

*Research Paper***Creative strategy and storytelling in advertising: conceptual systematization and empirical analysis of Brazilian restaurant brands***Submitted in 5, November 2021**Accepted in 10, December 2021**Evaluated by a double-blind review system*

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** Creativity plays a key role in marketing communication and especially in advertising. In this context, this research intends, on the one hand, to systematize the application of creative strategy and storytelling in advertising, as technical procedures that can guide the work of communication professionals. On the other hand, it intends to present an empirical application of these concepts through a content analysis of campaigns of restaurant brands in Brazil.

**Methodology:** The first objective was answered through a literature review that configured an academic foundation for these concepts. The methodological approach applied in the empirical part involved a content analysis of television advertising of fast-food brands in Brazil focused on the creative and narrative components of the messages.

**Findings:** We found that most advertisements focus their approach on only one product, highlighting its features and advantages. The main message and the unique selling proposition are often based on price and novelty. The most used creative format is the narrative one, confirming that storytelling has been a creative focus of brands in recent years.

**Originality/Value:** The systematization of the advertising creative method is a contribution for professionals as a procedural orientation, and for the teaching of advertising as a roadmap for creative activity. The empirical work, operationalizing the concepts of creative strategy and storytelling, contributes to overcoming the scarcity of studies on this subject, and sheds light on the activity of brands in the field of advertising.

**Keywords:** Advertising, Creative Strategy, Storytelling, Brands, Restaurants, Marketing, Communication.

**1. Introduction**

In a market increasingly filled with products and brands, marketing communication becomes essential to the pursuit of business objectives. Advertising, in its offline and online aspects, is one of the areas of marketing communication that can contribute the

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most to brand building, due to its persuasive character and its capacity of involvement (González Oñate et al., 2019).

In this context, advertising creativity plays a key role, both in the process of constructing the message itself and in the impact, it can have on consumers (Cardoso, 2011).

The importance of advertising creativity is particularly important at a time when products and brands find it difficult to distinguish themselves from their competitors, at least from the consumers' perspective, transferring to communication the responsibility to formally compensate for this lack of differentiation (Tsai, 2020).

At the same time, consumers are increasingly informed, demanding, and equipped with resources that allow them to dismantle, decode, and sometimes reject advertising messages aimed at them (González Oñate et al., 2019).

Advertising creation goes far beyond the momentary inspiration of its authors, requiring a strategic and creative process, reinforced with techniques that allow a more effective approach to the consumer. It is within this context that it is important to elaborate a creative advertising strategy, which characterizes the product to be advertised, the main message to be transmitted, and a creative format that involves this content. Advertising creative strategy is a tool that has been addressed in both academic (Cardoso, 2011) and professional contexts (Gunderson, 2020).

It is also important to mention storytelling as one of the creative formats that can be used in advertising. In general, storytelling is an approach that has involved companies, consultants, and communication agencies, either in the development of strategies for brands or in the development of studies that allow a deeper knowledge about storytelling and its effects on the consumer. Several surveys conducted in the business context have found that storytelling is a strongly used approach to brand communication (AESOP, 2017; Llorente & Cuenca, 2017). In the academic context, several studies have found that the use of storytelling can have positive effects on communication and consumer behavior, particularly regarding awareness of the advertisement, perception of product quality, attitude towards advertising, and purchase intention (Zatwarnicka-Madura & Nowacki, 2018).

Thus, this work has two main objectives. On the one hand, it intends to systematize the application of creative strategy and storytelling to advertising, as technical procedures that can guide the work of communication professionals. On the other hand, it intends to present an empirical application of these concepts through a content analysis of brand campaigns in the restaurant sector in Brazil.

The use of storytelling in marketing communication, and more specifically around restaurants in the broad sense, provides evidence of an increase in the number of consumers, partnerships, and media coverage (Mossberg & Eide, 2017). Thus, the profusion of brands in competitive markets has led to the development of communication approaches that go beyond the mere argumentation around product attributes. In this scenario, brands feel the need to elaborate advertising campaigns in a more emotional and narrative tone, getting closer to the consumer through creative strategy and storytelling. In fact, in the area of fast-food restaurants, there is evidence of the relationship between online content advertising and building and maintaining strong brand equity (Hanaysha, 2016).

The choice of the territorial context for the application of the empirical work is because Brazil is the country that invests the most in fast-food in South America, surpassed only, in 2014, by the United States, China, and Japan (Diário Verde, 2016). The demand for

this type of product mirrors a change Brazil is going through in its eating habits and consumption places, where a diet based on grains, tubers, fruits, vegetables, beans, and rice has been replaced by the growing consumption of industrialized products and meals away from home, especially in places that offer quick meals (Gomes & Valente, 2019).

Regarding the methodological approach, this study analyzes television advertising of fast-food brands in Brazil, focusing on the creative and narrative components of the messages. Specifically, we intend to examine three strategic elements: the advertised product, the conveyed message and the format used, and three narrative elements: the characters, the scenarios, and the action. Using content analysis as a method, 50 television ads from ten fast-food brands operating in the Brazilian territory were observed for about five years.

Advertising content analysis as a methodological approach, allows us to understand the goals, the argumentation, and the creative expression chosen by advertisers to communicate their brands. On the one hand, it allows the identification of trends and a critical view of how a particular sector develops its communication. On the other hand, the results obtained offer elements for reflection that allow an increase in the effectiveness of future campaigns (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2002).

The relevance and contribution of this study make sense both in its conceptual and empirical components. At the conceptual level, it is considered that the systematization of the advertising creative method can be useful at the professional level as a procedural orientation and as theoretical support for marketing practice. Additionally, this organization may be useful in the context of advertising education by demarcating the paths for strategic and creative activity, a roadmap that may be important for future professionals in the sector.

The empirical component may provide a pertinent contribution to the academic universe, in a thematic area where scientific research is scarce. In a careful review of the last few years, the studies that analyze this theme with an empirical application supported by content analysis are not frequent (Noguero et al., 2018; González Oñate et al., 2019; Maatota et al., 2019).

As for the structure, this work begins by addressing the concepts of advertising creative strategy and storytelling and its importance in advertising creation. In a second part, a framing of the methodology used, and the results obtained in the analysis of the campaigns selected for the sample is made. It ends with some reflections on the importance of these techniques for the work of professionals and a set of suggestions for future research in this area.

## **2. Advertising creative strategy and storytelling**

### *2.1. Conceptualization of the creative strategy*

Creativity as the core of advertising communication and as an essential factor in its effectiveness has been advocated by several authors (Lee & Hong, 2016; Baack et al., 2016; Sameti & Khalili, 2017). And in this sense, to achieve the desired results, advertising must be structured based on a creative strategy (Nader et al., 2021).

In terms of its content advertising creativity involves messages that are innovative, distinctive, and meaningful to consumers (Shen et al., 2021) and that often exploit an indirect approach to the products being presented (Simola et al., 2020). Some of the key dimensions of advertising creativity, and which must be contained in the messages themselves, are novelty, significance, distinctiveness, and relevance (Nader et al., 2021).

In terms of effects, advertising creativity has, in the first place, an important role in drawing attention (Shen et al., 2020), seeking to counteract barriers to consumer perception and differentiation from the competition (Nader et al., 2021). Secondly, it has a positive impact on the processing of the message in the attitude towards the advertisements, and the attitude towards the brand (Baack et al., 2016; Sameti & Khalili, 2017). Third, it can influence consumer response, namely on purchase intention (Nader et al., 2021). Finally, and as a long-term result, advertising creativity facilitates the memorization of the message thus contributing to the effectiveness of advertising itself (Sameti & Khalili, 2017; Shen et al., 2020).

The construction of the advertising message follows a strategic and creative process that comprises a set of components. This process involves identifying the type of product to be advertised, defining a message strategy, and identifying a format (Cardoso, 2011).

The product advertised in the advertisement results directly from the strategy previously defined, seeking to achieve the marketing objectives of the brand (Chang, 2007). The advertisement informs about the characteristics of the product, the price, or its form of use showing that it meets the expectations and needs of the consumer (Molina, 2019). In general, advertising tends to simplify the message, so each campaign or advertisement concentrates its argument around a single product or service (Rosa, 2015).

The core message is the central selling point presented in the advertisement. Often, this component is associated with the concept of Unique Selling Proposition (USP): the feature or benefit offered by the product that ideally allows it to distinguish itself from competitors (Olajidetalabi et al., 2012; Wang & Praet, 2013).

The main message coincides with the content that is intended to be conveyed in the campaign and is strongly conditioned by the audience profile to which it is addressed (Molina, 2019). These benefits can be functional or emotional depending on the characteristics of the product and the strategy that is intended to be implemented (Molina, 2019).

In the context of the main message, we find essentially rational or fundamentally emotional approaches, in their emphasis on the product or brand (González Oñate, et al., 2019). Over the last decades, several authors have systematized the "advertising appeals" subdividing them into more rational approaches such as product characteristics, performance, and emotional approaches such as pleasure, protection, or audacity (Akbari, 2015).

The creative format describes the narrative structure or the overall scheme of the advertisement. Thus, the advertising message can be presented in several formats: scenes from everyday life, musical, celebrity endorsement, product presentation, among others (Anurekha, 2015). In the context of creative formats, features such as "problem-solution", "demonstration", "testimonials", "humor" or "narrative" can also be included (Molina, 2019).

**Table 1. Essential concepts related to creative advertising strategy**

Concept	Definition	Authors
Concept of creative strategy	The construction of the advertising message follows a strategic and creative process that comprises a set of components: advertised product, main message, and creative format.	Cardoso (2011)
Product	Advertising informs about the product's features, price, or form of use by demonstrating that it meets the consumer's	Molina (2019)

	expectations and needs. Alternatively, or complementarily, the advertisement can build a visual or narrative environment to frame that same product.	
Main message	The main message coincides with the content that is intended to be conveyed in the campaign and is strongly conditioned by the profile of the audience to which it is directed. These benefits can be functional or emotional, depending on the characteristics of the product and the strategy to be implemented.	Molina (2019)
Creative format	The advertising message can be presented in several formats: problem-solution, demonstration, scenes from everyday life, musical, testimonials, celebrity endorsement, humor, or narrative.	Anurekha, (2015); Molina, (2019)

*2.2. Conceptualization of storytelling*

Storytelling can be a creative format used in the context of advertising creative strategy. The advertising message can take a rational approach by presenting functional data and benefits about the product. But, alternatively, an essentially emotional approach can be chosen, structured around a narrative, which is closer to the receiver (Noguero et al., 2018).

Overall, stories are important in people's lives because they generally use stories to frame their experiences (Tsai, 2020). In fact, human beings tend to store information in the form of stories making it easier to remember them (Kang et al., 2019). The storytelling used in an advertisement can appear in the form of an everyday situation or as a fictional situation, emphasizing the product, the consumer, or the brand image (Dhote & Kumar, 2019).

In addition to these elements, the use of narrative can involve the integration of information into real-life or fantasy stories, allowing people to understand and internalize the messages in an emotional environment (Znanewitz & Gilch, 2016). Storytelling can then be defined as communication structured around a sequence of events, using human or animal characters, with their personality and displaying emotions (Green et al., 2015). Currently, this approach is used as a strategic communication tool, allowing brands to structure their identity, build a positive image, and distinguish themselves from the competition in a more emotional format (Zatwarnicka-Madura & Nowacki, 2018).

The use of storytelling has several advantages, and perhaps one of the most important is that it draws attention to the consumer (Zambrano, 2018; Dhote & Kumar, 2019). This approach also has several effects on the consumer namely generating a positive and differentiated image of the brand or product (Dhote & Kumar, 2019; Maatota et al., 2019) as well as building a long-term image (Tsai, 2020).

In operational terms, the use of storytelling allows a search for differentiation from competitors with a format that can be applied to various media and communication channels (Zambrano, 2018).

Applied to brand communication, storytelling can involve several elements such as the message, conflict, characters, plot, and setting (Fog et al., 2001; Saviolo, 2016) and comprise several parts, such as exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and outcome (Quesenberry & Coolsen, 2014). However, since advertising generally involves messages of short duration and immediate perception, these elements can be adapted and simplified to the content that the brand wants to convey to the consumer.



Characters in advertisements are an important narrative component (Espinar-Ruiz & González-Díaz, 2012). These participants may represent the consumer at the time of purchase or use of the product, technicians, and professionals related to the product, or public figures endorsing the product. In brand storytelling, the characters, which can take the form of brand archetypes, are the protagonists of the story and allow the transmission of its values and benefits (Maatota et al., 2019). A frequent strategy in the construction of characters is the use of archetypes, a set of behavioral patterns associated with roles represented in a story. These figures embody characteristics that manifest themselves through values, feelings, and physical traits and can be used in the narrative around the brand (Cardoso, 2018).

Scenarios constitute the spaces where the ad takes place (Downing & Mujic, 2015). They can describe the area where the product is sold, the place of consumption, environments that frame the product, or visual references that highlight its advantages (Anurekha, 2015).

Action is an essential element of storytelling. It can be presented in its natural chronological order, or it can even be represented indirectly by images (Moraru, 2011; Oyedele & Minor, 2012). Action is often the framework for product presentation and interaction between the consumer and the brand. Action can be related to the flow of the story through which recipients can best make a connection with the brand that is presented in advertisements (Dhote & Kumar, 2019).

**Table 2. Essential concepts related to storytelling**

Concept	Definition	Authors
Concept of storytelling	Storytelling can be a creative format used in the context of advertising creative strategy. The storytelling used in an advertisement can appear in the form of an everyday situation or as a fictional situation, emphasizing the product, the consumer, or the brand image.	Cardoso (2011); Dhote & Kumar, (2019)
Characters	The characters in advertisements may represent the consumer, technicians, and professionals related to the product, or public figures endorsing the product. In brand storytelling, the characters, which can take the form of brand archetypes, are the protagonists of the story and allow the transmission of its values and benefits.	Espinar-Ruiz & González-Díaz, (2012); Maatota <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Scenarios	Scenarios are the spaces where the advertisement takes place. They can describe the product's sales area, the place of consumption, environments that frame the product, or visual references that highlight its advantages.	Downing & Mujic (2015); Anurekha (2015)
Action	Action can be related to the flow of the story through which recipients are better able to make a connection with the brand that is presented in the advertisements.	Dhote & Kumar (2019)

### 3. Objectives and research method

Supported by the importance of advertising as a marketing communication tool, and the relevance of creative strategy and storytelling in its structuring, this study analyzes television advertisements of fast-food brands in Brazil. Consequently, it intends to examine three components of the creative strategy, such as the advertised product, the main message, the creative format used. Furthermore, it aims to analyze three components of storytelling, namely the characters, the scenarios, and the action.

The contextualization of this study in Brazilian territory is justified for two orders of reasons. Firstly, the consumption of fast-food in Brazil is very relevant: in 2014 this was the sixth country that most consumed fast-food, specifically by money spent in Euros per inhabitant (Diário Verde, 2016). A Consumer Panel conducted by the research firm Opinion Box in October 2019 with 1.998 internet users from all regions of Brazil found that 44% of the sample frequented fast-food chains at least once every 15 days and that 50% spent at least R\$50 (about 10.7€) per month on such meals (D'Angelo, 2019). In terms of economic importance, the fast-food market in Brazil currently moves R\$84 billion (Hirai, 2019).

Secondly, this is a sector which is very close to the consumer, not only at the level of products but also of brands and advertising. According to the Opinion Box Consumer Panel, the presence of these brands in the mind of the Brazilian consumer is quite solidified, with a strong recall of the brand and advertising, with a strong emotional attachment, and a clear purchase intention (Mariotti, 2019).

The methodological approach used was content analysis, a research methodology oriented towards the observation and interpretation of communication content through a systematic classification process (Cardoso & Fonseca, 2016). This method allows the objective description of the communication content enabling the use of valid explanatory variables, quantitative verification of the data, and a conclusive inference and interpretation (Amado, 2000; Bardin, 2011).

Content analysis of advertising with a quantitative approach has focused on different advertising media. For example, (Segev et al., 2016) conducted a content analysis of magazine advertisements focusing on the argument around ecology and its creative execution. In turn, Srivastava et al. (2016) analyzed the presence of nostalgic advertising on Indian television and its creative execution, namely the presence of humor and emotional content.

In the last decade, several studies have focused their analysis on digital channels. For example, Okoro and Epepe (2015) analyzed the frequency, prominence, and magnitude of small business ads positioned on Facebook and Google. More recently (Mishra & Kalia, 2017) examined online advertisements positioned on websites, focusing their analysis on informational and creative content.

The methodological approach of content analysis comprises a set of procedures including: defining the content to be analyzed, selecting units for coding and systematic sampling, identifying unambiguous categories, developing a coding scheme, identifying occurrences and quantifying them in terms of count (Parikh, 2016).

In pursuing these steps, and following the procedures proposed by several authors regarding the content analysis method (Bardin, 2011; Câmara, 2012; Krippendorff, 2013) and after defining the objectives, the process began with a pre-analysis of the entire study corpus. In this initial phase, the categories of analysis were adjusted, and a coding grid was built. Subsequently, the categories, subcategories, and their respective scope were adapted, and we moved on to the coding stage for each of the advertisements. Finally, the data were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics software for the quantitative treatment and calculation of results (Table 3).

**Table 3. Content analysis steps and procedures**

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Procedures</b>
1. Pre-analysis	Analysis of the entire sample of ads.
2. Creating Categories	Creation of the categories based on the reviewed literature and own observation of the sample.
3. Coding table development	Construction of the coding table with all the categories and subcategories.

4. Coding the Ads	Analysis of all the ads and filling out a form for each ad where the occurrence or non-occurrence of each subcategory is registered.
5. Data treatment	Transferring the data collected in the coding forms to statistical software, such as SPSS, for the respective treatment.
6. Report and conclusions	Systematization of the results in tables, display of the respective comments and presentation of the conclusions.

The categories used in the content analysis were established, firstly, based on the reviewed literature. These concepts and models were then confronted with the reality of the ads themselves, resulting in a more objective and reality-based list of categories. On the one hand, 3 categories related to the creative strategy were systematized, namely the advertised product, the main message and the creative format (Table 4).

**Table 4. Analysis Grid: Elements of Creative Strategy**

Categories	Subcategories	Description
<b>Product or brand advertised</b>	A nuclear product	The ad features only one core product (e.g. hamburger).
	Several nuclear products	Several core products are presented.
	Brand	The ad gives the emphasis to the brand and not exactly to its products.
	A complementary product	Only one complementary product (e.g. sauce) is presented.
	Several complementary products	Several complementary products are presented.
	Social Responsibility Initiatives	The ad features a social responsibility initiative of the brand.
<b>Main Message</b>	Attractive Price	The main message is centered on the attractive price of the product.
	Novelty	The main message focuses on a new product or complement.
	Delicious taste	The delicious taste of a product or complement is emphasized
	Brand	The main message highlights the brand in a global perspective.
	Product Quantity	Emphasis is placed on product size or menu quantity.
	Tradition Product	The main message focuses on the brand's "classic".
	Healthy Product	The message highlights a healthy product.
<b>Creative format</b>	Narrative	The ad tells a story.
	Musical	A sequence of scenes is presented with a soundtrack or jingle.
	Presenter	The ad shows one or several people speaking about the product or brand.
	Unusual or unexpected	Presentation of a surprising and unforeseen situation.
	Scenes from everyday life	The ad presents the product or brand in the context of quotidian situations.

In addition to the elements of the creative strategy, the elements of storytelling were also systematized. In this sense, the following categories were created: protagonists, scenarios and action (Table 5).



**Table 5. Analysis grid: storytelling elements**

Categories	Subcategories	Description
<b>Protagonists</b>	Ordinary consumer	The protagonist of the action is an ordinary consumer.
	No protagonists	The ad plays without human protagonists but may focus on the brand or product.
	Mascots	The protagonist of the action is a mascot.
	Public figures and celebrities	The ad is performed by a public figure or celebrity.
<b>Scenarios</b>	Interior of the restaurant	The action of the ad takes place inside the restaurant.
	Interior of another space	The action takes place in an interior space, but not in the restaurant.
	Several Scenarios	The ad takes place in several spaces.
	Graphic Environment	The scenery is designed with either graphic or virtual elements.
	Outdoor	The action takes place in an outdoor space (street, garden, etc.).
<b>Action</b>	Consuming the product	It occurs when the personage is consuming the product.
	Several situations	The ad is made up of several situations and actions.
	Singing	The action involves one or several sing characters.
	Choosing the product	The character finds himself choosing and buying the product.
	Chatting	The characters are presented in dialogue.
	Narrating	The character does or participates in a narrative.
	Dancing	The action involves one or several characters dancing.

In the specific case of the present study, the corpus of analysis was composed of 50 television commercials collected through the YouTube channels of the respective brands. This video-sharing platform, used by individuals, but also by commercial brands, constitutes an objective and online accessible source, which can be used in scientific research (Kousha et al., 2012) and concretely in advertising content analysis (Cardoso & Van Schoor, 2011).

This study analyzed advertisements of the brands Bob's, Burger King, China in Box, Domino's, Giraffas, Habib's, McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Subway, and Spoleto, for being among the largest restaurant chains present in Brazil (Sindal, 2019). To obtain a sample with some representativeness, five advertisements from each brand were selected from a five-year period.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Sample characterization

As previously mentioned, the sample consisted of 50 advertisements from ten fast-food brands operating in Brazil (Table 6).

**Table 6: Brands, number of advertisements, and years analyzed**

Brand	Number of advertisements	Years
Bob's	5	2013-2017
Burger King	5	2013-2017
China in box	5	2012-2017
Domino'S	5	2013-2017
Giraffas	5	2013-2017
Habib'S	5	2015-2017
McDonalds	5	2014-2017
Pizza Hut	5	2013-2017
Subway	5	2013-2017
Spoletto	5	2013-2017
Total	50	

Most advertisements were between 16 and 30 seconds long (70%), in line with the traditional advertising format in the Television media (Table 7). Exceptionally, some were longer, with two minutes long, or shorter, with less than 15 seconds.

**Table 7. Advertisement running time**

Running time	Frequencies	Percentages
16 to 30 seconds	35	70.0
31 to 59 seconds	8	16.0
1 minute to 2 minutes	4	8.0
0 to 15 seconds	3	6.0
Total	50	100.0

*4.2. Creative strategy: advertised product, main message, and format*

As for the product being advertised, most advertisements focused on just one product (48%), a structure that is common in advertising communication (Table 8). A smaller proportion (26%) featured several core products simultaneously, and only a small percentage (12%) built their approach around the brand rather than the product. Social responsibility initiatives were virtually absent from advertisement content with only 2% of the sample displaying them.

**Table 8. Product or brand advertised**

Product	Frequencies	Percentages
A nuclear product	24	48.0
Several nuclear products	13	26.0
Brand	6	12.0
A complementary product	4	8.0
Several complementary products	2	4.0
Social Responsibility Initiatives	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

The messages conveyed in the advertisements are varied, however, price (30%) and new products (20%) stand out (Table 9). Other messages also presented in the advertisements include the taste of the products (7%), the brand features and advantages (6%), and the

quality of the products (6%). The presentation of a healthy product is practically absent, with only 4% of the advertisements using this argument.

**Table 9. Main Message**

Type of Information	Frequencies	Percentages
Attractive Price	15	30.0
Novelty	10	20.0
Delicious taste	7	14.0
Brand	6	12.0
Product Quantity	6	12.0
Tradition Product	4	8.0
Healthy Product	2	4.0
Total	50	100.0

Regarding the creative formats used (Table 10), the narrative (42%) and the musical (24%) stand out. However, the presence of the presenter (18%), unusual or unexpected situations (12%), and, residually, scenes from daily life (4%) are also registered.

**Table 10. Creative format**

Creative Format	Frequencies	Percentages
Narrative	21	42.0
Musical	12	24.0
Presenter	9	18.0
Unusual or unexpected	6	12.0
Scenes from everyday life	2	4.0
Total	50	100.0

#### 4.3. Narrative elements: characters, scenarios, and action

The scenarios (Table 11) most used in the advertisements are the interior of the restaurants themselves (38%), highlighting the space where the products are bought and consumed, but other interior scenarios are also present in other spaces (24%). Other less frequent situations follow, such as the combination of several scenarios in the same advertisement (18%), the use of graphic environments (14%), and outdoor (6%).

**Table 11. Scenarios**

Scenarios	Frequencies	Percentages
Interior of the restaurant	19	38.0
Interior of another space	12	24.0
Several Scenarios	9	18.0
Graphical Environment	7	14.0
Outdoor	3	6.0
Total	50	100.0

In the chapter on characters (Table 12), the common consumer stands out as the center of attention of the advertisement (64%). However, some advertisements do not feature

human protagonists, leaving this role to the product (22%). Mascots (10%), public figures, and celebrities (4%) are also present, but in smaller numbers.

**Table 12. Protagonists**

<b>Protagonists</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Ordinary consumer	32	64.0
No protagonists	11	22.0
Mascots	5	10.0
Public figures and celebrities	2	4.0
Total	50	100.0

Finally, in the "action" category, there are several situations presented (Table 13): the consumption of the product in the restaurant (20%) and the combination of several actions in the same advertisement (20%) stand out. But other situations also arise, such as the choice of the product (10%) and the conviviality among consumers (10%). Coinciding with advertisements without protagonists, 22% of uncoded advertisements appear in this category, since generally, the images are only descriptive of the product, without animating it.

**Table 13. Action**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Consuming the product	10	20.0
Several situations	10	20.0
Singing	6	12.0
Choosing the product	5	10.0
Chatting	5	10.0
Narrating	2	4.0
Dancing	1	2.0
Total	39	78.0
Uncoded situations	11	22.0
Total	50	100.0

## 5. Conclusion

The present work proposed the attainment of two essential objectives. First, it was intended to systematize the concepts of creative strategy and storytelling, as well as their respective components. To this end, several authors who have addressed these topics were summoned, thus allowing an updated treatment of these concepts, as fundamental tools of advertising communication. Recent scientific production is confluent in defining these concepts and identifying advantages for strategic and systematic development of the creative process in advertising.

Thus, the application of a creative advertising strategy can enhance the production of campaigns that tend to draw the consumer's attention (Shen et al., 2020), to facilitate the processing of the message (Sameti & Khalili, 2017) and to lead him/her to purchase (Nader et al., 2021). In turn, the use of storytelling carries several advantages from the outset such as bringing the brand closer to the consumer (Dhote & Kumar, 2019),

generating a positive and differentiated image of the product (Maatota et al. 2019), and a declination of the messages in various media and communication channels (Zambrano, 2018).

The systematization of these tools was operationalized in an analysis grid and applied to an investigation on a sample of television advertisements, fulfilling the second objective of this work. As such, the empirical part of this research allowed, on one hand, to put these concepts into practice and, on the other hand, to identify trends in television advertising of fast-food brands operating in Brazil today, both in terms of creative strategy and storytelling.

Following a common structure in advertising communication, most advertisements focus their approach on just one product, highlighting its features and advantages (Olajidetalabi et al., 2012; Wang & Praet, 2013; Rosa, 2015). However, since this is the restaurant sector, there are also advertisements emphasizing complementary products, such as drinks and side dishes. Noteworthy is the near absence of social responsibility initiatives in advertising, which shows that large fast-food chains are not emphasizing this component of business activity that can be advantageously used in marketing and communication strategy.

The main message and the unique selling proposition are often based on price, which is natural since this is a type of meal that is often eaten daily or during a break from work. The new products are also noteworthy, highlighting the innovation component that is characteristic of this sector, both because it operates in the mass consumption dimension and because there is strong competition between brands that requires permanent differentiation.

The most used creative format is narrative, demonstrating that storytelling is considered an approach that enables brands to compose their identity, create a positive image with the consumer, and distinguish themselves from the competition (Zatwarnicka-Madura & Nowacki, 2018).

As for the narrative elements, the scenarios essentially show the interior of the restaurants as spaces for buying, tasting, and socializing. The action of the films thus shows the experience of choosing the product, the consumption of meals, the interactions between consumers, and the bonds they can establish with the brand. The common consumer, in a strategy of direct identification with the buyer, is the main protagonist of these advertisements.

Setting up a conclusion to this work, we believe that its first part can be useful at a professional level as a procedural orientation and as a theoretical underpinning for marketing practice. In fact, the use of a creative strategy in advertising is assumed as an operational tool by advertising agencies, demonstrating the importance of methodizing these concepts (Gunderson, 2020).

Additionally, this systematization may be useful in the context of advertising education by delimiting the paths to strategic and creative activity, a roadmap that may be important for future professionals in the sector. In this sense, we sought to ground the concepts in the literature, structure them into a useful tool, and highlight their advantages.

The empirical component of this work may constitute a relevant contribution to the academic field, in a thematic area where scientific research works are scarce. At the business level, we hope to have alerted to the importance of these tools for marketing and communication professionals, highlighting the advantages of their application both in brand communication and in the impact on the consumer.



The limitations of the study are the small size of the period analyzed. In future studies, the observation period could be extended to collect data that allows for a more detailed portrait of the communication of these brands. In addition, other communication channels, namely digital ones, could be involved, allowing a holistic view of the strategies that are being developed.

Finally, we suggest involving the consumer's perspective, seeking to better understand the impact that creativity and, in particular, storytelling can have on the receiver of messages.

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