From images to ideas: Graphic Narrative as a Language in social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok

De las imágenes a las ideas: La narrativa gráfica como lenguaje en las redes sociales Facebook, Instagram y TikTok

Alejandra Corrales Morales
First author/corresponding author
Research - Methodology
project administration – writing
alejandra.corrales72@uabc.edu.mx
Universidad Autónoma
de Baja California
Tijuana, Baja California, México
ORCID: 0009-0000-4286-9968

Ervey Leonel Hernández Torres
Segundo autor
project administration
Supervision – writing
ervey.hernandez@uabc.edu.mx
Universidad Autónoma
de Baja California
Tijuana, Baja California, México
ORCID: 0000-0003-3720-1415

Hildelisa Karina Landeros Lorenzana
Tercer autor
Conceptualization – Supervision
abraklanderos@uabc.edu.mx
Universidad Autónoma
de Baja California
Tijuana, Baja California, México
ORCID: 0000-0002-6462-7481

◆ Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore the graphical narrative and how it has become an essential tool for brand construction in digital environments, from a Graphic Design perspective, especially on social media, such as Facebook, Instagram and Tik-Tok. In this context, visual elements (images, videos, memes, etc.) are not just decoration, but languages that emotionally and culturally connect with users. The particular characteristic stands out of each social media platform and its contribution to the brand's narrative, with Instagram prioritizing Reels and influencer marketing, Facebook allowing a broader construction of the user's life narrative, and TikTok standing out for its immediacy and personalization of visual content. Graphic Design is presented as a discursive and strategic practice that transforms images into connection, identity and participation devices. It is claimed that the audience is no longer passive, but co-creates content, becoming a prosumer. The text ends with examples of successful brands that had known how to build solid graphic narratives, adapting themselves to the changing demands of the digital environment. The visual storytelling is consolidated as an opportunity for designers and marketers to generate meaningful, authentic and lasting communication.

Keywords: Graphic Design, digital marketing, social media, graphic narrative, neurodesign.

◆ Resumen

El propósito de este artículo es explorar la narrativa gráfica y cómo ésta se ha convertido en una herramienta esencial para la construcción de marcas en entornos digitales, desde una perspectiva de diseño gráfico, especialmente en redes sociales como Facebook, Instagram y TikTok. En este contexto, los elementos visuales (imágenes, videos, memes, etc.) no son meros adornos, sino lenguajes que conectan emocional y culturalmente con los usuarios. Se destacan las características particulares de cada red social y su contribución a la narrativa de marca: Instagram, que prioriza los reels y el marketing de influencia; Facebook, que permite una construcción más extensa del relato de vida del usuario, y TikTok, que destaca por la inmediatez y la personalización del contenido visual. El diseño gráfico se presenta como una práctica discursiva y estratégica que transforma las imágenes en dispositivos de conexión, identidad y participación. Se argumenta que la audiencia ya no es pasiva, sino que cocrea contenido, convirtiéndose en prosumidora. El texto finaliza con ejemplos de marcas exitosas que han sabido construir narrativas gráficas sólidas, adaptándose a las exigencias cambiantes del entorno digital. El storytelling visual se consolida así como una oportunidad para diseñadores y mercadólogos de generar comunicación significativa, auténtica y duradera.

Palabras clave: *Diseño gráfico, marketing digital, redes sociales, narrativa gráfica, neurodiseño*

◈ Introduction

One of the communicative strategies that has acquired more relevance in contemporary *marketing* is *storytelling*. This technique, translated to Spanish as narrative, has shown to be an efficient tool to generate emotional bonds between brands and their audiences. From this perspective, the brand is no longer conceived as a commercial message transmitter, but a cultural agent that builds sense within consumer society. Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2019) maintain that "the brand is a *storyteller* from which it is expected to play the role of a cultural device within consumer society" (p. 26).

This approach implies to consider cultural perceptions of the audience as a central factor in the brands narrative's construction. Various authors agree that the relationship between individuals and their environment is mediated by perception processes that are, in essence, socially and culturally shaped. In this sense, Bull et al (2006) state that "senses mediate the relationship between self and society, mind and body, idea and object" (p. 5). Thus, perception is not limited to a physiological phenomenon, but is understood as a process shaped by cultural diagrams that influence the way individuals experience the world.

From this premise, Vannini et al. (2012) argue that perception is built from outside to inside the body, mediated through an exterior sense, (such as vision, hearing, taste, and smell), which, likewise, inform internal senses related to balance, temperature, hunger or movement. This perceptive corporeality, according to Sabido (2016), is culturally oriented through what he calls "perceptual schemas", which delimits possibilities of sensory interpretation within a specific cultural framework.

In consequence, if the brand narrative is shaped from the audience's perception (and this perception, in turn, is culturally determined) the solidity and longevity of a brand will directly depend on the narrative coherence that it is capable to maintaining. Ávalos (2010) suggests that the value of a brand lives in its capacity of holding a narrative that is culturally pertinent for its audience.

Brown (2009), from the Design Thinking approach, states that innovation is created in the deep comprehension of the user's context, interpreting their reality by an intuitive approach that articulates functionality, emotion and sense. This posture suggests that the visual narrative should be built from symbolic elements that facilitates user identification with the brand's values and aspirations. Barros y Mandagarán (2014) reinforce this idea when indicating that de brand's narratives should be conceived as cultural productions that allow individuals to experience multiple symbolic worlds in which they could project themselves.

Importance of social media in the spreading of visual content

In the contemporary digital context, characterized by the Web. 2.0 expansion and social media, the identity has become fluid and fragmented. This new scenario forces the adoption of multidisciplinary perspectives that incorporate theories about self and the representation. In this line, Ricoeur (1996) distinguishes between *selfhood* and *ipseity*, which make evident inherent tensions to the identity construction and its relation with personal narrative. According to the author, failure in the incorporation of these dimensions can lead to a disconnection between individual and their own identity story.

From this standpoint, the brand's proposal should not be limited to the functional benefits offering nor the isolated emotional experiences generation. Ruiz (2011) submits that the act of consumption becomes an auto-affirmation experience in which the user recognizes themselves as protagonist of a story that gives sense. In this process, digital media play a main role as identity expression tools. Dans (2015) points out that these media offer users unique opportunities to explore and communicate authentic aspects of their identity.

This article proposes to analyze the role of the graphic narrative as a strategy for the construction of meaningful brand identities in digital environments. It is suggested that visual elements not only perform an aesthetic or communicative function, but also acts as symbolic devices that allow users to recognize themselves and reflect themselves into stories suggested by brands. In this sense, we're seeking to offer a theoretical and conceptual framework to be a guide for designers, marketers and those who are responsible of social media compromised with the creation of brands with purpose, coherence and symbolic depth.

What is narrative?

The *storytelling* or narrative has been consolidated as a main element of construction of meaningful brands, capable of generating deep emotional bonds between them and their audience. This strategy not only responds to a style in the marketing area, but also it responds to a profoundly human need to tell and listening stories. As Sadowska y Roche (2013) affirm, stories and legends have a universal appeal, given that they constitute the foundation of human societies. Thus, the narrative

not only performs a communicative function, but also shapes the way how individuals give meaning to their experiences and relationships.

From philosophy, Paul Ricoeur (1996) holds that we "tell stories because, ultimately, human lives deserve to be told". This affirmation shows the ontological character of the narrative: human beings narrate why the seek to understand and shape their existence through language. In this line, Olave (2023) argues that stories not only allowed to share experiences, but also act as inspiration, connection and social expression vehicles.

That social character of the story is also translated in the branding field. The story a brand tells (both in an explicit or implicit way) becomes a key tool to establish its identity and symbolic value. In this context, Claude Hopkins, pioneer of scientific publicity, argued that one of the fundamental elements for a brand's success is the name. This should not be arbitrary, but should incorporate a narrative charge that contributes with publicity communication. As Vizcaíno-Alcantud (2023), states, "a name that tells a story means a great advantage", due that it integrates itself in an omnipresent way in the communicative actions and should justify the space it occupies.

On the other hand, the evolution of language has given place to new ways of representing and transmitting information. In the actual media scene, where the visual prevails, the capacity of building visual narratives becomes fundamental. Dondis (1976) states that information visualization is a meaningful transformation of language, given that it allows to make and understand messages through visual structures that serve as cultural codes. Thus, visual language is not only a verbal message, but an autonomous communication system that allows to synthesize, excite and narrate from a sensory and symbolic perspective.

Both, these elements reinforce the importance of storytelling as an integral strategy that articulates what is verbal, visual and symbolic in the brand's construction with identity and sense. Narrative not only brings cohesion and coherence to the brand's story, but also makes possible the identification and emotional connection with people, in a time where authenticity and purpose are more valued than ever.

◈ **Narrative in digital context**

It is said that nowadays brands require to offer a holistic experience to their audiences, Marc Gobé (2004) in his book Emotional Branding, affirms that emotional connection makes a fundamental difference and provides the basis to develop brand strategies, these strategies should focus on the consumer.

In the social media era, subcultures can be found about any topic, there is no longer a language or regional barrier. With the arrival of social media, lines that made a separation of mass have become blurred and this is because in prior periods, those interested had to physically gather,

but nowadays anyone interested in any topic can give their opinion from anywhere around the world and that definitely changes the user/consumer behavior, obviously producing content that is innovative requires other types of strategies (Wahid y Sultana, 2023).

Often, users choose certain products more for what they symbolize rather than for what they really do; acting as self-expression vehicles, brands are imbued from stories that clients find valuable to build their identities (Holt, 2004). It is said that many brands become iconic because they change the user's cultural behavior. Gonzalez, (2018) states that, on the other hand, the innovation in digital environments will have a short lifespan and for it to succeed, a brand should resort other skills, characteristics and new mentalities. It is no longer enough to know some superficial peculiarities of the user but to further knowing them.

◆ Characteristics of the visual content in social media

Multiple authors agree with the idea that contemporary marketing is not limited to the sales of products and services. Instead, it is headed towards the building of meaningful emotional relationships between brands and their audiences. In this context, *storytelling* is not simply another tool in the marketing repertoire, but one of the most effective strategies to generate affective bonds with users, promoting indirectly the consumption (Kim, 2019).

Kim (2019) in his article *A Study on the Effect of Storytelling Marketing on Brand Image and Brand Attitude*, identifies three fundamental typologies of storytelling that can be implemented as marketing strategies, which can also give key opportunities for the graphic design when offering narrative frameworks that could be visually promoted.

1. **Narration based on real facts:** This type of *storytelling* is founded in true stories, told by users or people directly related to the brand, like CEOs, founders or employees. This approach brings authenticity and humanizes the brand, which allows that graphic design reinforces the emotional connection by coherent visual resources with personal stories and the brand's values.

2. **Modified and processed narration:** In this case, stories are creatively adapted to incorporate humoristic, anecdotal elements or even rumors. This narrative freedom opens a space for graphic design to experiment with more playful, disruptive or innovative visual styles, aligned with the communicative intention of each story.

3. **Creation of new histories:** This category includes completely original narratives, developed to appeal to users' dreams, wishes or aspirations. Subcategories are included within this strategy, like narrative *series*, that keep a thematic coherence over time, and anniversary narratives, that focus in meaningful dates

such as Christmas or Valentine's Day. These themes offer a fertile ground for the design of shocking and memorable visual campaigns.

Mexican brands such as OXXO, Knorr and Bodega Aurera have used *storytelling* as cornerstone of their visual communication strategy, building narrative universes that go beyond what is commercial to become cultural referents and taking advantage of already established trends in culture to create their own narrative. Despite it being said that success is not granted in social media, these brands have known how to create active communities with their content structure based on constancy, quality and innovation (Im, 2018)

◆ The impact of immediacy in rapid consumption of narratives

Social media have become quite relevant in a brief period within the communication environment. The sharing of personal experiences has not only exponentially grown, but it has also opened new ways of contact and interaction (Túñez, 2012). According to Bolter and Grusin (2011), virtual reality has an immersive character whose purpose is to "disappear", which means, to incorporate itself in a way that it is perceived as a natural part of our daily visual experience. To generate an authentic sense of belonging, this reality should get as close as possible to our daily perception.

In this context, the digital narrative promoted by the Web 2.0 has experienced an important evolution. Currently, a discourse focused on emotions and personal experiences is prevalent (Martínez, 2011). This proposes a new challenge to those dedicated to publicity or content creation: to remain attentive to this transformation in the ways of communicating (Maqueira and Bruque, 2012).

Taking up Bolter and Grusin (2011) approach, they point out that the digital graphic has not only become popular, but also has become a profitable industry. With it, the desire of immediacy becomes evident: digital images acquire a protagonist role by being more striking, vivid and realistic than ever. According to the authors, immediacy should generate a sense of "naturalness" in visual experience, preventing the spectator from perceiving arbitrariness or artifice in the representation.

◆ Key elements in the graphic narrative of social media

Use of images, illustrations, videos, memes as narrative transportation

To create a relevant graphic narrative in digital media, it is important to understand the particular characteristics of each social media, especially in terms of dimensions and formats that adapt to the users' expectations. Also, it is crucial that such narrative is aligned with the strategic objectives of the brand, granting coherence between its visual content and identity.

In this context, Escobar and Campo highlight this essential role for the designer in the brand's building in digital media, a process that not only favors the visual identity, but also generates confidence and loyalty among followers. In fact, multiple studies point out that the images and graphics have a superior capacity to capture the attention in social media, becoming key tools to attract and keeping audiences. From this perspective, graphic design is conceived as a discursive practice oriented to the communicative action, whose objective is to generate a change in the perception or behavior of the audience to whom the visual message is destined (Gamonal-Arroyo and García, 2015).

Define in a precise way formats, typographies, visual resources and other elements appropriate for each social media is complicated, given that, as previously mentioned, these are adapted to the expectancies of the users and are determined according to the context and the brand's objectives. Nevertheless, the designer should turn to the essential principles of a structured design, which are considered as classics in the profession. In *"El poder del diseño gráfico en las redes sociales"* (Kuri, 2025), it is suggested that the designer should look after fundamental aspects like keeping a coherent color palette with the brand's identity, to avoid the use of pixels or wrong edited images and to organize the information with titles, subtitles and an appropriate disposition of spaces.

The importance of the gap between visual and textual

Many times, graphics require a previous knowledge from the audience to correctly codify the messages they transmit. Currently, platforms as Facebook, YouTube or Twitter give users a sense of belonging, at the same time they promote the need to "see" and "be seen". This phenomenon manifests itself tangibly through metrics such as views, likes, shares, and followers, among others, which highlight the impact and visibility achieved (Sanchez, 2016).

The capacity of users to share their experiences in real time or a little later cause the image recovers all its capacity to generate social and hyper-media interaction, which means, it has the ability to combine and narrate along with other elements like texts, sounds, and visuals, also it generates a new sociomediatic form of interpreting and representing the world. The real cultural strength of social media lies in this socialization, and the image becomes a fundamental tool to achieve it (Bañuelos y Gomez, 2020).

It is important to take into account that a website, social media or a digital profile represent "the virtual face" of an enterprise. In this context, various measurement methodologies have been developed to ensure the effectiveness of these digital environments. In this context, a key question arises: how does text influence in social media? Even though these platforms are characterized by their immediacy and their strong visual component, the text continues to have an essential role. A proper writing allows

graphic and textual elements to complement themselves, generating a more coherent and effective communication, (Herrera, 2012).

Strategies in content creation.

Clara Avila (2019) in Estrategias de Marketing de Contenidos, highlights that the fundamental aspect content generation for social media is the conscious choice of strategies to implement. This choice should be analyzed from a communicational perspective that considers the relationship between sender and receiver, as well as the dynamic established between them. The author points out that, if the objective of the brand is to position the user as a passive receiver, meaning, that content consumption is limited, the focus should be focused on the production of informative messages. Instead, if it is aimed to mobilize the user and foster their active participation, a strategy based on persuasive communication is required.

In the research titled: Interacciones: más seguidores no significa más alcance, published by Francisco Silva in the platform Foroalfa, the author holds that alterations in social media's algorithms such as those of Facebook and Instagram have caused a decrease in the organic visibility of content. This is due, mostly, to the fact that such algorithms prioritize the distribution of short video formats, like reels, at the cost of other types of publications. Also, Silva points out that the organic reach has been affected by the commercial strategy of Meta, which favors sponsored content. In this context, the number of followers is no longer a reliable indicator of interaction, given that posts do not necessarily appear in users' feeds.

As has been shown throughout the analysis, an efficient strategy for the content creation in social media requires understanding how digital platforms evolve and which factors have an influence on algorithms to favor the visibility of a brand. In this context, the building of solid communities that not only foster user loyalty, but also generate new environments of interaction and meet specific communicational objectives, like the persuasion in advertising campaigns

Various specialists in digital *marketing* suggest a series of key recommendations to develop effective content:

◈ To deeply know the objective audience.

◈ To take advantage of current trends of each platform.

◈ To clearly define the communication and *marketing* objectives.

◈ To create content with emotional charge that connects with users.

◈ To optimize formats and messages according to the characteristics in each social media.

◈ Social media as graphic narrative platform

Instagram: stories, carousel, reels

According to Statista, Instagram is the third most used social media platform with the third highest percentage of users in Mexico. In 2024, under this premise, it has been consolidated as one of the most popular digital platforms nowadays, given the diversity of formats that it allows to share, like images, videos, stories and live streaming. This versatility makes it a highly efficient tool for the brand management, especially in strategies focused on the endorsement of products or services (Rose, 2017).

Currently, Instagram has led a large part of its strategy towards the promotion of vertical video formats, known as *reels*, which are progressively replacing the traditional horizontal format (Navarro-Güere, 2024). According to Manovich (2016), Instagram can be understood as the medium par excellence of the "aesthetic society", in which the production and presentation of images, styles, visual designs are not only frequent, but fundamental for the platform's operating logic.

One of the key aspects to build an effective narrative in social media is to achieve an authentic connection with the user. In this sense, the influencer *marketing* is presented as a strategic tool to facilitate this bond between brands and their audiences. Influencers, defined as outstanding users in digital platforms, are often seen as models or experts in specific fields, which gives them credibility and persuasion capacity towards their communities.

It must not lose sight that the building of a coherent graphic narrative continues to be a key element to achieve the communicative objectives of each social media. It is important to clearly define which story is desired to tell and the values one wishes to transmit. Instagram, in particular, offers multiple tools that allow to generate images and videos aligned with this narrative, as long as they are used strategically.

While it is true that the algorithm and visibility formats of the platforms are frequently modified, this does not imply essential elements of the content should be neglected. Among them are visual clarity of the information, aesthetic coherence, and the elaboration of texts (*copy*) that complement and enhance the visual message. These components, worked on holistically, contribute to effective communication and a deeper connection with the audience.

Facebook: Covers, infographics, posts

Facebook continues being the most used social media in Mexico, with a penetration of 93.2% among the population, according to Statista data from June 2024. In this same period, Mexico had 111.4 million users in Facebook, positioning itself as the second country in Latin America with more users on this platform after Brazil (García Hernandez, et al. 2021)

On the other hand, WhatsApp ranks second place in Mexico with an insight of 92.2%, followed by Facebook Messenger with 80.3% and Instagram with 79.4%. This shows the domain of Meta Platforms in the country, where its platforms cover the three first positions, (Revista-Merca2.0, 2024)

With regard to the evolution of Facebook, in 2009, the sociologist Manuel Castells pointed out that Facebook had emerged as the second biggest social media of the world, just behind Myspace. Since then, Facebook has kept its leading position, consolidating itself as the most used platform worldwide. According to Gurevich, social medias serve as spaces where users live their own reality. Facebook, with its profile personalization and timeline, allows users to build and articulate their own stories, becoming a place where individual life is expressed and shared.

The "brand-experience" concept holds that brands not only sell products or services, but they also build meaningful relationships with users, creating an identity that is felt and lived. In this context, social media have become key environments where users live their own reality and brands can establish authentic bonds. According to Montúfar (2021), social media are deeply involved in each person's daily life, becoming essential platforms for interaction and personal expression.

The main function in social media is to connect users, offering a variety of tools that facilitate this interaction. These Facebook tools include:

◈ Sharing images and videos.

◈ Private messaging and video calls.

◈ Geolocation and events.

◈ Status updates and reactions

◈ Group creation and participation.

◈ Music playback and sharing

◈ Birthday and celebration recognition.

◈ Live streams and ephemeral content.

These features allow users to share moments of their lives, to express emotions and establish relationships with others, creating a network of interactions that show their identity and belonging. Hence, social media have evolved to include direct commerce tools, allowing users to buy products without leaving the platform, which strengthens even more the bond between brands and consumers. In this environment, brands have the opportunity to actively participate in the building of meaning-

ful experiences. When offering an authentic content, interacting genuinely and adapting to needs and values of users, brands can establish lasting relationships and build an identity that resounds with their identity (Regalado Pino, 2025).

TikTok: Short and dynamic videos with graphic elements.

TikTok has consolidated itself as one of the most popular social media in Mexico. In 2024, the platform registered approximately 74.15 million active users over the age of 18, which represents a penetration of 76.5% among Internet users in the country. This increase has been particularly meaningful between the youth, especially those aged 18 to 24 (Torres-Toukoumidis, 2021), who constitute a large proportion of the TikTok audience in Mexico.

The success of TikTok in Mexico can be attributed to many factors. One of them is that its recommendation algorithm, which uses artificial intelligence to quickly learn user's preferences. This system allows it to offer highly personalized content, which increases the usage time and the interaction on the platform (Montag, 2021).

From the perspective of the uses and gratifications theory, TikTok satisfies various users' needs, like entertainment, socialization and personal expression. This theory holds that people actively choose the media that satisfy their desires and needs, and has positioned itself as an efficient tool to accomplish with this expectancies (Montag, 2021). Besides its popularity between the youth, TikTok has influenced significantly in the national digital culture. The platform has been used for political, marketing, and advertising campaigns due to its wide reach and popularity. This has allowed their users and content creators to achieve a global audience, reinforcing their influence in the new digital trends.

Del Río affirms that TikTok is interpreted as a platform for the youth that facilitates content creation with the use of smartphones and the easy-to-use editing software that offers the same appliance, the way content is primarily presented in short video format

◆ **The users' role and participation**

Instagram
-Aesthetic
-Visual styles
-Coherence

Facebook
-Personal connections
-Interactions and expression

TikTok
-Speed
-Organic Content
-Satisfies desires and needs

Compiled by author

Narrative and graphic as co-creation tool

Although each social media functions with own characteristics and dynamics, what implies the necessity of adapting content to each one of them, should not be understood as entirely isolated platforms. Both, they form an integral communicative ecosystem that contributes the construction of a coherent digital identity. Nevertheless, the selection and strategical use of each network will depend on the specific objectives and the particular necessities of each project.

Users, in general, experiment with their life as a story in which they see themselves as protagonists. This vital story can be seen in a global form, but in most cases it is built in a partial and fragmented way. In this context, the product or services consumption is interpreted as a fact that is integrated to this personal narrative, as long as it achieves to generate a meaningful connection with the previous experiences of the individual (Ruiz, 2011).

The identity, understood from a narrative perspective, is articulated from stories that people build about themselves. Ruiz (2011) states that the narrative constitution of identity is directly linked with human identity, either at an individual or collective level. With the arrival of the Web 2.0 and the social media boom, identity representations become more complex, which demands a multidisciplinary focus that incorporates multiple theories of the self.

From Ricoeur's (1996) philosophy, in his work *Sí mismo como otro*, he suggests a fundamental distinction between two identity dimensions: *sameness (idem)* and *ipseity (ipse)*. These concepts, in confrontation terms, undertake the difficulty of reconciling a continuous identity with otherness. At times, identity confronts the risk of failing to recognize itself, ignoring its narrative dimension and deepen the fragmentation of self.

For a brand to have a true impact in consumer's life, it is not enough with offering functional benefits or isolated emotional experiences. It is about suggesting a narrative sense that allows the user to live itself as the main character of a satisfying story, in which the act of consuming reinforces its identity (Ruiz, 2011). In this line, digital media acquire

a significant value as identity exploration instruments, when offering spaces where users can project, discover or redefine aspects of their authentic "own" (Dans, 2015).

Audience contribution to the narrative through reactions, comments and content generated by the user.

Pinedo holds that interaction constitutes a fundamental activity in all societies, given that it represents the bond between two or more individuals and is manifested as a common characteristic in social life. In addition, he suggests that, through this interactive change, social reality is configured, continuously building and rebuilding its meaning.

One of the distinctive characteristics of the narrative in social media, that substantially increases *storytelling*, is the active participation of the audience. As Quintas-Froufe y González-Neira (2013) claim, the involvement of the spectator in the development of the content favors the creation of online communities united around shared experiences.

The cyber culture has transformed the social environment, having an impact specially in the ways of interaction between individuals (Ayala, 2014). Under the immediacy logic that characterizes social media, the question about what has changed in publicity to have a significant influence in users arises. In this new scenario, the user is no longer limited to the passive role of the receiver, but it alternates between sender and receiver roles, which has given place to the concept of "prosumer": an individual that not only consumes content, but also produces it (García-Galera, *et al* 2014).

◈ Success stories   *Examples of brands, campaigns and creators that have used the narrative*

If the brands are analyzed with more presence in social media in Mexico, a large amount of information associating success with the follower's accumulation is observed. Hence, this metric by its own is not enough to define the true achievement of success in digital platforms. Effectiveness in social media can be assessed from multiple perspectives, even though, generally, it is measured through measurable indicators such as reach, interaction, amount of followers, click rate and conversion rate. These parameters constitute fundamental criteria in the digital performance analysis of a brand.

In this context, a published analysis by LinkedIn in 2023 identified ten more distinguished brands for their branding strategy and original content production in social media. The following brands were: Four Seasons, Oreo, GoPro, Chobani, Virgin, Nike, National Geographic, Dunkin' Donuts, NASA, IBM y Starbucks. The study highlights the importance of authenticity and coherence in digital communication as determining factors of the successful positioning in virtual environments.

Although it is true that the aforementioned brands have developed marketing strategies highly effective, it is complicated to define the true concepts of success in a digital environment characterized by immediacy and the constant evolution. In this context, the user's loyalty can be volatile, and the momentary notoriety is not always translated in a lasting connection. Thus, it is equally important to observe those brands that, beyond achieving traditional metrics, they are building a solid and coherent graphical narrative that generates meaningful bonds with their audience. Both consolidated and emerging companies are starting to stand out in the digital ecosystem of the Web 2.0. Under this perspective, Duolingo has been positioned as a referent in the content creation of value, achieving an authentic connection with users through a distinctive visual communication and effective *engagement* strategies

Viral campaigns analysis that relied in the graphic narrative

Duolingo, an app designed for language learning, could seem, at a glance, a bit complex case in terms of digital marketing. However, it has been consolidated as an outstanding example of communication strategy and positioning of the brand. The company has structured advertising campaigns regarding the playful and accessible content creation, with a strong presence in multiple digital platforms. Even though it reuses content between social media, it has achieved a high level of effectiveness, especially on TikTok, where it has built a solid community and a close relationship with their users.

According to the Brand24 blog, a blog post by Magdalena Sadowska (2025), Duolingo's success in social media is due to five key elements, among which the personification of their logo stands out. The main character, "Duo the Owl", has become the visible face of the brand. This character is represented by a variety of funny or symbolic situations, which significantly contributes to the visual and emotional narrative of the company. Thus, Duolingo has not only used its logo as a graphic identifier, but also, it has transformed into a main feature of their communicative strategy, reinforcing its identity by the constant use of colors and visual elements that characterize it.

Contemporary advertising strategies are based on the creation of dynamic brands, capable of adapting themselves to visual trends that digital platforms demand. In this context, de Graphic Designer's role acquires a central importance, since it needs to be capable of building a flexible visual identity, that can be effectively translated into various formats like videos, characters, narratives and contents adapted to the cultural phenomena of the moment. Duolingo constitutes a paradigmatic example of this dynamic. Through a daring and empathic marketing strategy with its audience, it has achieved to consolidate a solid community without compromising visual coherence and identity elements with which the brand was conceived. Its capacity to remain faithful to its

visual essence while it evolves along with the digital environment trends shows the importance of a graphical identity well established and strategically managed.

◆ Challenges and opportunities

Visual content saturation in social media

Although social media offer an efficient platform for publicity, they present inherent limitations that affect their effectiveness. These platforms still lack accurate mechanisms for measuring the conversion of interactions into sales, which creates uncertainty in evaluating advertising return on investment.

Also, the constant exhibition to advertisements can generate a saturation sensation and fatigue in users, reducing their responsiveness to advertising messages. According to a PuroMarketing's (2024) article, online advertising has achieved a critical point of saturation, losing its capacity to capture the consumers' attention.

In essence, even though social media continue to be valuable tools for advertisement, it is important to address the challenges associated with the measuring of their effectiveness and user saturation to keep its efficiency in time.

The intense use of digital tools by brands to promote products and services has generated an information overload that adversely affects the user retention. The constant exposition to various stimuli, messages and format makes it difficult for the target audience to effectively retain information. In this context, Cantuarias (2024) holds that "simplicity and clarity are more important than ever in a world where the consumer's attention is more and more limited". This statement emphasizes the necessity of prioritizing clear and direct messages to improve advertising campaign's efficacy and to strengthen the relationship between the brand and the consumer.

Technical challenges: Adaptation to different formats and devices

The future of social media can seem uncertain of observed from an immediacy perspective. Even though they exist trends and predictions, the dynamic nature of these platforms and the user's unpredictable behavior make a brand's permanence at the height of success difficult.

Various studies and experts agree that artificial intelligence (AI), will perform a crucial role in the transformation of social media. Nevertheless, human authenticity continues being a fundamental value. According to Amber Venz Box, co-founder of LTK, even though AI tools will make easier the tasks automation and the content optimization, consumers continue valuing creativity leaded by humans. Also, recent researches show that an important proportion of users prefers content

generated by real people rather than automatized content. For example, a study from Sprout Pulse shows that 83% of consumers considers that the content generated by AI contributes to the saturation of social media, meanwhile 74% feels comfortable with brands using AI for customer service (adepa.org.ar, 2025).

This scenario suggests that, in the context of increasing automation, authenticity has become a key differentiator. Brands that achieve the efficiency of AI with the human emotional bond will have a competitive advantage in the building of lasting relationships with their audience.

An emerging concern for designers is the growing prevalence of video formats, especially those powered by artificial intelligence, which are revolutionizing the way users experience products and services. The integration of immersive reality technologies allows users to enjoy complete and immersive experiences, which poses new challenges and opportunities for experience design.

According to an article from El País (2025), PortAventura World has launched "El Diablo Neo," the world's first roller coaster to incorporate mixed reality technology. This innovation transforms the classic attraction with optional glasses that immerse visitors in an interactive digital universe, as part of the park's 30th anniversary celebration. The project is part of the complex's modernization and technological innovation strategy, which already includes experiences such as "Uncharted: The Enigma of Penitence," "Hysteria in Boothill," and "VRX." The creation of "El Diablo Neo" was carried out in collaboration with the technology company Spatial Voyagers, using advanced artificial intelligence tools such as Midjourney, Move AI, Runway, and ChatGPT to design hyper-realistic visual content and characters. The initiative marks a turning point in the entertainment industry by combining adrenaline, immersive storytelling, and cutting-edge technology, consolidating PortAventura World as a leader in high-tech family entertainment.

For designers, this evolution implies the need to adapt to new technologies and deeply understand the company's identity. The immersive experiences design requires a careful planning, taking into account aspects like usability, narrative and censorial coherence. The interdisciplinary collaboration and the constant feedback are essential to create experiences that are not only innovative, but also accessible and effective, Rubio (2025).

In conclusion, the convergence of artificial intelligence and immersive technologies is transforming the design panorama, offering new ways of interaction and connection with users. Designers should be prepared to incorporate these tools ethically and effectively, assuring that created experiences are not only advanced technologies, but also authentic and aligned with the brand's values.

◈ Conclusion

To conclude, *storytelling* is not only consolidated as a strategic tool within the marketing area, but as an opportunity for graphic design to take advantage of the impact and practice a communicative, emotional and cultural function. Understanding the different types of narrative allows the designer to develop visual solutions that not only communicate, but also deeply connect with audiences.

Historically, *marketing* has multiple objectives, among which stand out the capacity of generating an emotional bond with their audiences through hearing and telling stories. With the arrival of Web 2.0, these tasks seemed to turn out more accessible, given the interactive character and the proximity that this new digital era promised to facilitate. However, various authors agree that, far from becoming simpler, advertising today faces new challenges. Among them is the difficulty of generating brand loyalty and establishing sustainable emotional bonds in an environment characterized by immediacy, information overload, and volatile user behavior on social media.

Under this premise, this study seeks to understand the impact designers have and how they can help build a solid brand identity, generate emotion and purpose in the virtual social environment, and create a narrative that has emerged as a powerful and multifunctional language. Throughout this exploratory study, it has become clear that images, videos, memes, and other visual resources are not mere aesthetic complements, but essential discursive devices that mediate the symbolic relationship between brands and audiences and build on that basis a clear identity that resonates with the user. Visual narrative not only constructs coherent stories, but also allows users to recognize themselves in them, project themselves, and actively participate in their reinterpretation.

Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok shape narrative territories with their own logic, where graphic design plays a strategic role in the production of culturally relevant and emotionally resonant content. This dynamic gives rise to a prosumer audience that is active and co-creative, whose participation redefines communication processes and blurs the traditional boundaries between sender and receiver.

Likewise, the challenges associated with visual saturation, fragmentation of attention, and the integration of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and immersive reality, require us to rethink brand strategies from a transdisciplinary perspective. In this context, authenticity, clarity of message, and narrative adaptability are established as key principles for sustaining effective and meaningful communication.

Finally, graphic storytelling is positioned not only as a digital marketing trend, but also as a substantive opportunity for designers and communicators to generate symbolic value and build brands that transcend the commercial realm to become cultural agents within a hyperconnected society.◉

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◆ About the authors

Alejandra Corrales Morales
Currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Research and Design (MYDAUD) at the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC). Holds a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design from UABC. Experience in design agencies, with a focus on social media, user experience, and neurodesign. Currently teaches at UABC, offering courses such asAdvertising Campaigns in Hypermedia and Creation of Virtual Communities.

Ervey Leonel Hernández Torres
PhD in Information Display Design from the Autonomous Metropolitan University, with a specialization in Video Game Design and Creation from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Holds a Master's degree in Educational Technology Design from UNID and a Bachelor's degree in Communication from UABC. Currently serves as head of the Research Group in Design and Communication and as a full-time professor-researcher at FCITEC-UABC, affiliated with the Graphic Design Program and the MYDAUD graduate program. Author of several publications focused on the analysis of narratology and aesthetics in audiovisual discourse, including participation as coordinator of the book Videojuego y lenguaje (Video Games and Language), and co-author of the books Narrativas transmedia (Transmedia Narratives), Literatura y videojuegos (Literature and Video Games), Cultura gamer contemporánea (Contemporary Gamer Culture), and El diseño gráfico como agente de cambio discursivo (Graphic Design as an Agent of Discursive Change

Hildelisa Karina Landeros Lorenzana
Currently pursuing a PhD in Business Administration. Holds a Master's degree in Marketing from CETYS University and a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Communication Design from the University of Guadalajara. Also completed a Diploma in University Teaching and the BasicCourse in Economic Development at CETYS Universityand the University of Oklahoma.

Full-time professor at UABC, also serving as Assistant Director. Worked in design and marketing agencies and has taught at several universities in Baja California. Additionally served as coordinator of the Design Program and coordinator of the Industrial Design Program at UABC.