FROM STORYTELLING TO STORYDOING
The voices of 30 brands on the emergence of stories
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Introduction

For a long time, channel surfing was a common practice for everybody. The need to consume scraps of content has extended to all of our activities since the immersion in the age of on-demand television. That impulse has radically changed the way we consume information and entertainment through our long list of devices on an ongoing basis. Focusing your attention for a few minutes on specific content requires a special effort that we are not willing to assume at any price. The concept of attention has thus become one of the main challenges that organizations face today.

In a context swamped with information, in which the contents evolve in just a matter of seconds, storytelling, as a communication technique seems to be one of the most plausible alternatives when it comes to engaging consumers. Organizations believe that, beyond the nature of the business—whether or not there is direct contact with the end consumer—telling stories can be key to recapture and maintain a conversation with audiences that are not used to been a part of large users-conversation. As expressed by Bernardo Leon, Director of Marketing at Backus AB InBev, and one of the 30 communications and marketing specialists interviewed for this report, storytelling and storydoing are what consumers are demanding as an audience just to be able to enter the game; it is not an option.

The rebirth of storytelling nowadays is, therefore, a requirement in order to be a part of the conversations among different stakeholders. A tool that can be used to get closer to an audience that is ever more sophisticated in the way they consume content. These new consumers feed of various sources of information and place around specific interests. They are an audience that will only spend time on the content they may identify with, and which offers them some type of value.

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Storytelling, why now and what are the challenges?

Most of the communication and marketing specialists interviewed for this report coincide in that the core utility of storytelling is enabling closer relationships with stakeholders. The allusion to emotions makes it possible to develop empathy with what the message and transmit transparency by humanizing it. However, it also makes it possible to address the concerns and interests of the other side. For Frank Pflaumer, Director of Communication and Corporate Affairs at Nestlé Panama:

“Storytelling is about recovering something that had always been successful. Look back at when you were a child and your mother or father would tell you a story or read you a book; I think we are going back to what is essential. Storytelling is all about going back to the basics.”

Juan Llovet, Communications & Sustainability Director at Gonvarri Steel Industries, shares that for his organization, storytelling “Allows you to reach people, to soften and wrap up the message you want to transmit and increase the response from those who receive it as well as a positive attitude.”

Adriana Rius, Brands & Communication Manager Latin America at 3M, says:

“Since we are a company that mainly works with industrial products, using the storytelling technique is essential to connect with audiences beyond the product; it is about speaking to our audiences as professionals and people and not just as customers which in the long run improves the brand equity and loyalty.”

Recognition that the benefit of storytelling lies in creating a bond that is about more than just a transaction and helps you transmit the company’s purpose and values based on the other side’s mindset and not your own, is widely acknowledged by corporate communication and marketing leaders. That is the case of Ana Virginia Castrellon, Senior Manager of Marketing and Communications at Deloitte Panama, who states:

“We are really changing how we handle things. I think it goes beyond just communicating and creating stories to share as it is more about beginning to think how the things we do create and impact that really transcend.”

Despite the widespread coincidence, almost all those interviewed give clear proof that the return meant by “telling” stories also gives rise to big new challenges. The challenges that find the most consensus are:

- Maintaining the story’s coherency and consistency with the brand personality, values and purpose
- Constantly creating attractive yet relevant and credible content
- Provoking interaction among stakeholders with that content

Daniel Montes, Communications Manager at Cine Colombia notes that, in addition to the challenges mentioned, there are others related to the ability to entertain while informing and demonstrating the impact of creating stories on the business results. For its part, Cine Colombia has developed its communications around the concept of healthy entertainment and has humanized it by bringing films to communities that historically had no access to this mean. This is a clear example of storydoing.

If any of the interlocutors question the emergence of storytelling as a technique, things get complicated when delving into how is built a powerful story with real capacity to engage. On the one hand, the method and discipline enabling the construction of a story are not all that well understood or known. Additionally,
companies’ teams have not thoroughly developed the skill of connecting on that more emotional level, which transcends the traditional way we handle products. Susana Coerver, Global Marketing & Communication Director at Parfois, mentions that “One of the main challenges is rethinking the teams and comprising them differently than has been done to date as we need digital experts, people who understand people and who have the ability to produce feelings in others.”

Brand memories created with powerful stories are limited to those who have conquered territories of conversation that endures over time. For a long time, Coca-Cola has sought to be in the conversation surrounding happiness, Nike has conquered the territory of motivation, Red Bull that of breaking all limits and Heineken has worked in many music-related markets. Coca-Cola is precisely a common response when we asked the communications and marketing specialists about their own top of mind on storytelling. Claudia Patricia Rios from the Latin American Communications Department at Gas Natural Fenosa mentions that the key lies in that Coca-Cola is able to successfully connect emotionally as it gets deep and transcends the product, even creating a story based on two cultures which have historically been very far apart (Pakistan and India). That is the power of storytelling. Riccardo Navone, Marketing Director at IKEA in Portugal, also mentions the Nike’s case, and recalls the story of women’s empowerment in India where they facilitated women taking a step ahead. Ricardo alludes to how this use of storytelling is motivating in that it encourages other people to create their own stories with the brand.

1 Coca-Cola small world machines- Bringing India & Pakistan together. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ts_4vOUD1mE
Where do the stories reside?

Just as occurs with people, companies have stories to tell. A birth, a trip once taken, numerous conflicts, values that make sense of it all. As they grow and mature, they dive into their reason for being and mold their purpose. Based on that story, the perception we all have of them gradually starts shaping.

Brand stories have something to do with each person’s journey. That is why most of those surveyed position the corporate narrative somewhere between the stories they launch in the intermediate-term and the stories they tell in the short-term. For most of them, the primary motivation behind telling a story arises out of the firm’s actual goals. They all find it quite natural to include their corporate narrative in stories and none of them can fathom communicating without coherence outside this purpose.

We shall begin by citing the case of AVON, for example. AVON includes their narrative in everything they do from scratch, ranging from the company’s slogan “Beauty for a purpose”: “Beauty is the road and empowerment is the destination; we develop products in an effort to generate economic independence all while generating empowerment based on self-esteem,” says Susana Casabe, Director of Communications and CSR at Grupo de Mercados Sur.

Therefore, it is no surprise to discover how these initial seeds of the company’s DNA are now what continue to make sense out of today’s stories. Both Gruppo Campari Argentina as well as Nestlé Central America have been recreating stories with the same concepts for years now. Mariano Maldonado, Director of Marketing at Gruppo Campari in Argentina, says that they include brand stories in all phases.

“They have to do with the industry, perhaps not just with our products, but brands have very strong and very powerful ties to stories; there is basically no brand out there that works with us that has less than 200 years of history. There is an anthropological tie between alcoholic beverages and human beings and that first contact happened thousands of years ago. Based on this, the possibility of retelling a story opens up a whole lot of possibilities for us in understanding the aspects that can be more relevant nowadays than 200 years ago.”
disseminate their values. BACKUS AB InBev says it is not about each story having a mission to fulfill but rather being honest and practicing what they preach:

“If we divert from that dream of being a category, which is a social lubricant for a better world, none of the actions or stories in our brand narratives, or even the corporate brand, could be honest first and relevant later. We would be getting out of that manifest that moves us every single day,” states Bernardo Leon Cantella, the company’s Director of Marketing.

On the other hand, as explained by Carmen Maria Irazola MacDonald, Marketing Manager at Saga Falabella: “The story cannot adapt to your values but rather should be built based on your values because, otherwise, it would be very difficult to create an adequate link to the brand and you’d lose credibility.”

Most brands’ goal is, therefore, to communicate their purpose and the challenge lies in being creative when telling stories about themselves. In Cerveceria y Malteria Quilmes they are confident that they have managed to incorporate the storytelling vision and mission in the contents they are developing:

“The recent responsible consumption campaigns have put the focus on the ‘designated driver’ figure within a multimedia and multi-device communication strategy. Through vignettes based on humor, we sought to work on a very important communication pillar for our company’s vision: building on our dream to become the biggest beverage company in the world, unifying people for a better world. The CSR campaigns within the company fulfil a key role in achieving this dream,” maintains Lucas Adur, Consumer Connections Director for LAS (Latin America South) at Anheuser-Busch Inbev

Along these same lines, Salome Suarez, Director of Corporate Relations at the Spanish company Multiópticas, explains:

“After the Nepal earthquake in 2015, we heard the story of a group of mountaineers who were there and had to stop doing what they were doing to help people. Their story seemed interesting to us and we saw an opportunity to offer our own little contribution. All Multiópticas’ aid must be connected to the company’s business: caring for people’s visual health, testing eyesight and offering them the best glasses; that is the Foundation’s criteria. In Nepal, we tested the eyesight of 1200 people, donated 300 pairs of eyeglasses and 500 pairs of sunglasses. In addition, we donated medication and local doctors’ service who accompanied the eye doctors on this adventure to reach people who had never had the opportunity to get a medical checkup.”
The importance of stories in territories and community analysis

Using their corporate narratives, companies go about building their specific stories in various territories that help them connect with their communities of interest. They analyze these communities in different ways in order to gain a greater understanding of how to generate stories and better connect.

“We listen to people in order to offer related content to our company that can bring them value, such as: wellness, the environment, community, employment, our history or our brands. Every topic has a specific way of being told based on the business goals, promoting and protecting the corporate reputation, and the topics we seek to disseminate, position and even demystify,” says Eugenia Cesar from the Digital Communications Department at Coca-Cola Mexico.

On a similar level, Rafael Fernandez de Alarcon, Global Director of Sponsorships and Institutional Relations at Telefonica, points out:

“We always try to make it so Telefonica’s contribution goes beyond just financially supporting a good initiative. We have learned that when we truly get involved with our talent and our technologies, the stories gain in credibility and we come out looking like a more friendly company.”

The long-term corporate narrative takes companies in the intermediate-term to a series of territories (areas of conversation) which are associated with their purpose and business strategy. There are those who believe they have achieved a specific story in many territories organically; others, however, confess they have made various efforts to bring several of their brands closer to territories such as music, fashion, entertainment, sustainability or ecology, and have realized that the opportunity does not lie in the quantity but rather in conclusiveness and persistence.

Other companies such as AVON concentrate on only one territory, empowerment in this case, yet applied to all facets of a woman’s life, her development and economic independence as well as her physical wellness—through fighting breast cancer—and emotional wellness—by working to stop the scourge of gender violence. The company also works behind closed doors to create conditions that guarantee equity and the opportunity to occupy new arenas of decision-making for women. As concerns Enel-Codensa, Alejandro Barragan, Assistant Manager of Innovation and Market Development, believes that

“The company has very well-defined values and that the main cornerstone is opening up to new technologies, new clients, new uses for energy in order to explain a whole set of values such as innovation, the main territory to be transmitted. Storytelling personifies these values in a way that is tangible for people so they can make them their own.”

On the other hand, Andre Bettencourt, Director of Marketing and Communication at Bridgestone in Portugal, states that at his company

“Everything is always done on the safety basis. For us, telling a story implies the use of a vehicle, a motor vehicle in this case, which requires something we also want which is for people to see getting away, discovering new things and travel as things that can be achieved and always safely.”

In line with this, Bridgestone Portugal made the effort to get the public involved in a narrative regarding road
safety through the web series Estrada Fora², where the brand’s followers were challenged to decide the end of the last two episodes (thus taking advantage of the potential of co-creation and fandom techniques).

Jaime Lobera, Chief Marketing and Sales Officer at Campofrío Food Group, sums it up by saying that what they have looked to do is determine

“In which territories our brands are relevant to people or where our company could be credible and have some legitimacy so that it would relevant to the business. After that, there was an analysis of these territories that could be emergent or could generate interest in people and then we have gone about creating a matrix to relate certain communities to certain territories and what they can offer our brands in creating a connection for the medium–and long–term which is relevant to our business.”

This reflection led the company to success stories, such as the one involving its story in the territory of the empowerment of the modern woman, which was reflected in its transmedia storytelling campaigns like Deliciosa Calma (Deliciously Calm)³ or Message for the future⁴.

Most of the companies use different tools and analysis methods that allow them to obtain various thermometers, identifying messages that offer value, that have an impact, that generate insights, as a way to understand what is happening in terms of the conversation and society in order to be able to participate.

“What inevitably happens is that there must be a more fair exchange between consumers and producers and I think it is absolutely fantastic that this happens. I believe this transfer of such immense power as is occurring nowadays is just excellent. It is great that companies today are concerned about having a brand or company’s purpose and viewing this purpose as another reason for being beyond earning money. They are concerned about having a beneficial impact on society. I even believe it is a good thing that this

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⁴ Pavofrío. A message for the future. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVPWD6OkDII
is a response to this change in power, whether or not it is genuine. After all, in most cases, it is not,” analyzes Maldonado, Director of Marketing at Campari in Argentina.

The increasing power of consumers based on the changes that have occurred with all the breakthroughs in technology has forced a change in brand communication priorities as they now focus on identifying their interests in order to meet each community’s particular needs. “The consumer profile is no longer so important, rather it is about understanding what moves consumers, what the cause is that moves them. It is about democratizing, we are united by interests not by socioeconomic factors,” says Carolina Gonzalez, Senior Communications Manager Northern Cluster at Johnson & Johnson Medical.

Regardless of the industry, there is an interest in using these analyses to identify the messages to work on relevant and meaningful values shared by consumers: “It all starts with the right segmentation to ensure a better understanding of consumers and of the strengths and weaknesses of our portfolio. This is something we do periodically, annually or bi-annually and in every country in the region. We need to understand what these values are, these unsatisfied needs, to understand the consumption occasions and the role of each brand within the portfolio. This is the first step to start working,” declared Lucas Adur from Quilmes, to explain the importance of the analysis of communities to identify the ‘passion points’ that mobilize their consumers.

Smart analyses and services used to understand consumers must be adapted to not only each brand’s needs, but also to the markets where the brand is present. In the case of AVON, the company works with global market studies and does country research to compare and have different thermometers to come up with the specific development they need. This situation is similar at IKEA, where they also work with consumer profiles in different situations to analyze them and be able to move from mega-trends to local trends when building their business plan and communication strategy.

It is indisputable that, when speaking of similarities, regardless of the measurement and analysis strategy applied, or the greater or lesser degree to which these practices are used, companies are following consumer conversations. They do so by understanding the needs of their stakeholders and even processing the information handled by their sales forces as key data, treating these role-players as powerful sources of information. Understanding the needs of the communities offers value but getting ahead of them is what allows us to create a present, which builds a future for the brand and, above all, relevance over time.

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Transmedia storytelling

Storytelling as a technique is as old as communication, but transmedia storytelling is completely new and it derives from the digital breakthrough. Being capable of telling our stories in different formats and channels without losing the idea along the way yet understanding the diversity of conversation models that we face requires an all-new approach.

The story Emotional Driving by the Spanish multinational firm Gonvarri, bases on how positive motivation can help prevent traffic accidents. Emotional Driving has taken the utmost advantage of the different formats and channels for more than three years to tell stories always revolving around the same idea. It has moved from a book to experiences at their own worksites, gamification and web series, all with a focus on generating engagement with its employees and other stakeholders. Jose Leyton, Creative Director at Turner Latam, emphasizes the need to think about conversation ecosystems: “In the last year, we have seen how each social network defines its own rules, style and language. And if your proposal does not take this information into account, it is very likely that it will be ignored in each platform.”

The storytelling moment arrives when we want to go further as creating experiences is key to connecting with communities. Living out the brand’s purpose all while entertaining not only will enable instant connection, but will also help build strong relationships. Movistar’s Rafa Nadal Challenge initiative allowed Telefonica to create interactive experiences and virtual games with its customers at its stores. It generated conversation in the social media. The company summed up the best stories in an advertising spot, which further increased the engagement and generated awareness in different channels.

Eugenia Cesar, from the Digital Communications Department at Coca-Cola Mexico, tells us:

“The stories we tell come out of the actions we take. For us, storydoing goes beyond creating experiences with our stakeholders or proposing activities to be able to tell a story later. It is about turning our philosophy and values into action: we tell stories because we generate a large number of actions.”

However, that leap is not as easy to make as it appears; there are barriers placed by customers, advertisers and communication specialists:

“Many creativity agencies are accustomed to deliver a television script and today’s world has gone the other way. We were able to do a quick catch up and reconver the work teams to think about transmedia...” says Lucas Adur, Consumer Connections Director for LAS at Anheuser-Busch Inbev in Argentina. Lobera, from Campofrio Food Group, points out that his company.

Gonvarri Emotional Driving webserie (2015)

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In the jump from the spot to transmedia, the allusions to available budget are commonplace but the reality is that it does not necessarily have to be considered an obstacle because it is not about generating more but rather boosting the most powerful content for a particular channel so it meets the goals. At Multiópticas, they emphasize the type of conversations boosted and allude, for example, to their recent commitment to a web series which tells of the evolution in the world of optical stores since the 1970’s. More than a story about themselves, it is a story that reflects the changes of an entire sector in an effort to generate conversation not only with consumers but also with suppliers, customers and SMBs.

Figure 1. Which storytelling techniques have gotten the best results?

Source: prepared by authors based on the report survey.
The measurement challenge

This leads us to the great mystery of KPIs, which still seems unresolved. How have the metrics evolved in response to this paradigm in content consumption? Are metrics like ROI based on potential audiences valid for measuring engagement goals and what can be used in their substitution?

Susana Salazar Gonzalez de Cossio, Regional Director of Experiential and Cultural Platforms at Bacardi Latin America and the Caribbean, focuses the debate in the following way:

“All of a sudden there is a trend and you have a whole lot of people at your door telling you they have the best Snapchat strategy for your brand. I think there is a big challenge and even more so with the huge range of options and tools and resources and platforms available to us. There is immense opportunity if you do not succumb to this schizophrenia thinking you need everything and must be in everything in order to have a proper impact because you do not have the ability to measure it all. We have not and are not at the point where we can clearly understand exactly what is the role and effectiveness of a specific delivery, of a specific KPI in being useful for each one of these mediums or platforms. We measure ourselves particularly in terms of engagement. The reach, the frequency and the investment return, trying to homogenize within the formulas used and understand if a dollar in one medium or another will have the greatest impact, all of these continue to be important indicators. However, the issue of KPIs scoring the effectiveness of storytelling is an enormous challenge and I think this is true for many if not all of us as if it is a Pandora’s box. So, whoever finds the solution should patent it because they’ll surely make gold from it.”

Rafael Fernandez de Alarcón at Telefónica points out that these indicators:

“Are not so different. Because storytelling is essentially a strategy that helps you position the company’s values through stories, yet the goal continues to be the same: brand visibility, viewings, building engagement... There are metrics out there that measure the tie with the brand, how many people share your post, the perception as if it were a spot... but the metrics that really work are–those tied to–meeting business goals, not those related to the story. Storytelling is a way to support the company.”

At Coca-Cola Mexico, the emphasis is on the difficulty of measuring what we are interested in measuring.

Changes in perception:

“Some say that everything can be measured in the digital world and in all reality, even though you can get an infinite number of data, the metrics we are interested in are the most difficult ones to get and we still have not found what works 100 percent. Therefore, in order to measure the efficacy of a story, we take into account data such as views, average visit times and shares. In social media, we measure likes, retweets, etc. But, if we really want to know if certain content worked or not, we have to use surveys and, even still, we do not get all the qualitative information we’d like to have.”

Ana Serafim, Communications Manager at Vila Gale Hoteles, also alludes to “the feeling that is created in receivers and the relationship they then have with the brand, which in our case is measured in bookings and loyalty which is ultimately the objective.”

Quilmes points out:

“The bad thing about traditional communication is that we have very little information on the performance of what we do. If I direct a stimulus to the traditional media audience, it will probably stick with many people I am interested in targeting, but I am also going to affect many people that are not part of my ‘core target’ nor the audience I want to influence. Therefore, the information is superfluous for those it sticks with, much like the level of attention, which is poor or almost zero. If I place a billboard on the Pan-American Highway, how much information can I obtain? How do I calculate the frequency? Do the same people see my billboard every day? The truth is that the digital environment has been able to build a better background of information and KPIs to measure. While there is a lot of information that cannot be trusted (bots, fake views, etc.) there is also a great global debate on the best ways to attack these problems and resolve them in the short term.”
Looking for storytellers

Nevertheless, just who is this storyteller who is responsible for humanizing corporate messages sent out to the market? What skills must such a person have to overcome the competition with their message in a transmedia scenario?

As a rule, teams in charge of corporate marketing offices are experts in this profession and people trained in communication. They are people who, in the words of most of the large companies interviewed, must have a very specific set of skills. As defined by Isabel Borgas, Director of Communications at NOS, the emergence of storytelling “is going to force communications and marketing professionals to be much more versatile, flexible and open-minded because it forces them to rethink their role.”

The first most highly demanded skill by the companies surveyed for this report is being able to encode stories. However, it is important to remember that our storyteller will not just tell us any old story: theirs will be prepared in such manner that it connects with consumers, will be easy to transmit and difficult to forget. There is a link between that and creativity. Juan Llovet from Gonvarri Steel Industries says to this end “you need a high dose of creativity to imagine, to stimulate teams to constantly come up with new ideas.” A storyteller’s creativity must be further reflected in their ability to identify “the raw material,” that big idea on which to build that story centered on a real need among the public to which they are speaking. In order to achieve this, Gabriel Chavez, Marketing Manager at Coca-Cola Peru, believes marketing or communications professionals must know who they are targeting and must “be with them, breathe with them, see how they move, what they do, understand their problems and understand their day-to-day.”

Curiosity and open-mindedness are related to learning when seen as an endless process, which is outside the storyteller’s comfort zone

All of this means that our hero must qualitatively and quantitatively know consumers, must be able to strategically understand them, anticipate their behaviors, needs and expectations in addition to—and quite specially—know how to connect with them. Obviously all of these skills intertwined and, given their importance, are highly desirable for the companies consulted. Alvaro Rojas, Director of Business at Pastificio Santa Amalia, Grupo Alicorp Brazil (the former Director of Marketing at Alicorp Peru), literally says that, beyond the cliché, storytellers have to know consumers “because what often happens is you tell the story you want to tell and not the story they want to listen to.”

Up to this point, you have a professional who is creative with very developed skills to understand and connect with the target public; in other words, we are talking about a person who has developed extreme soft skills with the ability to listen in depth with the empathy and sensitivity to understand their communities of interest. Note that we have mentioned “communities” in plural to make it clear that this professional must know how to recognize different organized groups based on specific interests.

In addition to all of this, they must be curious and open-minded; the most of the interviewed executives mentioned this. Therefore, David de Castro, Corporate Strategic Communications Advisor at Grupo Corporativo Perez, is of the opinion that “it is essential for the storyteller to have read the great writers, the great writers of stories and novels; he who does not read does not know how to tell stories.” It is worth specifying that both curiosity and open-mindedness are related to learning when seen as an endless process, which is outside the storyteller’s comfort zone. Versatility, adaptability and agility also must be competencies in the professional profile of a marketing manager and communicator willing to tell stories with the product at the core of the message. David Hernandez, General Manager of Popeyes in Panama highlights that “the ability to innovate, to change at the same pace as modern society, to be flexible and dynamic and adjust to market trends without losing sight of strategic thinking; in other words, where the brand is going.” In addition, this person must have a good dose of courage to suggest storytelling as the communication tool used with an internal public that
tends to be conservative. This daring nature comes hand in hand with taking on calculated risks that enable constantly bubbling creativity and curiosity. Of course, none of this is possible if the recipe does not include a bit of tolerance for error and resilience.

Once the soft skills are covered, it is time to mention the essential technical skills so our storyteller can shine in a changing and hyper-connected world. Most of those interviewed coincide in that they obviously must be up-to-date as far as their knowledge of the digital world, the corresponding tools and formats and, above all, know how the omnipresent social networks function. Nevertheless, when talking about the digital world, we must mention proficiency in the metrics used as another skill required by companies. This aligns with the ability to construct traceability variables to measure the efficacy of the strategy used. As a result, a storyteller must have a significant capacity for abstraction and data and information analysis.

Analytical capabilities would also help professionals use the storytelling technique, as they must create transmedia content in their day-to-day in an atmosphere where the digital channel is becoming more and more important. If we go back to creativity at this point, we would find that the next thing to take into account is the ability to find and develop the story and transfer it to attractive content from a transmedia or multi-channel perspective. Ricardo Rosa, Strategic Marketing Manager at Sonae Sierra, underlines that a lot of creativity is necessary to adapt the story “to different channels and that will become more critical because the media format is getting smaller all the time.”

As if this were not complicated enough, the Argentine brand Quilmes comes along to stress on the importance that the storyteller must be aware of the constant competition with different brands present in the channel, regardless of their category.

“The recipes of the past do not work for a young person who is consuming content all the time, because on social media you are looking at content all the time. I insist that Quilmes is not competing with other beer brands. Quilmes is not competing with other brands of alcoholic beverages; Quilmes is competing with any other brand in the world that is inside a young person's phone,” says Lucas Adur.

However, what happens if a storyteller cannot check off the entire list we have mentioned? Keep calm, because even though it is desirable for them to have the baggage described, companies indicate that it is not only important to be multi-faceted, but you also have to have the ability to take advantage of diversity. It is important to get the best out of multi-disciplinary teams that offer the described skills all together and get support from the work of agencies that can boost your own skills. Likewise and ultimately, if soft and technical skills on a superlative level are not common currency, Daniel Montes, Marketing Manager at Cine Colombia, reminds us: “if you do not have the skills, it is fundamental to understand them and know that a technique exists.”

Why is the mentioned knowledge by the Colombian company so important? Because storytelling is one of the tools that offers companies’ corporate communication the most value. It all makes one think that it will be even more so in the future when 90 percent of the Ibero-American firms consulted answered affirmatively when asked if they were expecting to include storytelling in their marketing strategies over the coming year.

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The future of stories

Nevertheless, in the context of content consumption and the evolution of conversations in permanent change, where are we going in terms of storytelling? “Often, companies do not have the speed or the flexibility to be quick enough to play this game, so when we identify players that are playing very well, the best thing is to invite them so that we can do things together”, says Lucas Adur of Anheuser-Busch InBev.

IKEA is one of the brands with the greater experience in this field. They had understood that its role is to promote the story instead of lead the content production. “We have the example of the blue bag, our frakta. There is so much huge buzz out there from people sharing how they use this product that it came about organically and, then we promoted it,” point out Riccardo Navone and Helena Gouveia dos Santos from Ike.

Although they identify the potential for co-creation to generate more credibility for brands, most of the professionals also expressed that promoting user participation in the brand conversation is not an easy task. “People are interested in their friends’ and family’s stories and it is difficult for us as brands to get ourselves into those stories. You have to have done something really well in order for them to advertise you for free,” thinks Rafael Fernandez de Alarcon from Telefonica. Technology is changing the way we talk about stories as it opens up a range of possibilities as far as channels, communication techniques and consumer knowledge. “The stories, however, continue to be the same as they have a creator,” says David de Castro, Storymaker and Corporate Identity and Brand Strategist for Grupo Corporativo Perez. Sixty-four percent of the professionals consulted for this study think that Big Data will be the factor that affects the most the way we tell stories in the years to come. “You can promote these stories but if you do not know or understand the specific target, their behaviors, etc., then you will not get the expected return,” says Maria Cecilia Morales, Digital Media Manager at Bayer Central America and the Caribbean.

Nonetheless, most of those interviewed stated that they did not know what the impact would be although some of them have already mentioned the potential to detect consumer insights.

“Big Data will be critical to the way communities, targets, channels and formats are determined but I’m still not able to predict what the impact will be,” says Ricardo Rosa de Sonae Sierra.

“The challenge lies in analyzing all of this data and processing it adequately,” they say at Nestlé Central America. The raw data detected by technology is not enough to design good marketing and communications strategies. Data analysis is necessary to make good decisions; in other words, what is known as Smart Data. Moreover, the human work of analyzing and making decisions is essential to innovation. “It is important to know what consumers are saying but it is also important to have the courage to take risks even though the data do not recommend such path,” notes Susana Coerver from Farfois.

Big Data makes it easier to detect communities comprised of individuals with shared values or interests and even identify the interests of unique

![Figure 2. Which of the following aspects do you believe will most affect storytelling by companies?](image-url)
individuals. Thus, brands can create content and personalized experiences for users. This trend is key in an environment where brands must compete for the attention of “infoxicated” consumers (intoxicated with information) with the never-before-seen power to choose what information to consume. For example, Netflix offers its users specially selected content for them based on an algorithm that takes into account previously watched content and content watched from other users with similar interests to the former.

**52 percent of those interviewed stated that the co-creation of brand content alongside users will be the most outstanding trend**

Among the personalized content or the interests of a specific community are micro-stories that can spread via the social media. Live videos are in, especially among the youngest, and they will be even trendier in the future, meaning companies must adapt to them. Consumers are already talking about their experiences with the brand via live videos broadcast via Facebook Live or Instagram. In this context, the brand’s role is to encourage the production of positive content by users where consumers transmit the brand’s values or the benefits of its products, thereby becoming brand ambassadors (advocates). At 3M, Adriana Rius, Brand & Communication Manager Latin America, says that

“with consumer brands like Nexcare®, we have invited mothers in our community to offer first-aid advice and tips during specific seasons such as back-to-school or Scotch-brite® consumers to tell us their stories behind a clean area; the participation has been really great.”

As asked about which storytelling format they believe will evolve the most over the next few years, 52 percent of those interviewed for this report stated that the co-creation of brand content alongside users will be the most outstanding trend, followed by immersive content (29 percent) and live narratives. Immersive content refers to the use of technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, 360, etc., which are also trends among marketing professionals for telling stories. The consumption of live content in Snapchat or Instagram Stories has led to a taste for instant micro-content. Very much concerned about the permanence of their messages, brands are of the understanding that in this era of all things ephemeral, they have to mix the intensity of experience with the halo of exclusivity if they wish to capture consumers’ attention.

![Figure 3. What do you believe the storytelling or storydoing format will be like in the next few years?](image-url)

Source: prepared by authors based on the report survey.
Authorities and brands participating in the report

<table>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Susana Casabe</td>
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<td>Quilmes</td>
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<td>Mariano Maldonado</td>
<td>Director of Marketing in Argentina.</td>
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<td>Turner</td>
<td>Jose Leyton</td>
<td>Creative Director for Latam.</td>
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<td>Bacardi</td>
<td>Susana Salazar Gonzalez de Cossio</td>
<td>Regional Director of Experiential and Cultural Platforms for Latin America and the Caribbean.</td>
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<td>3M</td>
<td>Adriana Rius</td>
<td>Brand &amp; Communication Manager for Latin America.</td>
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<td>Coca-Cola</td>
<td>Eugenia Cesar</td>
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<td>Claudia Patricia Rios</td>
<td>Communications for Latin America at Gas Natural Fenosa.</td>
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<td>Johnson &amp; Johnson</td>
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<td>Sr. Communications Manager Northern Cluster at Johnson &amp; Johnson Medical.</td>
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<td>Cine Colombia</td>
<td>Daniel Montes</td>
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<td>Enel</td>
<td>Alejandro Barragan</td>
<td>Assistant Manager of Innovation and Market Development.</td>
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<td>NOS</td>
<td>Isabel Borgas</td>
<td>Director of Communication.</td>
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<td>Ricardo Rosa</td>
<td>Strategic Marketing Manager at Sonae Sierra.</td>
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<td>Vila Galé</td>
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<td>IKEA</td>
<td>Riccardo Navone</td>
<td>Marketing Director at IKEA Group.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Helena Gouveia dos Santos</td>
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<td>Carmen Maria Irazola MacDonald</td>
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