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# STORYTELLING IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL BRAND DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL BRAND CONSTRUCTION IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SYMBOLIC CONSCIENCE

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## **Abstract**

With the development of digital communication, storytelling is gaining increased importance in communication generally and in the construction and development of brands especially – whether it is organization brand or product or personal brand. The experience of telling stories is essential to the human mode of being in the world, due to its mythical, spiritual and religious resources. Using stories in the brand communication causes a symbolic transfer taking place both in terms of attributing personal qualities to an organization and of a symbolic integration of organizational virtues in the personal brand identity construction. An important role pertains to consumer experiences that may contribute own stories to the improvement or consolidation of the image of organization or personal brands. Likewise, one should valorise stories' significance to the individual and to his/her personal development in the personal brand construction process. Regarding the fundamental stories construed by human beings we have stopped to the significance of love and love stories in the personal brand development. They are relevant to the way the story may function as a catalyst of branding and of commercial brand or personal brand communication. Also, storytelling proves its relevance in the perspective of an enlarged rationality, as part of the brand recognition process instrumented by emotions and rational processes in a symbolic conscience, privileging and valorising the significance of the buyer's feelings and of the attachment to the brand chosen from all offers existing on the market.

*Keywords:* spiritual, religious, connotations, digital, communication

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## **1. Importance of storytelling in organizational and personal brand communication**

The story is a presence that we find to be a general communication instrument. The development of social networks and digital communication

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indicates that *storytelling* functions nowadays like a good instrument in media communication, in motivational and leadership discourse, in public relations, publicity, marketing, brand communication, philosophical counselling and in all communication activities. It is a privileged communication instrument because it calls on a deep dimension of the human being that we may connect with the position in relationship to the sacred. Since always we find man within his stories or face-to-face with his stories. This explains the important role of storytelling practices both in personal brand development and in its recognition on the brands market.

Retrospectively, we may note that in time stories may be found in archaic societies' mythical thought as constituents of the grand narratives of traditional societies, as distinctive elements of a spiritual elite, as part of the metamorphoses brought about by rationalization and demythicization in the era of flourishing scientific knowledge, shaped as new mythologies in the postmodern symbolic thought as well as in communication practices in the digital era. In its mythical form, the story would accompany the identification, personal discovery and belonging and celebration of community. Both the individual and the group could benefit from mythical support. This support relation could be instituted by reciting the stories and by ritualizing the stories' content, depending on the practical needs of those involved. The story may be regarded as a place serving for the rest and regeneration of the soul.

A human being's return to the recovery of the story as part of the communication mechanism is attained through personal action as well as professional practices or those related to activities in organizations. We note a dual process: a transfer of human qualities to organizations, and an organizational shaping of the human universe and the organizational integration of the person. Thus, there is a process of shaping the organizational imaginary in the spirit of personal attributes uploaded to an organizational identity. Organizational structures are charged with energies resulting from the motion of components typical of human nature. Organizations are therefore invested with a responsibility that we associate in ethical terms with human responsibility for actions.

We note today that the extrapolation from human behaviour to community behaviour extends both to the level of human-organization relation reconstruction and to the level of the organization conceived as a structure acting as if it had personal features. Theorists emphasized a metaphor process by which organizations are bestowed human attributes [1]. Most evidently, there is a tendency to make the organization a responsible practitioner of values such as care for the public, strengthened honesty, increased responsibility, encouraged practices of respect and trust, etc.

Considering the importance of stories in the image and personal identity construction, we note that counsellors on image and organization identity construction tend to use this means also in organizational communication. There is a constant concern for the construction of the organization's biography based on stories following the model of people's life stories. Increasingly powerful and

widespread is authors' conviction that no organization can afford to avoid introducing such elements in organizational communication. A sustained effort is necessary to note down specific stories that may partake in the communication process of one's own identity. Exposing organizational experiences that might increase trust, empathy or loyalty in certain public categories or consumer groups would be beneficial. Similarly, sharing stories of good professional practice could improve or strengthen a certain image of the organization.

Most often, consumers are encouraged to use the opportunity provided by social networks to share their own experience, to tell the story of places, products, services, people who have enjoyed them or accompanied them in their experiences. Digital histories constitute a distinctive domain that not only use networks as a communication instrument but also are an integrating part of the system brought about by digital communication [2-4]. The story of one's own experiences becomes a constituent of the construction and recognition of product and services value.

Highly visible is the concern with brand construction. Stories become part of the logic of brand construction, whether it is the company brand, product brand or personal brand. There is a widespread belief that certain instruments need be created and set to motion by which stories should become part of a special experience that the brand procures, and that brand communication always carefully maintains. The communicator is the story creator, the one who sets the base for a new opening to cultivating a world symbolic conscience. In this process, we note the existence of at least two beneficial aspects for brand construction. On the one hand there is a strengthening of brand identity and of consumers' expectations. On the other, a new brand dynamic is boosted and is visible in the very process during which the importance of stories for the brand's further development increases.

Consequently, the brand gets its own life by participating in world's life, even when it is about the products that we perceive as brands. In order to understand the way by which this personality transfer from human being to various products occurs, we may remember that Jean Baudrillard would speak about a projection of subjective values onto objects, and their transformation into familiar objects that populate our world as if they were live entities [5]. There is a permanent interference in which we do not know exactly who gives and who receives in this exchange relationship. The subject shapes things, and the symbolic investment it achieves is manifested as a form of reinvesting in its own personal becoming. Something similar appears in the analyses proposed by Klaus Fog, Christian Budtz and Baris Yakaboylu, relevant for the fact that – due to the important role played by brands in our life – we are at a stage in which the stories told by brands, with which they set their identity, are deemed as part of the way we, the consumers, define ourselves as persons. The products as such become part of our way of self-identification, of setting our personal value and positioning within an imaginary social hierarchy. This happens because the brands we grow attached with become a symbol of our expression, and their story becomes a way of telling our own story, constituents of our physical and

spiritual manifestation. In this sense, we should understand the statement according to which branding and storytelling create a very productive alliance, also visible and with positive effects on our wish to communicate what we are [6]. Personal development uses all these elements as support to the personal brand construction.

Studies in communication anthropology and branding practices showcase the importance of stories to the construction of professional group identities. Stories act following a model typical of tribes in traditional societies. It is about the role of stories in founding an organizational culture based on a set of values. Onto this base, desirable behaviour types are built, as well as the organizational imaginary linked to the organization's strengths and weaknesses. Onwards from this point, a process instituting organizational ethics begins at the intersection of rules about what is good and what is bad. Without resorting to a vision supposing a re-enchanting or re-mythologizing of the secular world and man of digital societies, we cannot ignore the analyses indicating that a type of mythological construction is operational both at the organization base and at its top. In close connection with it, harmonious horizontal relations are set, hierarchies are established, also leadership elements, both with the management caste and with informal leaders. All these contribute to a greater coherence of answers about aspirations, self-discovery, purposes and ideals, reputation, which in branding theory function for organizations according to a model operating at the personal level [6, p. 14].

There is dialectic of the relation between person and organization. In this process, each leaves a symbolic mark on the definition and growth of the other. Brand stories are the ones mediating, ensuring transfer and making possible the spiritualizing of those participating in an intended investment into a powerful brand.

A good illustration of stories' role in the relation between the individual and the organizational lies in the conclusions reached by Iulia Grad in her studies, according to which, in the perspective of a symbolic conscience: "The symbolic dimension of organizational communication has a special relevance for the dynamics of the relation between organizational culture and the process of constructing the identity of the individual in a postmodern society, especially in the context of the challenges addressed to the concept of work by a globalized society. Thus, the organizational stories, regardless of their type, act as little narratives that generate symbolic meanings." [7, p. 121] We are here on grounds of a social responsibility theory in which perspective responsibility is construed on the one hand following the model of individual action, while on the other, organizational stories contribute to a clearer delineation of the professional's personal identity and to a better valorising of the personal brand. Actually, it is a known fact that a person's brand development may have very positive effects on the brand of the organization he/she is part of, as much as the organization brand may add new symbolic significance and added value to the market value of a person's brand. In addition to the physical and economic dimensions, the brand also involves development along social and spiritual lines, and in the case of the

personal brand there is also an own self dimension, with a special impact on the relation with the consumer. On each of these dimensions, storytelling practices may contribute both to increasing the degree of exposure, recognition and valorising of the personal brand.

## **2. Storytelling and the personal brand in the perspective of a symbolic conscience**

Storytelling has a special significance in terms of defining human beings. It responds to an intrinsic need of the human being seeking the purpose of personal life and of existence as such. On the one hand, the individual participates in his/her world reality by means of the significance revealed in his/her community stories. On the other hand, the individual self-identifies in the community during a complex process of finding his/her part in significant stories about the actions and the way he/she understands what he/she is and intends to be. The stories are the base of the position in one's own existence and the base of ethical and efficient strategies construction, of conflict solutions, of the response to existential dilemmas and integration in the world around. This inheritance, that man in present societies receives from man of religions cultures, functions in a secular context with the same force of man's inclination towards deciphering the deep significance of existence, surpassing life difficulties and seeking a peaceful existence. Stories have the role of bringing an existential tension with a strong motivational impact and one that positions us comfortably in our own life [6, p. 16].

Both in religious groups and in the ones adopting a life style and a set of choices based on secular values, the story has the transfiguring role leading to options of a spiritual nature. Even in the digital generation, the need for a significant discourse is present so that "the attractiveness of spiritual discourse keeps growing, as its legitimization is established within the main stream" [8]. The presence of the story responds to the need for spirituality which sometimes has a religious connotation, but most often spirituality has for this public a larger cultural sense.

One very interesting assertion made by Klaus Fog, Christian Budtz and Baris Yakaboğlu is that in an economy in which consumer's behaviour is increasingly based on emotions, it seems natural to be interested in stories as an instrument for brand development [6, p. 16]. There is no doubt about the importance of emotional factors in understanding the storytelling, in the strategy if brand construction and communication, in shaping consumers' options or in mobilizing the public that is loyal to the brand [9]. Practically, the use of stories reveals a special capacity to connect with the public, especially when it is about brands felt to contribute greatly to personal image development or when we talk about personal brands. We should be aware that the brand has always an intangible dimension, that the brand implies added value. An additional contribution to a product is provided by a stable preference for it, a buyer's loyalty both to the product and to the organization producing it. Beyond the

effort of an organization to sell a product that should highly meet all needs, the experiences we have and associate with the brand make the brand consolidate or even intensify its power. Thus, we note that “a strong brand is a combination of facts and emotions. We rationalize and legitimize without brains, but we buy with our hearts.” [6] Of course, heart symbolism is a productive one. It has greater power when it is used in the mind-heart pair.

I do not want to diminish the importance of the emotional factor in our choices. However, in the perspective of the story presence in brand development and communication, there is a more important dimension than the emotional one. Without excluding in any way the role of the heart, of emotions, I believe that rational inclination prevails, especially when we deal with personal brands. Here we talk about a complex sense, of rationality, involving mythical type of rationality brought to our life by the presence of the story.

Let us remember that myths always had the role to introduce a new form of rationalization of the inexplicable in human existence. It is true that in this case we should speak about an enlarged rationality in which operational rationality, based on what we generally accept to be Aristotle’s logic, is accompanied by a symbolic rationality, based on significance and human being’s power to create new significance at all levels of existence. When we talk about these two types of rationality, we have in mind the distinction made by Aurel Codoban between operational rationality and significant rationality. If the former is based on logical practices, the latter may be exemplified by the discursive texture of metaphor and symbol. In this sense it is important that with stories something similar to the philosophical discourse happens. Some distancing from the logic typical of Science and rationality practiced by it in the name of an orientation towards the world of metaphor, significance, internal logic typical of the symbol world. Significance is not perceived with one’s heart, even if we do not intend to subject significance to concepts. Probably in this case the idea of uniting the mind with the heart is a lucrative metaphor. We may suggest in this way the need to use for a work instrument a type of enlarged rationality that should include both the operational rationality (based on choices pertaining to logic) and symbolic rationality (based on choices in significance order, hidden meaning, yet unrevealed). Such an endeavour enables the philosopher to submit that the philosophical discourse (that he places under the sign of a literary genre discourse) is the locus par excellence of the dialogue between logic and significance, which means that dialog is the discursive practice most fit for philosophy [10]. The dialog and the concentrated narrative account are privileged instruments of the story. The story, even when present as a simple narrative account, always involves a dialogical state, contains in itself the opening to the dialog as an open spiritual attitude.

Actually, the fact that our choice or attachment to brands is more than a simple emotional reaction or an emotion-based choice is to be found in the study by Klaus Fog, Christian Budtz and Baris Yakaboylu. When they state that the product needs to be dressed in a significant story, capable to provide a special experience to the consumer and create links with him/her, they connect the entire

experience with the idea of living a fully significant life, according to value communication and illustration of concerns for attaining deep meanings that reveal themselves along at least two levels: emotions and values. One needs to add a logic of significance generated by a coherent system made fertile by symbolic thought and rationality. Because it is based on such symbolic rationality, branding should have “a strong brand builds on clearly defined values, while a good story communicates those values in a language easily understood by all of us. A strong brand exists based on its emotional ties to the consumer or employee, while a good story speaks to our emotions and bonds people together.” [6, p. 21] But, irrespective of the particular situation that the story tells, the story has the power to strengthen a brand through the significance attributed by the brand constructor and by the brand consumer. It is not a matter of emotions and feelings only, but rather of setting to motion a logic of symbolic becoming in the relationship with a product, be it a commercial brand or a personal brand.

The brand, whether it is a product, a company or a person, has an intangible dimension that reconstructs itself continuously, like symbolic entities, while we already know that the symbol carries “beyond the significance of its sign, an invisible sign. And this hidden meaning, that man adds to the first meaning of the sign-object, constitutes the symbolic operation.” [11] This symbolic operation does not pertain to the world of emotions, but to a mechanism of man’s symbolic conscience. It must be treated as an important element that interferes not so much in the heart’s guidance but rather in the mind’s games.

At the same time, we should not exclude the representations generated by reality perception through senses. The story calls on this type of representations. Their importance may be noted in the virtual realities constructors’ interest to combine symbolic conscience with senses perception and with the representations at their foundation. We note that “Our sense of physical reality is a construction derived from the symbolic, geometric and dynamic information directly presented to our senses. Sensory simulation is thus at the heart of virtual reality technology.” [12, p. 21] Relevant in this sense is not only the debate on brand reception value, but also the metamorphoses undergone by the elements of the personal brand construction. The way in which the world of the senses shifts from an emotional register to the ontological dimension becomes very important in the postmodern world. Positing the body at the core of concerns with personal development tells a lot about the changes at the level of personal brand conception. It is no longer just the physical base of the emotional world but also the central axis around which the whole image of the personal brand is configured, similarly to what happens in the ontology of the sacred. The virtual reality technology has such a direct impact on the technological and virtual integration of the human body and on the development of ‘self-technologies’ visible in the stories about human becoming in the digital world [13].

As in the case of myths, stories bring images full of significance. Even if we cannot conceptualize and label them, they do are not subject only to emotional reception but also reveal themselves to symbolic rationality, are transfigured as result of spiritual interferences even when set to motion by man in secular societies [14].

### **3. Storytelling as an instrument of self-discovery and personal development**

We cannot live without stories because man has a thirst for being. In the absence of stories, we would become so estranged from being that we would no longer bear our positioning in existence. Man is a story being. Stories are vital, they are a necessity as important as the need for food or the need to be loved. They feed us with their magic and can cause powerful experiences, even similar in intensity to a mystical joy. Ever since the traditional societies, one said that such beatitude is so powerful that it could not be experienced as a permanent state. For this reason, we need to understand that there is a technique and an art of storytelling with clear rules about when, what, how and to whom the story may be told.

From such a perspective we discern at least three meanings of storytelling. A first one is related to the experience of storytelling, which involves a great intensity of the narrative force at play. It brings along a powerful energy acting predominantly at the level of sensitivity and symbolic conscience. It is an experience that may be associated with the feelings connected with the sacred and with the full significance at this level [15]. Secondly, the meaning of storytelling is the one we may categorize as metaphysical. It aims for high generalization and abstractization. It is about the philosophical ways by which we tell the story of man, his nature, his human condition, his way of being in the world. Man shifts from varied registers, from the conditioning caused by the daily existence to the meaning of life and human existence and the understanding of the ultimate reality. Man as story has a rapport this time with the narrative account of existence per se and the ultimate reality [16]. A third meaning lies in the story of one's own life that reflects a certain life philosophy. It privileges a softer meaning of the story, one that brings in a minimal experience of lower intensity but of great impact upon personal options and decisions, upon the way one relates to the others and guides one's actions. It is built according to a series of stories, interconnected or not, that get substance from one's self, being integrated in a mode of situating and acting in the world according to an appropriated existential model. It belongs to a logic of the fragmentary, of weak thought, minimal ethics and contextual significance. This way, the postmodern thought spirit remains present in the opening regime of the digital era. The man of the new century sets to motion this very type of storytelling. The virtual space encourages the facile and fragmentary style and makes it function as an existential style. Firstly, it is the fact that everyone can become the creator of one's own stories, based on which one can build the identity, select values or integrate a joint story with the other. Secondly, digital



era man has the nostalgia of participating in a common significance ensuring integration in a unique reality, a result of sharing a network of plural significance sources.

Even when we talk about storytelling, we tend to believe that today's image civilization has replaced word civilization. Nevertheless, the two complex structures of communications are as live and interdependent in traditional societies and in the digital era. There are contexts in which we privilege the word, others in which the image prevails. The presence of stories as a significant structure of community life shows that both the word and the image are important to the man of traditional societies. There is no contradiction between word and image. The two have coexisted in time and have gained the highest expression in the greatest theophany of all, Jesus Christ, in whom word and image overlap, internalizing each other [17]. In the religious register, one of the most powerful representations that combines image and word as expressing the primordial creation, is the representation of light. It is understood as a knowledge form in utmost spiritual situations and as a metaphor of experiencing storytelling about purity, perfection and human being illumination in total communion with the sacred: "The aspiration of the human soul to light and knowledge proves the existence of transcendental spirituality and helplessness towards the total subjugation of the materiality of creation. This aspiration can be fulfilled by entering into communion with a personal God." [18, p. 80]

Also, there is no incompatibility between digital era man's preference for the image and the fact that storytelling is based on word expression. Images are plasticized forms of the word, materialized forms of the world in which the word can take shelter. Authors like Mircea Eliade [19] or Ninian Smart [20] can help us understand that images may fulfil myth's function in traditional mentality. It is not difficult to note together with Michel Meslin that to the virtual reality man, "more than words and more than writing, the image takes hold of man's space and time; it defies history because it is, for everyone and all ages, an immediate global perception of the world. ... Like myth, the image mediates between man and the world, and between man and his most profound ego." [11, p. 268]

As a matter of fact, we recognize with Midge Frazel that the importance of storytelling is increasing in virtual reality, stories bring along multiple elements contributing to a complex construction: "A digital story may have a narration overlay and sometimes a music background; it may combine, in any number of ways, images, audio, and video to tell a story or to make a factual presentation. In many cases, sound, music, and images surround the written or narrated content." [21] Irrespective of its expression form, the story involves a self-discovery that automatically triggers the meanings it produces. These are founded in terms of authenticity on the personal brand. We may see that even in the posthumanist theories [22, 23], that speak about surpassing man, the discourse relevance (even if it is deconstructing) is tied to the problem of rethinking man and his regeneration capacities in the perspective of a symbolic conscience.

#### **4. Storytelling experience as a disclosure of the internal world of personal brand**

Therefore, it is important that in addition to alternative stories about man we should remain aware of the fact that man's story is the story of a wonderful being, born not only in the best world possible, as Leibniz tells us [24], but also in the world of all possibilities, as dreamers suggest [25]. The story of this thinking being, posited between reason and dreams, speaks about the privilege of a unique being, to whom love was given as a mode of rationalizing existence. Love – received as a gift of one's life and as a heritage to be left to those in the future – makes the narrative thread of personal history and of continuity in the tapestry made by the other lives. Love does not have anything miraculous. It is the foundation of what appears natural, human and daily. Love becomes mysterious only when, in the story of one's life, the human being tried to associate love with the sacred, with a gift that has in itself both the natural and the supernatural, with a mode of being liked not only by people but also by God. This is how, in man's story, the idea appeared that the highest ideal of human life should be to love at least for one day like you would love with God's love, described in terms of maximum intensity and inexhaustibility. To love the others with a love similar to the one we imagine to be God's love – only this is the mystery of love that lets itself be grasped by the story of man, like all men.

This man like all men is targeted by brand theorists when they put at the individual level the resources to build a personal brand [26, 27]. Narrative structures like the ones set to motion by person marketization, personal image construction in communication, motivational, personal development and leadership discourses, each contributes to a puzzle representing man's postmodern history. Of all the stories told by man, yesterday and today, the most complex is the story of love. It is always associated with truth, authenticity, beauty, happiness or good life. To some mystical, to others magical, love should be seen as divine potion in which we partake with the others. Love is always something that involves the mere presence of the others. It helps us escape illusion, position ourselves in the reality of life in which we see ourselves as we are in relationship to the ones we love or could love. This setting in the sphere of love is privileged in the construction of a successful personal brand. For the present, human being has invented another better growing resource than the gift of love, conceived as a call to action and dialog in light of a Transcendence perceived as an endless source of love. The finite being is given this endless source as a desire for self-transcendence in authentic relations with the alterity. People's closeness is based, first of all, on such a sincere, impassionate but enthusiastic attitude in dialog with the others and about the others. Sometimes we forget that love also targets the way we include the others in the conversation, not only the way in which we choose our words when we are face-to-face. Man in the western world is seen as a person precisely due this role, which does not suppose wearing a mask but rather cultivating a face whose configuration is fit for love. The image of love is the same as the position in

love's truth. For this reason, one insists that the human being's personal manifestation supposes a union of the mind with the heart, of truth with love. This is where any discussion about man and man's endless capacity to love should start.

I believe that illustrative for the importance of love stories in personal brand development is the presence of love's imaginary in advertising creations focused on various types of products and services: mobile phones, digital cameras, juices, chewing gum, travels, etc. We can hold here Kevin Roberts' statement: „So long as an entity continues to inspire love, it remains invulnerable to attacks by price, quality, feature, tech, range, and the entire brand arsenal” [28, p. 370]. We like to live or re-live love stories. We perceive love story as a special experience in which people are not alone, do not face loneliness and do not carry the burden of defeat. We drift away with it until we take it for our own life or at least for a significant chapter of our own life. A story that cannot be assimilated to a personal experience appears to belong to a ghost-like existence similar to the shadows in the hidden worlds of ancient Greek worlds or with the shadows lacking in happiness at the Yellow springs of the ancient Chinese. The love story is to digital era man by excellence the story, as it is about a presence, about abandoning estrangement, escaping external life's constraints, a sacrifice perceived as an internal purge, an intersubjective connection in which the virtual becomes part of reality as such.

Whether we give love a metaphysical significance or we deem it a hermeneutical practice [29] or existential art [30], love is the foundation of symbolic behaviour that we associate to the idea of transcendence. Thus, although symbols are important in their significance, in the perspective of love stories, “symbol is a given of the human integral conscience” [31] which provides content to communication and the power of its revelation.

Having such a symbolic conscience at base, both in real world and in virtual world, love is hard to include in a unique concept. It should pertain to a horizon opening while it closes. Love includes intimacy and disclosure, bringing to one's self and dissipating among the others. It is an inclusion of the specific and of the abstract, of the finite and infinite, of losing in the other and of finding oneself. Love is a perpetual reconfirmation of a relational existence, of the communication situation understood as endless transcendence – detectable by the special instruments of total being engagement. Only a total engagement positions us in the sphere of love.

In the personal construction, the discourse on love is often associated to that of happiness. Among others, happiness is a reflexive state of great complexity. Happiness is linked to the way in which you see yourself in the mirror of your values and note that they fit so well with what you are and wish to be. Happiness is not a simple feeling. It is an attitude of gratitude for what is happening to you. To be grateful for what has already found a place in your life is an attitude placing you at an opening in which you sense a feeling of endless freedom. Given this freedom, there is the joy of responsibility, of being grateful for what you have accomplished, for what you have received and especially for

what you can share with the others. Happiness cannot be lived alone. It is in its nature to create a communion state [32]. It increases in intensity the more we share it with various instances that we valorise with gratitude, recognition, reciprocity and content for being together.

It is important to note the high level in which communication relation is involved in storytelling. The exchange supposed here may be seen in the educational and constructing role of storytelling. The idea promoted by Juan Jesús Zaro and Sagrario Salaberri: “Story telling is an activity which requires a certain level of interaction between the storyteller and the audience and between the individual listeners. The storyteller can obtain the collaboration of the audience at several points during the story.” [33] The highest form of cultivating this collaborative attitude is communication and communion. Love is the one giving expression to communication and instituting communion as its utmost form.

In the digital world, which experiences an extraordinary self-promotion, there is consensus about the fact that self-storytelling has a special impact on imposing a personal brand [34]. However, the mythical mixture of the storytelling makes sharing personal experiences have a beneficial effect upon both the public consumer and for the mobilization of the personality presented in a brand available on the market. The storytelling experience may provide a very good background for the reconstruction of the individual’s internal life and for strengthening the relational structure or creating the framework for the joint world of the brand and of the consumer. The storytelling that calls on love stories has an important role in sustaining a special relation between the brand and the consumer, even when we are in the presence of postmodern versions of eros practices.

All the more, we should understand that the relational universe of the story is beneficial for personal development, relational strengthening, personal transformation and existential repositioning. All these may contribute to the creation, growth and recognition of values on the personal brands market.

## **5. In lieu of conclusions**

Although the practical value of using stories in brand development, in commercial communication, in strategies for long term audience and public fidelity is recognized [35], there are also according to whom storytelling cannot be used as an academic concept and should not be subject of research by brand communication professionals [36].

From such a critical perspective, one of the big potential obstacles in theorizing storytelling could be the difficulty to determine the most adequate instruments, rules, codes, language games, rhetoric figures, symbolic structures with the capacity to guide the way in which brand stories may be used. As a supporter of using storytelling in brand construction, I believe that the difficulty results from the complex relationship brought along by the story or the relation that the brand construction may create or maintain between brand, seller and

consumer [37-39]. It is obvious that (when faced with such difficulties) a reflexive initiative associated to the brand is beneficial both for brand understanding, and for the capacity to practice adequate stories in the branding activity.

Considering that the storytelling is a natural behaviour, present in the culture of humanity, positioning in the centre of the story is available to every human being. Anyhow, we are the authors of a plurality of stories that have been part of our own life. The narrative dimension is part of the symbolic condition of the brand we counsel to keep such personal step; the situation is similar to the one present in branding in general.

Irrespective of the way in which theorists perceive storytelling, we have to realize that the storytelling art supposes cultivating the polysemy typical of mythical thought. Any story needs to be construed so that, beyond of the standard version, it should be adapted by the sale intermediates to the consumers – who have different cultural, genre, age or other signs visible elements or data. It is often necessary that to add a symbolic value of the brand we are displaying, based on cultural context in which we propose and cultivate the exchange ties, in which the product or the person are employed [40, 41]. Whether it is about the commercial brand or the personal brand, a mediating process intervenes, as achieved by instances that the person managing the brand can control only partially. Stories about the brand should enable some intervention, without estranging the general framework of the story in its initial intentions.

Special experiences brought about by the story in brand communication are thanks to the significance that enriches the personal brand. This way, the brand's intangible dimension may be received and valorised by the consumer thanks to the symbolic mechanisms it triggers. The communicator is the creator of a story that facilitates integrating the consumer in an experience based on fundamental structures of the cultural and personal universe. Stories represent a logic of branding construction – whether it is about the organizational brand, the product brand or the personal brand – because they guide man to seek authenticity, open him for self-quest, feed the need to participate in values, provide the possibility to respond to what is significant in the personal, community and spiritual experience. Through the intensity of the narrative force, storytelling mobilizes a subtle energy that acts primarily at the level of sensitivity, symbolic conscience and existential dimensions of the physical, social, personal and spiritual world. Such power set to play in communication strategies is beneficial both to the brand construction in general and especially to the development of personal brands.

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