

RESEARCH

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BRANDED CONTENT AND ENTERTAINMENT: A MOMENTUM FOR ORGANIZATIONS

BRANDED CONTENT Y ENTERTAINMENT: UN IMPULSO PARA LAS ORGANIZACIONES

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, we can see that organizations are beginning to communicate in a more global way, their external communication goes one step further and reflects the internal values of brands, not always recognized by their publics. We observe that companies seek and even provoke their appearance in the media, through actions that generate a social impact, this way they develop and apply, from the communication departments, purely advertising strategies. The *branded content* emerges with a great impulse as an innovative communication model that offers new ways of commercialization. This piece of research analyzes the *branded content* actions that, since 2012 up to the present time, have been rewarded at the Cannes International Creativity Festival, being the most recognized event in advertising communication. It was in 2012 when the festival included *branded content* as an independent category. Through the analysis of the awarded actions, we have been able to observe the evolution that this phenomenon is experiencing and, through this study, we have obtained qualitative results that show what categories they contemplate, and through a content analysis, how they have adapted to new formats and how this has led to a progressive change in the names of the categories.

KEY WORDS: Branded content - advertainment - entertainment - advertising - communication - Cannes Lions - research.

RESUMEN

En los últimos años se aprecia que las organizaciones comienzan a comunicar de un modo más global, su comunicación externa avanza un paso más y refleja valores internos de las marcas, no siempre tan reconocidos por sus públicos. Observamos que las empresas buscan e incluso provocan, su aparición en los medios de comunicación, a través de acciones que generen un impacto social, de este modo desarrollan y aplican, desde los departamentos de comunicación, estrategias puramente publicitarias. El *branded content* surge con un gran impulso como un modelo de comunicación innovador que ofrece nuevas vías de comercialización. Esta investigación analiza las acciones de *branded content* que desde el año 2012 hasta la actualidad ha premiado el Festival Internacional de Creatividad de Cannes, siendo el

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evento más reconocido en comunicación publicitaria. Fue en 2012 cuando el festival incluyó el *branded content* como una categoría independiente. A través del análisis de las acciones premiadas, se ha podido observar la evolución que está experimentando este fenómeno, obteniendo mediante este estudio, resultados cualitativos que muestran qué categorías contemplan, y a través de un análisis de contenido, cómo se han ido adaptando a nuevos formatos y cómo ello ha provocado un cambio progresivo en las denominaciones de las categorías.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Branded content – advertainment – entertainment – publicidad – comunicación – Cannes Lions – investigación.

BRANDED CONTENT E ENTERTAINMENT: UM IMPULSO PARA AS ORGANIZAÇÕES

RESUME

Nos últimos anos aprecia-se que as organizações começam a comunicar de um modo mais global, sua comunicação externa avança um passo mais e reflete valores internos das marcas, nem sempre tão reconhecidas por seu público. Observamos que as empresas buscam e incluso provocam, sua aparição nos meios de comunicação, através de ações que geram um impacto social, deste modo desenvolvem e aplicam desde os departamentos de comunicação, estratégias puramente publicitarias. *O branded content* surge com um grande impulso como um modelo de comunicação inovador que oferece novas vias de comercialização. Esta investigação analisa as ações de branded content desde 2012 até a atualidade há premiado o Festival Internacional de Criatividade de Cannes, sendo o evento mais reconhecido em comunicação publicitaria. Foi em 2012 quando o festival incluiu o branded content como categoria independente. Através da análises das ações premiadas, foi possível observar a evolução que está experimentando este fenômeno, obtendo mediante este estudo, resultados qualitativos que mostram quais categorias contemplan, e através de uma análises de conteúdo, como se foram adaptando a novos formatos e como há provocado uma mudança progressiva nas denominações das categorias.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Branded Content – Advertainment – entertainment – Publicidade – Comunicação – Cannes Lions – Investigação.

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1. INTRODUCTION

At present, the communication style of companies is going through a stage of changes caused by multiple factors: the appearance of new technologies and forms of communication, media saturation, the fragmentation of audiences and the economic crisis. This has resulted in the fact that, in recent years, the effectiveness of communication in organizations has been questioned and the ways of connecting companies with their public is turning to more advertising communications, with large doses of symbolism.

The scenario of consumption of advertising content has changed in less than a decade, we are currently witnessing a greater orientation towards people, their interests and desires. The audience, consumers or prescribers of a brand are related to it through multiple channels and platforms, by their own decision, generating a trend in which they are directly exposed to the content voluntarily, it is not an imposition of the advertising messages, an irruption, or an interference in their life.

In this sense, there is a growing interest in the consumption of content through the Internet, and the conglomerate of agents that interact in the advertising market are not oblivious to this, but being faced with this reality -which they also promote- they are obliged to change the strategic axis of its advertisers to the network.

We can stress that there are factors that have profoundly influenced this evolution, global competition, homogenization in products and services, saturation of the offer of products and services, change of habits, acceleration of consumption, advertising saturation in media and traditional media and a more universal target. Some of the effects caused by these factors are observed in the fact that people have more difficulties to know, identify, select, differentiate from the competition and remember the products. And it is in this context where it is essential to analyze how advertising is developing versus the communication strategies of companies.

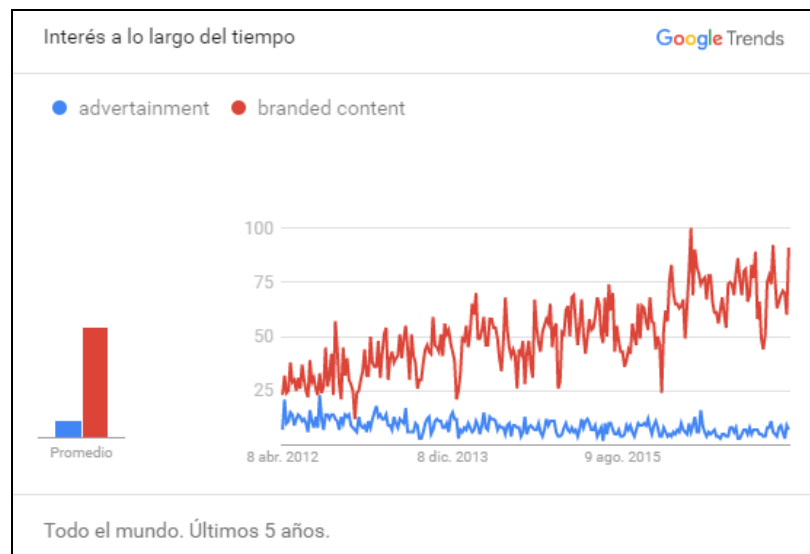
Companies, as social subjects, need communication to make themselves known, interact with their public, position themselves and not only exist, but be a reference when faced with the competition.

1.1 The value of content as a trend

The approach on which this study is based is based on the analysis of the different conceptions that predominate in management of advertising communication, content marketing, *branded content* and *advertainment*, concepts that converge in their purpose of impacting the consumer with *pull*-type techniques, promoting its distribution through the multiple channels that link the public with the brand (Roberts, 2010, Martí and Muñoz, 2008, Aguado, 2008, Eguizábal, 2014, Regueira, 2012, Ramos, 2006, Del Pino, Castelló and Ramos-Soler, 2013, Pineda and Ramos, 2009, among others).

As we can see in the following graph, when performing a search in Google Trends in which the concepts, *advertainment* and *branded content* are compared, we found out that there is a clear prevalence of the BC concept, said prevalence being progressive and increasing, while the concept of *advertainment* decreases, which gives us an orientation on the interest of both concepts in a global perspective.

Graph 1: Comparison between the concepts advertainment and branded content



When analyzing the evolution of companies regarding management of their communication and advertising, we can see that we are witnessing a progressive and growing investment in their image. The first study of *branded content* in Spain was conducted in 2013 by Grupo Consultores, and in 2015 they analyzed the situation again by presenting a new ContentScope work. Their latest data are significant in the study that concerns us with the growing investment in BC and the perspective they present. We collect the most significant data below (ContentScope, 2015): almost all advertisers have heard of the BC and 7 out of 10 have already taken some action, the percentage of the budget allocated to BC grows (there are projects over half a million euros and 6% of advertisers have an internal team dedicated solely to these actions), there is increasing commitment to a long-term content strategy (80% of advertisers consider it quite or very important in their global strategy), the advertisers' knowledge of the possibilities of the BC is increasing, *engagement*, brand image and notoriety are the most highlighted values by the advertisers and there is greater awareness of the collaborative process that the BC involves when proposing actions. All this indicates that, in our country, the performance of BC actions is progressively increasing and what could be a trend is settling.

We have experienced an evolution in management of brands parallel to the evolution of the market and the consumption of the public. There has therefore been a change of address

We are fully in a new era in history, in the economy, in culture, in society and, in general, in the individual, now a citizen and user of a reality 2.0. It is no longer a time of change but a change of era where the Web turns out to be the cornerstone (Del Pino y Reinares, 2013).

The public, the products and the brands create a social framework, being in turn pieces of it. With social networks, the public interact directly with the brands, fostering a transmedia communication.

The advertising messages are being designed so that the user is the one who seeks to see the content by himself, communication also becomes a consumer

product, entertainment is part of the message and brands become providers of experiences (Martín, 2014; Del Pino and Castelló, 2015).

This entire framework causes that there is no unanimity regarding the meaning of *branded content*, it is a concept of new creation, although there are also those who assure that it is to return to the origins of the value of the brand. For this reason, we also find literature that shows that *branded content* encompasses the concept of *advertainment* and vice versa, being in the professional field where less distinction is made.

Hence, it is best to consider it a broad concept that encompasses a style characterized by bringing the brand values to the consumer through strategies based on entertainment, leisure, education and information.

2. OBJECTIVES

The context of this study allows us to identify a panorama in which companies seek ways of approaching their audiences that differ from those previously employed, and it is in this reality where *branded content* acquires a greater role, however, it is still a phenomenon that has not been explored in all its magnitude.

Therefore, it aims to explore how *branded content* has been becoming one of the advertising actions used by organizations to attract their audiences, promote their products and simultaneously be able to transmit their values. In the same way, analyze its development from a meeting point such as the Cannes Festival and show how it has been enriching the advertising activity, a reflection of this is the proliferation of forums for debate, congresses, studies and publications that have been opening up a hollow, such is the case of the inclusion of this category in the Festival, however, there is still a long way to go in the conceptualization of its formal aspects.

3. METHODOLOGY

In response to the state of knowledge of the subject of research and the approach that is intended to give it, an exploratory and descriptive study has been carried out which has analyzed the evolution that the BC is having, considering different variables from the perspective of the awards and categories awarded by the Cannes Festival. The five years when BC has been present at the Festival as an independent section have been studied; their categories have increased from 12, in the first year, to 32 in 2016. A content analysis of the specification of the denomination of each award has been carried out in order to observe which ones have been maintained during these years and which have been included in the year 2016 which is when there was a considerable increase in them.

4. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The awards conferred at the Cannes Lions International Creativity Festival are divided into gold, silver and bronze lions that are distributed in each of the categories of each section. The *Grand Prix* is the most prestigious award because it is the recognition of the best action of all the categories in each format that is presented. It

was in the 2012 edition when the Festival decided to release a new category: *Branded Content & Entertainment*. That year, twelve different awards were included, which responded to the following specifications: *Best use or integration of digital media*, *best use or integration of music*, *best use of brand sponsorship integration*, *best use or integration of gaming*, *best use or integration of offline media such as print, outdoor, etc.*, *best fictional program, series or film (drama, comedy or miniseries around a product or brand)*, *best non-fiction program series or film (reality, documentary or light entertainment show around a product or brand)*, *best integrated content campaign*, *best brand or product integration into a feature film*, *best brand or product integration into an existing TV show or series*, *best use or integration of user-generated content*, and finally, *best use or integration of experiential events*. The consecutive years the categories varied without representing significant changes, however in 2016, not only the name of *Branded content & Entertainment* changed to *Entertainment*, the latter representing a more global concept, but the twelve categories in 2012 became thirty-two, producing a considerable increase, adding awards to actions that until that moment were not registered, specifying with greater precision the integration of each award and opening the way to increasingly innovative contents, and even with important technological implications. The awards in 2016, unlike the previous years, were divided into five main categories, which in turn host different awards, as we can see below (the number in parentheses that accompanies each denomination corresponds to the awards that were granted in each one in 2016).

1. Branded content and visual storytelling : online fiction 15 minutes or under in length (8), online nonfiction series (2), online: fiction series (1), user generated content in visual storytelling (1), excellence in partnerships between a content producer and a brand / product / talent (3), live broadcast / live streaming (5), innovation in visual storytelling and branded entertainment (2), use of brand / product integration into existing content (3) and audio content in branded entertainment (1).
2. Brand experience: cross channel brand experience (4), use of brand / product integration in an existing brand experience (2), mobile / device brand experience (1), social brand experience (2), new technology and brand experience (1), innovation in brand experience (3), Digital Brand experience (2), use of user generated content in a brand experience (2), Excellence in production and distribution strategy (2) and live brand experience (4).
3. Sports: use of user generated content in sports entertainment (1), social in sports entertainment (2) and visual story telling in sports entertainment (1).
4. Talent: visual storytelling (2), use of artist / Talent Integration into existing content (1) and sports (1).
5. Games: Live experience games (1), Use of brand / product integration in an existing game or gaming platform (1) and Innovation in branded games (2).

If we carefully analyze the qualitative leap that has taken place in the last year, we find that the types of actions that are framed in *branded content and visual storytelling online* and *offline*, and *brand experience* have been considerably expanded, which shows that brands are committing themselves to audiovisual

content that relies on more ambitious projects than the traditional spot, with a strong symbolic charge, with a greater social implication, that involve the consumer in the activity generated by the actions and that promote the experiences with the brand, at the transmedia level, and highlighting the realization of real actions that transcend from the moment they are made.

In the five years that *branded content* and *entertainment* have been awarded in Cannes, with the latter being a general category in 2016, we can find an evolution that presents significant data, not so much in the number of awarded actions that have fluctuated little each year, but in the increase in *entertainment* categories .

The increase in categories from 12 to 32, between 2012 and 2016, entails a percentage increase of more than the double. In addition to the fact that we have been able to observe in the study how the different categories have been increasing their specifications to more accurately integrate the actions, an example of which we find when analyzing that, in 2012, both "*best fictional program, series or film (drama, comedy or miniseries around a product or brand)*" and "*best non-fiction program series or film (reality, documentary or light entertainment show around a product or brand)*" welcomed a greater number of actions, while in 2016, those two categories passed to be integrated mainly in two large groups "*branded content and visual storytelling online*" that includes *fiction 15 minutes or under in length, non fiction series, fiction series*. And, on the other hand, "*branded content and visual storytelling*" that has more categories than the previous ones: *user generated content in visual storytelling, excellence in partnerships between a content producer and a brand / product / talent, live broadcast / live streaming, innovation in visual storytelling and branded entertainment, use of brand / product integration into existing content, audio content in branded entertainment* . Representing in most cases the actions with greater recognition not only in the Festival, but also the ones that have generated most impact at the media level, on the one hand, due to a question of investment in the global campaign but also for the generation of publicity.

Of the total of all the years, we found that 51 awards were distributed in 2012, in 2013 they were 52, in 2014 they reached 66, the year with the largest number, in 2015 the figure was almost maintained at 63 and in 2016, 61 awards were distributed. 2014 was the year when more bronze awards were granted, representing a considerable increase as compared to the other years, while, in relation to the winners in plant and gold, there are no significant differences in relation to previous and subsequent years. It is striking that, in the five years, only in 2012, 2013 and 2016 the Grand Prix has been awarded.

In 2012, the Grand Prix went to the chain of Chipotle fast food restaurants for the "Back to the Start" action of the Creative Artist Agency and the London production company Nexus, animation storytelling that, through a message full of emotion, shows in a critical way but with a positive atmosphere the need to return to the origins, to break with industrialization, giving priority to traditional values and inviting reflection; in a similar way, the action "The Beauty Inside" of Intel and Toshiba, in 2013 also obtained the Grand Prix, after presenting a metaphorical love story between both brands, the action was made by Pereira & O'Dell, an American agency. It introduces us into the story of Alex, a boy who wakes up every day with a different body, daily records his life on his computer and it is reproduced through six chapters.

The striking thing about this action is that Alex falls in love but, in such circumstances, it rather difficult if every day he appears with a new face, hence the audience was involved in the story, so that each chapter was about real stories of spectators who played the role of Alex, generating a link in which there were 26 million interrelations and more than 70 million visits. An inspiring story that reflects the *leitmotiv* that beauty is in the interior, that generated commitment with the fans, creating a greater connection with its consumers and a very subtle link with the Toshiba Portege Ultrabook computer. In 2016, "The Displaced" initiative of *The New York Times* was the winner of the *Grand Prix*, presenting the first virtual reality report, in which you can perceive the lives of three children who have become refugees due to war, Google also participated in this action, since it participated in the distribution of the Google Cardboard virtual reality viewers, distributing 1.3 million units among the subscribers. The application created for NYT TV was a success, bringing the possibilities of virtual reality closer to the public. The agency in charge of the action was Vrse. Works, American.

If we look at the values that these actions promote, we find that they reflect the symbolic universe that accompanies the brand in a close and accessible way to the general public, hence the interactivity with them is a fundamental key in their success and dissemination, transmediality and *storytelling* being very present. These actions have more extensive productions and have been extended over time, being part not only of a global campaign but of a philosophy that accompanies the brand, since they are a reflection of its evolution, above all it is seen in those that introduce technological aspects.

On the other hand, if we observe which categories are the ones that reward more actions in the Cannes Film Festival, we find that, from 2012 to 2015, the highest percentage of actions corresponds to *integration of digital media* in the first place, *non-fiction program, series, film online and offline*, and thirdly, *integration of experiential events*, while the rest of the categories are widely distributed and have fewer actions.

In relation to the year 2016, as mentioned above, the number of categories for *entertainment* increased considerably, the categories of *sports, games* and *talent* had an equal representation among themselves, but much less than the actions of *branded content* and *brand experience*, the latter standing out when compared to the former one.

At this point, it is necessary to consider that the study of the trends *branded content* and the culture of *entertainment* are following will result in the establishment of a more precise concept and the identification of communicative models that affect the effectiveness of advertising. Therefore, the starting objectives were established based on the study of the presence of these contents in a strictly advertising environment such as the Cannes International Creativity Festival, in order to analyze which categories and types of actions are receiving greater recognition in this field and know what is characterizing the evolution and immersion of these tools in advertising communication.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Once the bibliographic and hemerographic consultation necessary to construct the corpus of the study was carried out, it can be observed that it was from 2012 onwards that there was an increase in the presence of the BC concept in the academic, educational, business and informative fields, just as we have been able to check in the reference query. The scientific literature in this regard has experienced a considerable increase in recent years and the informative field is being more prolific in terms of debate. The BC has become a living concept, which is linked to *advertainment* and *entertainment*, they being three terms of a continuum.

On the other hand, in BC the symbolism of a brand is within an entertainment message, its purpose is, through its diffusion, to create a long-term relationship with its public, and this offers new ways of marketing advertising to journalistic companies. It is perceived that the trend of business communication is turning towards the generation of advertising content with *pull*-type techniques.

In this sense, the Cannes Festival as a badge of advertising is a reference of how the sector is and, specifically, what evolution the BC is having and how new creations emerge that are unclassifiable according to traditional advertising criteria. The considerable increase in categories, actions and formats in the FC denotes, on the one hand, the difficult classification of the actions and, on the other hand, the increase in participation; in 5 years 293 awards have been granted. Being in the first years when the same action received up to 4 awards, but later this rate has dropped.

Of the actions awarded in this last year, it is also worth noting that 65% of those presented at the Festival had their own web space, presence in social networks, and Facebook and YouTube standing out in relation to them. Since 2012, it has been a common trend, mainly in those that have received the largest number of recognitions and in more categories, and that is increasing as years go by. A reflection of this are the Grand Prix awarded in 2012, 2013 and 2016, which in addition have presented more content linked to the awarded actions through multiple platforms, thus receiving a large number of awards in other festivals, forums ... and generating a multitude of publicity.

From 2012 to the present, the actions that stand out in the FC are those that belong to *brand experience* and *experiential events*, integration in digital and social media, and non-fiction content in programs, series or movies, *offline* and online.

In recent years, the technological sectors and companies linked to these sectors are those that are receiving greater recognition, not only for the impact produced by the actions themselves, but also for the agreements that are established between different companies to cause this impact. These actions, like those that promote welfare and social improvements, are those that generate the highest publicity rate.

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