

D. ARAGÃO, MIGUEL VARELA

DIGITAL MARKETING AND THE ROLE OF *STORYTELLING* IN CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Summary: *Storytelling*, as the name suggests, is the act of telling stories. However, it is mainly about knowing how to tell the story and captivate the listener or reader. In the context of Marketing it is a relevant strategy, considering that pursues the identification of the consumer with the product and helps in creating empathy between the company and the consumer. In this way, *storytelling* is part of the B2C Marketing strategy and seeks to establish a strict relationship between them. This paper applies this concept to Coca-Cola brand marketing, through the use of methodology of Case Study, concluding that *storytelling* is an effective strategy for emotional engagement of its clients and it is a crucial marketing tool that should be used by small, medium and large companies, enhancing their customer's loyalty.

Key words: storytelling, customer loyalty, digital marketing, personal communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

Customer loyalty is one of the core objectives and perhaps the main goal of any company. While it is also important to reach a higher number of “buyers”, it is even more relevant to find strategies to retain customers. Those, posteriori, through the “word of mouth” may influence the adhesion of other people to a certain brand. (Alexandrov et al., 2013; Coker et al., 2017).

In this context, *storytelling* serves as a link between companies and consumers as it gives rise to the motivation involved in a particular purchase, having the ability to make consumers feel that they “are part of something”, creating empathy between them which can lead to customer loyalty. (Faustino, 2018). In this dissertation, customer loyalty strategies will be developed based mainly on *storytelling*.

For a better analysis of the effectiveness of *storytelling*, the case study of the company Coca-Cola will serve as an illustration.

In this study, the main question is to understand the role played by *storytelling* in customer loyalty. The habit of telling stories has always been present in human existence. In fact, it can be said that Humanity itself carries stories that form its own History.

Attribute meaning to things gives people a different view in general, just as showing the meaning behind a product allows consumers to pay more attention and even sympathize with the company, compared to direct selling. It is not only about the product; it is about connecting with it. (Faustino, 2018).

The aim of the study is to understand whether the use of *storytelling* increases customer loyalty, as well as find different solutions for customer loyalty.

Bearing in mind that a company's main objective is to retain customers, it is crucial to understand what drives them to choose a product and what the story behind a certain purchase is.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Marketing is a concept directly connected to the media, in the context of communication, it can be said that it appeared more than 500 years ago, especially with the creation of the printing press in 1450, by Johannes Gutenberg, which made mass information possible. As time passes and technology advances, the concept of Marketing is exquisite.

Philip Kotler considered as “the father of modern marketing” argues that the role of Marketing is essential, as it serves to create real value for a certain group or market. Philip Kotler, for his part, considers Peter Drucker “the grandfather of modern marketing”, it was through him that the five most important questions that all organizations should ask themselves emerged: “What is the mission? Who are the consumers; what do consumers value? What are the results? What is the plan?” Therefore, organizations must take their customers' needs into consideration.

Marketing is fundamental in the era we live in, as it is present everywhere, therefore “a globalized society without the marketing factor is unimaginable” (Dias, Á. L., Varela, M., & Costa, J., 2013).

As mentioned previously, Marketing follows the technological development, thus, in the 90s the concept of Digital Marketing came to light.

Digital Marketing is mostly used by luxury brands, although many enterprises still resist online sales, this tool is evident in every strategy, considering that helps brand awareness, consumer interaction and purchase motivations.

In practice, digital marketing focuses on managing different forms of the company's online presence, such as company websites, mobile apps and social media pages, integrated with online communication techniques, for instance: search engines marketing, social media marketing, online advertising and email marketing. These techniques are used to support the goals of acquiring new customers and providing services to existing ones that help to develop customer relationship management (CRM). However, for digital marketing to

be successful, it is still necessary to integrate these techniques with traditional media, such as print and TV as part of multichannel marketing communication (Chaffey, 2019).

“The habit of telling stories was very important for the perpetuation of the histories and traditions of the ancient people. Legends, tales and stories, recorded in the form of a narrative in painting, scriptures, songs, hieroglyphs, statues, vases and other means, were responsible for recording the preservation and propagation of stories and culture among people” (Santos, 2016).

Therefore, *storytelling* has been used long time ago and remains crucial in the perpetuation of stories. However, the word itself, as a concept of digital communication, first appeared in 1993, in the United States, through the launch of a project developed by Joe Lambert, film director, entitled “American Film Institute”, through which the stories were told by digital language.

In 1994 the term digital *storytelling* expanded and started to be presented to companies and institutions, especially after the creation of the *Storycenter* founded by Lambert, Dana Atchley and Nina Mullen, in order to study the methodologies that make a good story.

Regarding the use of storytelling, it can be mentioned the case of Coca-Cola campaigns, whose main message is the sale of “happiness” and not the soft drink itself. In this sense, storytelling is connected to the need to feel that we are part of something (Faustino, 2018).

Most of the brand’s value comes from the high number of loyal customers. (Faustino, 2018). A highly loyal customer base can be expected to generate a very predictable sales and profit stream. In fact, a brand without a loyal customer base is often vulnerable or only valuable in attracting new customers. (Aaker, 1996).

In addition, the impact of brand loyalty on marketing costs is often substantial. It is less expensive to retain customers than to attract new ones. A common and costly mistake is looking for the company’s growth by attracting new customers to the brand and neglecting existing ones. (idem, 1996).

Philip Kotler defines a brand as “a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or even a combination of them. A brand is a promise of value: it stimulates beliefs, evokes emotions and inspires behavior.”

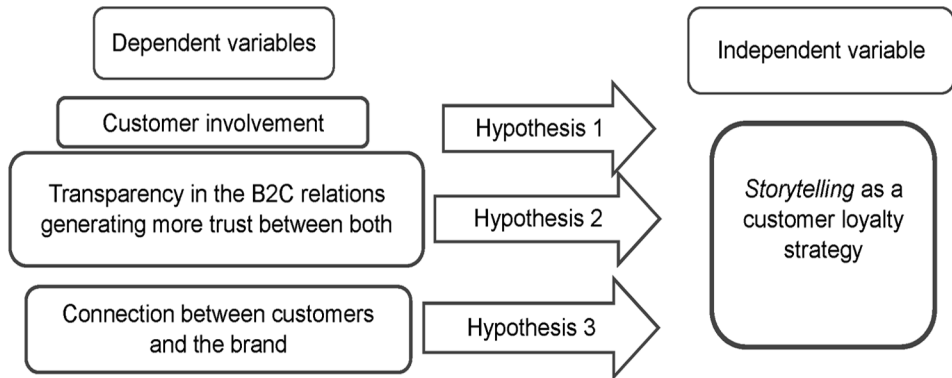
Brand expert David A. Aaker, known for the invention of the Brand Equity calculation model, distinguishes Brand Image and Brand Identity, the first being the way the brand is perceived and the second the way the brand would like to be perceived.

According to Aaker, the factors for evaluating a brand are: notoriety (which translates into competitive advantage); perceived quality (which refers to the quality attributed by consumers); brand image (feeling in the consumer’s mind) and loyalty (reflecting the fact that customers do not choose other competing brands).

When consumers are strongly attached to a brand, they not only have positive and strong attitudes towards it, but also feel discomfort when thinking about the brand’s unavailability in the market and regret the loss of that brand when they are discontinued (Keller, 2018).

It is also fundamental to mention the need to provide quality customer service, the better the service quality, the greater the number of loyal customers (Budianto, 2019).

Figure 1. Hypotheses



Source: Self Elaboration.

Hypothesis 1: Customer involvement: understand whether customers feel emotionally connected to the brand using storytelling.

Hypothesis 2: Transparency in the B2C relationship, generating more trust between both: which reflects the level of trust that the brand transmits to its customers and potential customers.

Hypothesis 3: Connection between customers and the brand: understand if the brand is so engaging that it makes the customer feel that they are part of the brand’s values and even recommend the brand to others.

3. METHODOLOGY

There are different types of methodology: Quantitative (which as the name suggests is precise, since it is based on numbers); Qualitative (on the other hand, can be discussed, taking into consideration that there is no dogma); Mixed (which is the mix of both quantitative and qualitative methodology); Case Study (which brings a certain case into reality in order to understand facts).

This paper used Case Study as the approach to understand the efficiency of *Storytelling* Marketing Strategy, analyzing the Coca-Cola brand. It is crucial to mention the mentor of Case Study, Robert Yin, who argues that “the case study is an empirical investigation that portrays a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context” (Yin, 1989).

A questionnaire was also conducted from which 111 responses were obtained, of which 52.3% are female and 47.7% male, showing a balance between both and approaching the percentages of the Portuguese population, which makes the

sample representative (structured by gender) as it can be seen in the table below, from the most recent data of the year 2018:

Figure 2. Portuguese population

Indivíduo - Milhares

Anos	Sexo		
	Total	Masculino	Feminino
2009	10.568,2	5.065,0	5.503,3
2010	10.573,1	5.058,6	5.514,5
2011	10.557,6	5.042,0	5.515,6
2012	10.514,8	5.013,1	5.501,8
2013	10.457,3	4.976,9	5.480,4
2014	10.401,1	4.940,8	5.460,2
2015	10.358,1	4.912,6	5.445,5
2016	10.325,5	4.892,0	5.433,5
2017	10.300,3	4.875,1	5.425,2
2018	10.283,8	4.860,0	5.423,8

População residente, média anual: total e por sexo

Fontes de Dados: INE - Estimativas Anuais da

População Residente

Fonte: PORDATA

Última actualização: 2019-09-24

Source: Pordata Portugal.

The questionnaire was carried out through *Google Forms* and it was online for 15 days (from November 17th to 1st of December 2019). The questionnaire has a total of 17 questions, the last three of which were used to identify the respondents (gender, age, and scholarship). The first two were designed to test brand awareness and 12 questions based on Coca-Cola ads (it was necessary to watch four short videos in order to answer the questions) using the Linkert scale to measure the level of satisfaction, connection, and emotion of the respondents regarding the brand,

“Likert’s scale is rooted in the goal of the research. Sometimes, the objective of the research is to understand the opinions/perceptions of participants related to the single latent variable (phenomenon of the “latent” variable is expressed by several items “manifested” in the questionnaire. These mutually exclusive items address a specific dimension of the phenomenon under research and, in cohesion, measure the whole phenomenon)”. (Joshi, 2015).

“During the analysis, the scores of all the items in the questionnaire are combined (sum) to generate a composite score, which logically in total measures the unidimensional characteristic. This instrument is known as the Likert scale” (Joshi, 2015). Instead of doing an individual analysis of each item, Linkert’s scale helps to combine the items using the sum or arithmetic mean (Harpe, 2015).

The original version of Linkert’s scale includes 5 options, one of which is neutral (Linkert,1932). There are also the seven- or ten-point scales, whose ad-

jacent options are less different or gradually different from each other, compared to the 5-point scale, giving the participant the possibility to choose the option he or she considers most accurately,(Joshi, 2015) or the 4-point one which excludes the neutral response.

In this dissertation the use of Linkert’s scale was used to measure the level of customer satisfaction, the level of proximity and trust in relation to the Coca-Cola brand. The scale applied in this study was 5 points in order to include the neutral option and use only two extremes, being: 1 – Totally disagree; 2 – Don’t agree; 3 – Don’t agree, neither disagree; 4 – Agree; 5 – Totally disagree.

4. EMPIRICAL STUDY

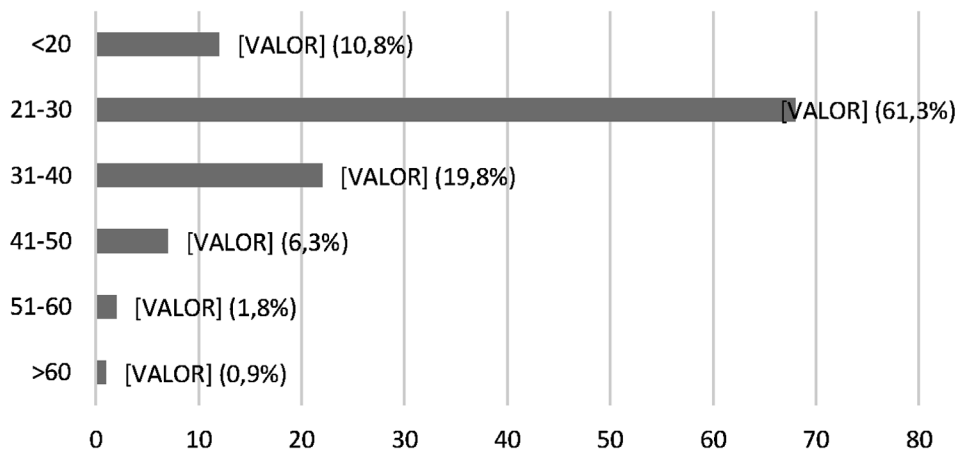
The Coca-Cola brand emerged in 1886 in the United States of America, specifically in Atlanta, upon the curiosity of a pharmacist, Dr. John Pemberton.

Dr. Pemberton wanted to find a different flavor in the soft drink sector that could help in the digestion, as well as give energy. Therefore, he created a flavored syrup and took it to the neighborhood pharmacy. The flavored syrup was mixed with carbonated water and considered “excellent” by those responsible for the experiment.

Since 2009, the “Open Happiness” campaign was launched globally by the brand. “Open Happiness” is an invitation to billions of people around the world to take a “break”, cool off with a Coca-Cola and continue to enjoy one of life’s simple pleasures. This campaign reflects the use of *storytelling*, conveying the main message of “selling happiness” and not the beverage itself.

In the figure below it can be found the main characteristics of the sample about the age:

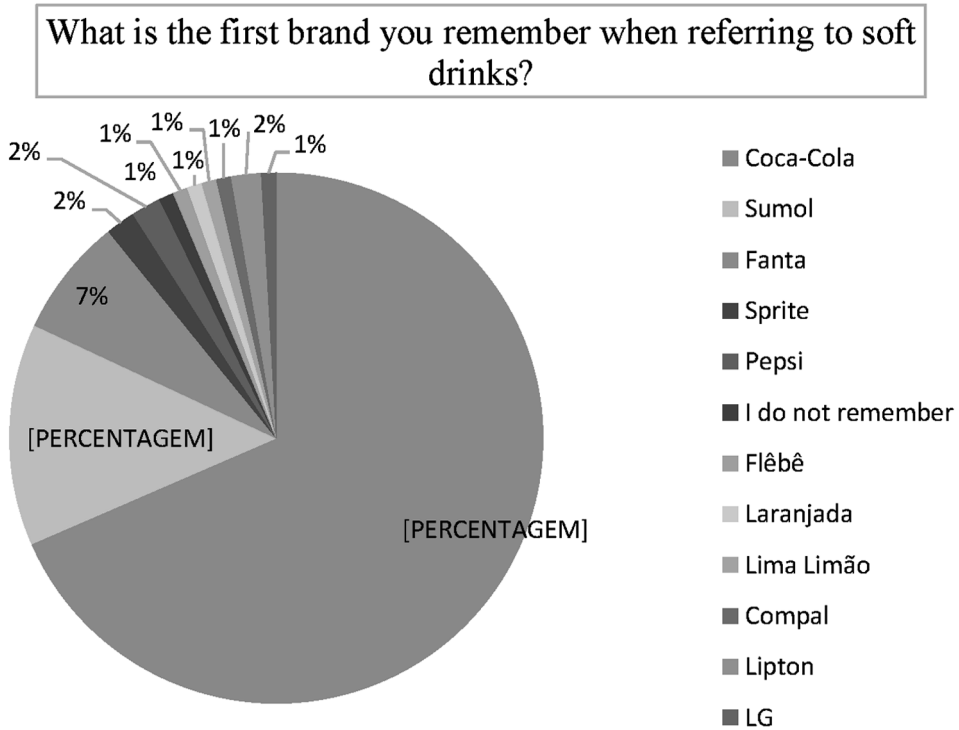
Figure 3. Respondents’ age



Source: Self Elaboration.

The first interrogation of the questionnaire can be found below, from the answers it can be said that Coca-Cola in the perspective of Notoriety of the brand (which is one of the measures from David Aaker to analyze a brand) is at the top of the respondents' minds.

Figure 4. Respondents' top of mind



Source: Self Elaboration.

The data analysis was done through the *SPSS* (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), an advanced statistical analysis software. With the *SPSS* the *Cronbach's Alpha* coefficient of each hypothesis was analysed and the gender response averages were compared.

Cronbach's Alpha emerged in 1951 through an american educational psychologist Lee Joseph Cronbach, "is a measure of consistency demonstrating the level of connectivity between items in a given group, is considered a measure of reliability of scale." (UCLA, 2019).

"When measurements represent various questionnaire/test items, which is the most common application, *Cronbach's Alpha* is referred as a measure of reliability of internal consistency" (Bonnet, 2014).

The reliability (*Cronbach's Alpha*) of the subscale points has a value of 0.795, which means that approximately 80% of the answers are consistent, as can be seen in the table above.

“The alpha coefficient varies in value from 0 to 1 and can be used to describe the reliability of factors extracted from questions with two possible answers and/or questionnaires or scales formatted in several points (rating scale: 1 = bad, 5 = excellent)” (Santos, 1999).

The higher the score, the more reliable the scale generated. Nunnally indicated 0.7 as an acceptable reliability coefficient, being: 0.7 exploratory survey, 0.8 basic survey and 0.9 applied scenarios (Nunnally, 1978).

The SPSS analysis carried out on this dissertation, focusing on the *Alpha of Cronbach* can be verified as following:

H1: Customer involvement: understanding whether customers feel emotionally connected to the brand through the use of storytelling.

Table 1. Hypothesis 1: Case Processing Summary

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	111	100,0
	Excluded ^a	0	,0
	Total	111	100,0

^a Exclusion from the list based on all variable’s procedure.
Source: Self Elaboration – through SPSS.

In the table above, it can be seen that no case was excluded, which means that all 111 responses are included in the analysis.

Table 2. Hypothesis 1: Matrix of correlations between items

Matrix of correlations between items				
	I feel connected with the ad I just watched.	Because of my personal values, I consider this brand important to me.	One of the feelings linked to Coca-Cola is happiness.	The stories created in the ads make me identify more with the brand than the ads of a direct sale like the one from 1994.
I feel connected with the ad I just watched.	1,000	,442	,534	,501
Because of my personal values, I consider this brand important to me.	,442	1,000	,508	,474

cd. Table 2.

Matrix of correlations between items				
	I feel connected with the ad I just watched.	Because of my personal values, I consider this brand important to me.	One of the feelings linked to Coca-Cola is happiness.	The stories created in the ads make me identify more with the brand than the ads of a direct sale like the one from 1994.
One of the feelings linked to Coca-Cola is happiness.	,534	,508	1,000	,516
The stories created in the ads make me identify more with the brand than the ads of a direct sale like the one from 1994.	,501	,474	,516	1,000

Source: Self Elaboration – through SPSS.

Above we can verify that all the values are positive, which means that there is a correlation between the items, implying that they are items used to measure the same category, in this case: customer involvement and satisfaction.

Table 3. Hypothesis 1: Reliability statistics

Reliability statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items	Number of items
,795	,797	4

Source: Self Elaboration – through SPSS.

Based on *Cronbach's Alpha* analysis, Hypothesis 1 is not rejected, therefore storytelling can have a direct impact on customer involvement with the Coca-Cola brand.

Table 4. Hypothesis 1: Report on Gender Comparison Average

		Report			
Gender of the respondents		I feel connected with the ad I just watched.	Because of my personal values, I consider this brand important to me.	One of the feelings linked to Coca-Cola is happiness.	The stories created in the ads make me identify more with the brand than the ads of a direct sale like the one from 1994.
Female	Average	3,83	3,17	4,10	3,95
	N	58	58	58	58
	Deviation Error	1,172	1,378	1,119	1,099
Male	Average	3,68	2,77	3,40	3,51
	N	53	53	53	53
	Deviation Error	,996	1,171	1,149	1,171
Total	Average	3,76	2,98	3,77	3,74
	N	111	111	111	111
	Deviation Error	1,089	1,293	1,183	1,150

Source: Self Elaboration – through SPSS.

Table 4 reflects greater emotional connectivity, under the influence of storytelling, with the Coca-Cola brand by female rather than male. In each item, women have a higher value than men. When adding up the average of female people we get a total of 15.05 and male 13.36 thus presenting a difference of 1.69.

H2: Transparency in the B2C relationship generating more trust between both: which reflects the level of trust the brand conveys to its customers and potential customers.

Table 5. Hypothesis 2: Case Processing Summary

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	111	100,0
	Exclueda ^a	0	,0
	Total	111	100,0

^a Exclusion from the list based on all variable's procedure.

Source: Self Elaboration – through SPSS.

Once again, it can be seen above that no response was excluded.

Table 6. Hypothesis 2: Matrix of correlations between items

Matrix of correlations between items				
	I feel connected with the ad I just watched.	Because of my personal values, I consider this brand important to me.	One of the feelings linked to Coca-Cola is happiness.	The stories created in the ads make me identify more with the brand than the ads of a direct sale like the one from 1994.
I feel connected with the ad I just watched.	1,000	,575	,578	,627
Because of my personal values, I consider this brand important to me.	,575	1,000	,560	,518
One of the feelings linked to Coca-Cola is happiness.	,578	,560	1,000	,574
The stories created in the ads make me identify more with the brand than the ads of a direct sale like the one from 1994.	,627	,518	,574	1,000

Source: Self Elaboration – through SPSS.

The correlation between the items in Hypothesis 2 is also evident, measuring the level of confidence of respondents regarding the Coca-Cola brand.

Table 7. Hypothesis 2: Reliability statistics

Reliability statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items	Number of items
,842	,842	4

Source: Self Elaboration – through SPSS.

The reliability of Hypothesis 2 is superior to that of Hypothesis 1, presenting 84.2% of internal data consistency.

Based on *Cronbach's Alpha* analysis, Hypothesis 2 is not rejected either, so storytelling can have a direct impact on your customers' brand confidence.

Table 8. Hypothesis 2: Report on Gender Comparison Average

		Report			
Gender of the respondents		I feel connected with the ad I just watched.	Because of my personal values, I consider this brand important to me.	One of the feelings linked to Coca-Cola is happiness.	The stories created in the ads make me identify more with the brand than the ads of a direct sale like the one from 1994.
Female	Average	3,62	3,69	3,55	3,69
	N	58	58	58	58
	Deviation Error	1,105	1,096	1,245	1,173
Male	Average	3,28	3,68	3,43	3,51
	N	53	53	53	53
	Deviation Error	1,063	0,956	1,101	1,085
Total	Average	3,46	3,68	3,50	3,60
	N	111	111	111	111
	Deviation Error	1,094	1,027	1,175	1,130

Source: Self Elaboration – through SPSS.

As it can be seen in the table above, under the influence of storytelling, women tend to trust the brand more than men. When adding up the average of female we get a total of 14.55 and male 13.90 thus presenting a difference of 0.69.

H3: Connection between customers and the brand: understanding whether the brand is so engaging that it makes the customer feel part of the brand values and even recommend it to others.

Table 9. Hypothesis 3: Case Processing Summary

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	111	100,0
	Excluded ^a	0	,0
	Total	111	100,0

^a Exclusion from the list based on all variable's procedure.

Source: Self Elaboration – through SPSS.

As in the hypotheses tested previously, the third hypothesis also includes all the answers.

Table 10. Hypothesis 3: Matrix of correlations between items

Matrix of correlations between items				
	I feel connected with the ad I just watched.	Because of my personal values, I consider this brand important to me.	One of the feelings linked to Coca-Cola is happiness.	The stories created in the ads make me identify more with the brand than the ads of a direct sale like the one from 1994.
I feel connected with the ad I just watched.	1,000	,768	,499	,787
Because of my personal values, I consider this brand important to me.	,768	1,000	,575	,821
One of the feelings linked to Coca-Cola is happiness.	,499	,575	1,000	,430
The stories created in the ads make me identify more with the brand than the ads of a direct sale like the one from 1994.	,787	,821	,430	1,000

Source: Self Elaboration – through SPSS.

The correlation between the items in Hypothesis 3 is shown in the table above, measuring the commitment that respondents have to the Coca-Cola brand.

Table 11. Hypothesis 3: Reliability statistics

Reliability statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items	Number of items
,882	,880	4

Source: Self Elaboration – through SPSS.

The reliability of Hypothesis 3 is even closer to 90% compared to the other hypotheses, being 88.2%.

In the same way as Hypotheses 1 and 2, through the *Cronbach's Alpha* analysis, Hypothesis 3 is not rejected, so storytelling can influence customers' commitment to the Coca-Cola brand, leading to greater loyalty.

Table 12. Hypothesis 3: Report on Gender Comparison Average

Gender of the respondents		Report			
		I feel connected with the ad I just watched.	Because of my personal values, I consider this brand important to me.	One of the feelings linked to Coca-Cola is happiness.	The stories created in the ads make me identify more with the brand than the ads of a direct sale like the one from 1994.
Female	Average	3,33	3,34	3,60	3,29
	N	58	58	58	58
	Deviation Error	1,480	1,446	1,363	1,475
Male	Average	3,38	3,06	3,28	3,19
	N	53	53	53	53
	Deviation Error	1,213	1,307	1,215	1,316
Total	Average	3,35	3,21	3,45	3,24
	N	111	111	111	111
	Deviation Error	1,353	1,382	1,299	1,396

Source: Self Elaboration – through SPSS.

Unlike the analyses made previously, at least one item in Hypothesis 3 represents a slightly higher value for males. However, women again have higher overall averages for their commitment to the Coca-Cola brand at the mercy of storytelling. The sum of the averages for women is a total of 13.56 and for men 12.91, having a difference of 0.65.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Through *SPSS* (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), it was concluded that *storytelling* as a bigger impact on females than males. It was also analyzed the fact that it boosts customers' emotional connection to the Coca-Cola brand,

achieves greater trust between customers and the brand, as well as, it increases the connection between customers and the brand to the point of making them recommend the brand to others.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated using *SPSS* to measure the internal consistency of the items of each hypothesis, having concluded that the hypotheses are not rejected, considering the fact that they present a value superior to 0.70, being that the *Alpha of Cronbach* ranges from 0 to 1.

Regarding the limitation of the study it can be mentioned that the questionnaire carried out may not have been answered based on the videos itself as it was requested but based on the impact that Coca-Cola's brand has on the respondents.

In a future study, two different questionnaires could be applied, in which the first one would be straight advertising sell and the second would be based on the use of *storytelling*, to specifically analyze the difference of respondents' answers.

As demonstrated in the study of the present work, the Coca-Cola brand can be considered one of the paradigms in the use of storytelling. In this way, with the present work it is suggested the application of this strategic method of marketing in different companies, whether of long existence or newly created, being able to emphasize the history of the company and the connection with customers.

The use of digital media is also an important point, taking into account that most people, especially Millennials "feed" on digital information, thus providing an opportunity to bring the company's target audience closer, through YouTube, Facebook and other means.

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MARKETING CYFROWY I ROLA *STORYTELLINGU* A LOJALNOŚCI KLIENTA

Streszczenie: Opowiadanie historii, jak sama nazwa wskazuje, polega na opowiadaniu historii. Chodzi jednak głównie o to, aby umieć opowiedzieć historię i zauroczyć słuchacza lub czytelnika. W kontekście marketingu jest to trafna strategia, biorąc pod uwagę, że dąży do identyfikacji konsumenta z produktem i pomaga w tworzeniu empatii między firmą a konsumentem. W ten sposób opowiadanie historii jest częścią strategii marketingowej B2C i ma na celu ustanowienie między nimi ścisłej relacji. W artykule zastosowano tę koncepcję do marketingu marki Coca-Cola, wykorzystując metodologię Case Study, stwierdzając, że

storytelling jest skuteczną strategią emocjonalnego zaangażowania klientów i jest kluczowym narzędziem marketingowym, z którego powinni korzystać małe, średnie i duże firmy, zwiększając lojalność klientów.

Słowa kluczowe: storytelling, lojalność klientów, marketing cyfrowy, komunikacja osobista.

PhD MIGUEL VARELA

ORCID: 0000-0001-8388-1250

ISG, Lisbon, Portugal

D. Aragão

ORCID: 0000-0001-5392-394X