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MULTIMODAL NARRATIVES ON CORPORATE WEBSITES: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract: This chapter's main goal is to shed light onto the most characteristic meaning making processes in corporate narratives by analysis ten corporate narratives of well-known international companies from a multimodal-narrative perspective. This is a qualitative study that examines the modal affordances provided by image, lay-out and color, as well as the language choices and elements that make up different narratives. The hypothesis is that corporate narratives have identifiable patterns that are used to create a sense of community, directed towards present and potential customers. Findings presented here can be of interest for corporate discourse analysis and researchers working on multimodality and narrative.

Keywords: Narrative analysis, multimodality, corporate discourse.

INTRODUCTION: CORPORATE NARRATIVES

Corporate narratives are a socio-cultural genre in which companies display outstanding creativity by a synergy of discursive and multimodal phenomena. The present study explores the interaction between modes in multisemiotic narratives as a creative discourse strategy in a sample of corporate narratives, a fairly unexplored genre. These narratives can index the social practices and reflect the socio-cultural context in which the practices occur. This study contributes to research creativity and core company values in corporate discourse by examining the nature of multisemiotic narratives. This type of genre is not aimed at a specific audience, but rather to anyone interested in a corporation and its products or services. Corporate narratives cover diverse topics and have some common themes, such as company history or corporate social responsibility issues. It is relevant to understand how these narratives work in corporate websites and how corporate identities are forged through the multimodal discourse currently used in corporate communication.

Corporate communication, according to Van Riel and Balmer (1997: 26), is "a management tool through which all forms of internal and external communication used deliberately are harmonized in the most effective and efficient way possible" with the aim of creating a favorable basis for the relations with groups on which the company depends, which includes management activities such as planning, coordinating and advising the CEO and senior management in the organization, as well as the tactical skills necessary for the production and dissemination of messages to relevant stakeholder groups. This includes lately multimodal narratives from marketing departments, employees and stakeholders about the history of the company, the launch of new products or services or testimonies from employees and customers.

Corporations have used marketing traditionally to show consumers what they want the consumer to see, but multimodal communication—the synergy of multi-directional modes—has made this model obsolete. It's fairly evident that communications have become ubiquitous, and we live amongst a generation of hyper-connected individuals. The challenge companies face nowadays is how to navigate across the chaotic ocean of pervasive communications. It is more difficult to make an impact and be heard above the noise.

Companies have learned to communicate differently. They use "corporate narratives", also known as brand narratives. Several studies have addressed narratives from a cognitive and social semiotic perspective using different modes (Stöckl 2002 among others). Different stakeholders of a company—customers, employees, investors, partners, etc.—are telling some aspect of the story of the

company. Corporate narratives are designed to include the values of a company that provide clear, forthright messages. Corporate narratives in websites provide the framework. They include stories that embody the essence of a business in action, comprised of more than just products and services. It's what a company stands for, and how it's making the world a better place. They need a deep and engaging narrative that connects employees to the company's message.

The following elements that allow for the development of a corporate narrative can be identified: the company's vision, ethos and founding principles; the company's messages, themes and aspirational elements; what the company is giving to the world: products, services and actions.

This study explores these corporate narratives as social, rhetorical and multimodal. The social aspect pays attention to the act in which someone tells someone else something that happened, with each party motivated to participate in the telling and listening to the narrative (Bal 2004). Rhetoric considers the relationship between tellers and audiences in specific contexts (Kearns 1999), paying attention to the how, the what and the why of the narrative (Phelan 1996). From a multimodal point of view, narratives are created using different modes (audio, visual, textual) to enhance meaning potentials.

It is clear that digital spaces have generated a new scenario that requires the acquisition of new skills. Corporate Websites have become a new way of interpreting and recreating the world of engineering, using integrative and multimodal discourses (Bateson & Martin, 2013; Kress, 2009) and where companies have become creators of different types of content.

The use of websites in turn requires the use of new elements that include photographs, videos, and any other mode (music, sound) that helps us to build a digital narrative. A form of expression that used to belong only to a few, but that now companies can do it quickly and easily (Lambert, 2010). These narrative creations also require communicative competences that prepare companies for a still unknown future in new communicative environments.

Corporate websites represent new forms of interactive communication that have become interactive cultural objects. Companies communicate through the network, making the boundaries between sender and viewer much more blurred. Shared experiences, values, information, and knowledge that emerges about a company (CEO, employees) and customers spread from social interaction and the creation of new narrative content in digital spaces.

The audience for this corporate narrative content may be:

a) Suppliers: the organizations or individuals that provide the organization with the elements necessary for its operation and the production of its products or services.

b) Employees: all those who are in charge of transforming inputs into the organization's products or services. Here we must differentiate between normal employees and managers, who have power and decision-making capacity within the organization.

c) Consumers: whether they are companies or individuals who purchase the products or services and then resell them to others. From them, the organization generates other audiences, based on their needs or actions:

d) The social environment: the neighborhood or city where the corporation operates (the individuals with whom it has a relationship and contact;

e) Institutions and groups: those that

by their nature or sector of activity have a relationship with the organization (governmental, financial, ecological social, media, etc.).

These multimodal narratives contribute to create group membership, that is, the social interaction that arises in corporate websites provides opportunities for people to meet, become acquainted, and build opportunities for people to get to know each other, become familiar with each other and build new knowledge, supported by common interests. They also generate an individual and collective dialogue; promote joint participation in space and time because sharing common goals gives meaning to the activities carried out as a "community"; and they employ multiple modes to express messages: its virtual nature allows the use of different creative expressions especially with narrative. Color, sound, text, or movement generated on screens are semiotic resources from which it is possible to construct meanings.

Corporate narratives as sets of audiovisual or written discourses are made up of elements that must be analyzed, designated by Jewitt (2013) as multimodal products. Multimodality is understood as the ability to express ideas through different representational systems. In this sense, each communication medium has its limitations and advantages. It is a multidisciplinary approach that approaches the ways of constructing meaning. It emphasizes situated practices, i.e., the social context and the resources that come from it.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

By expanding on previous work on multimodality (Molina and Alonso 2016), this study's main objective is to provide some insights into the most characteristic ways of creating corporate narratives. A multimodal functional perspective focuses on the interaction of the text, i.e. of linguistic elements, with other semiotic resources, mainly visual in our sample, and provides a description of the relationship among them in order to achieve the communicative goal of the message, the representation of diversity in the company in this case. This approach uses functionally oriented linguistic theories and adapts them for the analysis of visual texts (O'Halloran 2008; O'Halloran and Smith, 2011; Kress 2010; Van Leeuwen 2005 among others).

We set off from the notion of mode (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001) to analyze how meaning is constructed in these corporate narratives. A mode catalogues a channel of representation or communication: verbal, visual (moving and static images), lay-out, typography, etc. These different modes express the material and cultural aspects available to engineering website viewers and stakeholders. In our corpus, the main modes of meaning used are:

- Verbal representation: Written/oral texts.
- Visual-spatial representation: still images (scenes at the company, perspective and salience, proximity, spacing, lay-out, interpersonal distance),

To focus on the interaction between images and other modes, we also draw on two notions proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:201-204): salience and framing. Salience or highlighting is defined by Bezemer in the Multimodality glossary as follows:

> Highlighting: the semiotic principle of lending particular prominence to an element in a text or other semiotic arrangement (cf. 'making salient', 'emphasizing, 'centralizing', 'stressing', 'marking). Highlighting can serve different functions. Highlighting is at the same time a way of giving special weight ('significance') to selected features, that is, to represent a particular view on the world; and a way of pointing to these features to draw the attention of the readers to them

and shape their interpretation of the text, that is. to produce a social relation between those who make and those who engage with the text. Highlighting is differently realized in different modes. For instance, in image, writing and other modes, a part or feature of a text can be highlighted by giving it a size, style, weight, color, spacing or placement that 'stands out' (so that it is bigger or smaller, thicker or thinner, more or less saturated, or more or less central than most other parts of the text). In speech, music and other modes, salience can be realized by giving the part of the text that is to be highlighted a loudness that stands out, i.e. by varying the levels of energy in sound; or by pitch movement, i.e. varying tone; or by stress. In writing, highlighting is also indicated by position, in a sentence, paragraph or the text as a whole. https://multimodalityglossary.wordpress.com/highlighting/

Framing points are the connection between text and images, pointing at the semantic relationship between them (Kress, 2010, Van Leeuwen 2004). Framing is the principle by which, on the one hand, any semiotic entity (any meaning-entity) – such as a 'text' or an 'event' – is given internal unity and (the possibility of) internal coherence; and by which, on the other hand, it is clearly marked as distinct from other units or events of the same kind and at the same 'level' in a larger unit or event.

Each mode of representation and communication makes available a distinct set of framing devices apt for the materiality of that mode. Framing devices establish boundaries between elements by a variety of devices – for instance by marking the boundary itself or by creating contrasts between the framed elements at the particular level. We look for borders between elements in websites, repetition of shapes, colors, etc. which provide textual coherence to the way a company deals with diversity

The data in this research are based on the qualitative analysis of a total ten corporate narratives (five from Spanish international companies: Navantia, Telefónica, Iberdrola, Repsol, Naturgy) and five international companies. As for their selection, the sample was selected at random. They are well-known Spanish and International corporations. The idea is to guarantee that different cultural approaches to narratives are considered. Consequently, this sample is not a formal corpus, but a first approach to the corporate narrative genre which is expected to provide a preliminary characterization.

To understand fully the narrative process and its qualities, the study follows seven elements that define storytelling according to Lambert (2010, 2013)

1. The author-narrator's point of view.

The key to this first step is to find within everyone the ability to tell to tell his or her own stories. Companies tend to use the third person, as a more objective documentary about an event.

2. Dramatic question. The narrator should ask the corporate audience one or more questions about what may happen, generating a story that keeps the audience's attention until the end of the story when the dilemma is resolved. The key to this element is to convey to the others different concerns and sensations that engage the viewer.

3. Emotional content. Finding and clarifying the emotions of the story can be the most challenging and rewarding part of the narrative process.

4. One's own voice. Rhythm and intonation are important to carry the message. The tone, inflection, and timbre of one's voice are relevant to convey meaning and intent in a very personal way.

5. Economy (maintaining attention with different modes). This aspect is defined by visual and sound elements (text, photos, voice) to present the most relevant aspects in a short time. Modes serve to shape the story,

complement it and enrich it, from different perspectives.

6. Narrative rhythm (structure). This element involves mixing rhythms to keep the interest maintained.

7. The power of the soundtrack. This process focuses on sound as a tool to understand the intonation and +emotion of the story's creator. Music and sound effects give prominence to the story by adding complexity and depth to the narrative.

We adapted these seven categories defined by Lambert (2010, 2013) to corporate narratives. A preliminary analysis of the narratives helped the researcher establish four categories:

§ **point of view,** referring to the author's intention and the perspective from which he or she creates the content, which refers to the subject matter and the perspective from which the story is elaborated;

§ **content**, which refers to the theme and the messages conveyed, considering the way in which communicative strategies such as emotion, dramatic issue or narrative genre, among others are used to capture the audience's attention;

§ **structure**, which refers to the organization of the messages and the rhythm of the story it conveys, aimed at structure, which refers to the organization of the messages and the rhythm of the story it conveys in order to maintain interest;

§ **modes**, referring to the semiotic resources chosen, and the role they play, alone or in combination, in conveying the meaning of the story.

CORPORATE NARRATIVES AS A NEW EMERGENT GENRE

After studying ten corporate narratives from big companies, it is possible to achieve a general overview of the main features of the genre. Among the main characteristics, the following eight may be highlighted:

- Corporate narratives cover a wide range of topics (telecommunications, use of electricity, butane, gasoline, history and culture) and they transmit both factual and emotional content. They try to give a "human face" to the company.

- They are not very long. They last around five minutes and website content highlights main facts. Those with a diachronic approach compress several decades of company history and reduce it to "its essence".

- The verbal mode is the main, leading mode and images and sounds tend to be supportive. Most images are still but there are also videos and narratives which contain images of the CEO, managers or employees. They add a personal touch.

- The narrating voices lend a sense of veracity to the story that enhance its emotional content. Voices give socio-cultural information about gender, age, status, etc. The voices also provide rhythm and pace in the display of images. The tone of the corporate narratives is usually neutral, as if trying to portray objectively the narrated events.

- Some narratives have a soundtrack. Background music frames the whole story in a context.

- Photos portray images of the real people that work at the company and the office itself.

- There is a clear navigation interface. They use plenty of whitespace for readability and scanning.

- Use of the pronouns *we/ our* but also *you*, trying to meet potential customers and stakeholders eye-to-eye.

INTERNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

Big corporations have stories in their websites, told well and truthfully, about their organization. A good corporate narrative helps the audience understand what a company stands for, and its plans for the future. Like all good stories it needs a beginning, a middle and an end. A corporate narrative should capture what the company is doing, where it is going, what's important and why, using simple, clear everyday language. It should include strengths, values and vision. It should be human and focused on the people the company serves.

Let us see some examples of good stories in corporate narratives.

COCA-COLA

In their own words: "The Coca-Cola Company (NYSE: KO) is a total beverage company with products sold in more than 200 countries and territories. Our company's purpose is to refresh the world and make a difference" (https://www.coca-cola.co.uk/our-business/media-centre/coca-cola-global-music-platform-coke-studio-film)

It would not be exaggerated to say that Coca-Cola Co. invented brand narratives. Its corporate narratives offer some powerful benefits in an increasingly competitive global economy. Coca-Cola tries to build a long-term relationship with customers. A recent example is 'The Conductor', which pays homage to the legendary rock band Queen through a unique collaboration that encapsulates the multicultural magic at the core of the Coke Studio platform. Coca-Cola is expanding Coke Studio™, a music platform that builds on the program originally launched in Pakistan in 2008, to a global stage. The global Coke Studio program has created 'The Conductor' that features seven artists collaborating to reimagine the iconic Queen track 'A Kind of Magic'.

The 90-second film centers on a re-recording of Queen's iconic 'A Kind of Magic' melody, produced in collaboration with global breakthrough artists who each bring their own unique style to the music, reimagining the track for a new generation. Music is a powerful mode to convey a really positive message about the drink: "it a kind of magic". From a narrative perspective, this video relies on the international cultural resonance of this famous pop group that can cross cultural borders. This British rock band is associated with fun and often a tongue-in-cheek attitude. The structure is simple, based on the lyrics of this well-known song.

GOOGLE

https://about.google/stories/lifebank/

Google has a specific section in the company website devoted for stories. The heading is "our stories", with a catchy slogan: *The best thing about technology is seeing what the world does with it*. The stories are organized in a taxonomy: diversity and inclusion, small companies, opportunities, entrepreneurship, culture. They are a mixture of videos, text, graphics and visuals. They take part in different parts of the world (Japan, USA, Europe).

A very moving story is "The agoraphobic traveler" https://about.google/stories/agoraphobic-traveller/ a personal testimony of an agoraphobic artist who uses Google Street View to photograph the world. It is an example of advocacy advertising, which promotes a good cause to help people: how technology can help "to all those using technology to go places they never expected". She describes the symptoms of agoraphobia and how she feels. The coda is positive: Google technology can improve people's lives. Emotive music, close-ups from the narrator and a carefully crafted video bring particular aspects of Google and its activities to the public notice. The video presents a better image of the company and

creates positive associations that will offset the negative publicity the company may have in the media (i.e. use of cookies, etc.)

APPLE

(https://www.apple.com/diversity/)

Apple's communications team has a spectacular reputation and there is a beautifully composed grid of photos of smiling men and women of different nationalities and races in diversity section.

The textual mode is structured as a mini-narrative: it explains Apple's values about diversity and their approach to deal with different types of people: "We're continuing to build a culture where everybody belongs. That's what sparks our innovation. And our progress toward a more inclusive workforce and a better world". This is another example of corporate advocacy. It is used to change the way people see this multinational corporation. First person generalizations using "we" are combined with positive keywords: *innovation, progress, inclusive, better world.*

As Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) put it, this is a composite multimodal website, including text-image combinations, the latter being photos and videos. Employees are presented in the webpage as happy staff. The grid of photos is perceived as specific, informative and practical and presented as the real. The idea that working for Apple is difficult is challenged with this grid of successful workers involved in different activities and projects. Visually, the grid contains "demand" images. Employees demand that viewers establish a relationship with them. This persuasive effect is realized through direct gaze and smile where employees seem to openly invite and persuade the audience to engage with Apple's community. Men and women are shown at close shot, where heads and shoulders are included. The grid also includes employees at medium close, from waist up. Each employee

from different parts of the world has a narrative to tell, explaining in detail their work for the company.
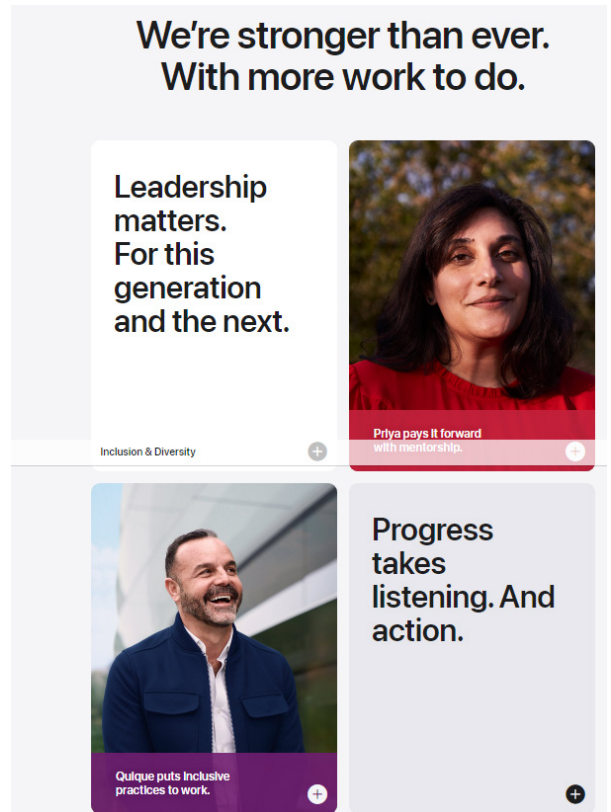
BP

BP is a British multinational oil and gas company headquartered in London, England. It is one of the world's largest companies measured by revenues and profits. It is a company operating in all areas of the oil and gas industry, including exploration and extraction, refining, distribution and marketing, power generation, and trading.

BP's narrative is a story told well and truthfully in the sustainability report, about the organization and the place it serves. It helps people understand what BP stands for, why it is important and its plans for the future.

Improving people's lives

We want to help improve people's lives through our sustainability frame. We recognize the importance of more clean energy, a just energy transition that respects human rights, sustainable livelihoods, health and wellbeing and enhanced diversity, equity and inclusion. Our five people aims build on strong social impact and risk management requirements, and guidance in our operating management system.

The headline written in BP's corporate green color for salience is an abstract of what follows: BP improves people's lives. People, background houses and vegetation are also drawn with the same color. Green is no longer just a color. It's now the symbol of ecology and it is one of the reasons why is used in the company logo as well.

Paragraphs are mainly written with S-V-O sentence structure to ensure clarity. The narrative is arranged with an introduction including positive keywords and noun phrases: *improve people's lives, sustainability, clean energy, just energy, respects human rights, enhanced diversity,* etc. The adjectives are typical of the corporate genre of reports.

Five people aims (*More clean energy, just transition, sustainable livelihoods, greater equity, enhance wellbeing*) follow this introduction: each headline is highlighted in green with a different typeface, creating salience for the reader. This narrative explains how BP can make the biggest difference. To pack information into sentences and economize on space, conjoined noun phrases (e.g. a just transition – *one that delivers* decent work, quality jobs) are commonly used.

https://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/sustainability/improving-peoples-lives.html

SHELL

Shell is a British multinational oil and gas company headquartered in London, England.

It is one of the largest companies in the world. Measured by both its own emissions, and the emissions of all the fossil fuels it sells, Shell was the ninth-largest corporate producer of greenhouse gas emissions in the period 1988–2015. Obviously, one of their main objectives is to convince society and stakeholders of their compromise with sustainability. An article from the Guardian https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/feb/06/most-hated-company-shell-oil-carbon-fuels-ngo-greenpeace-sigwatch-nestle-mcdonalds in 2016 labelled Shell as "the world's most hated company", criticized by Greenpeace and activists for their projects. In order to garner attention and backing, they have developed a creative website for influencing stakeholders, NGOs and businesses. They include a specific section with stories that support their current efforts to improve sustainability. Their structure is simple, focusing on one positive attribute

https://www.shell.com/sustainability/communities/education/australia-case-study.html

In their media section, Shell includes education and case studies, which begin with the word *reimagine,* that is, reinterpret events and the world imaginatively.

Redesign test sheets

Through the NXplorers toolkit, the students saw how our energy and waste systems are connected. Using NXthinking and the NXplorers tools, the students interviewed their teachers to identify a problem they could solve. Teachers spoke about the large amount of paper that was traditionally used for conducting tests and how much space the test papers took when stored for many years. The teachers supported reducing the amount of paper used in the classroom and for test sheets to be redesigned.

Replace unsustainable practices

The NXplorers students discovered that digital devices can easily replace paper-based education tools to help reduce the reliance on paper in the classroom. Paper production uses large quantities of water and wood which are both finite resources. By increasing the reliance on digital devices, the students then considered the power source for charging the devices. They discovered that solar energy is an important alternative energy source that can easily replace fossil-fuels and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

NXplorers students with their solar charging station at their school

The abstract is highlighted in bold: **Xplorers students from Warwick Senior High School in Perth, Australia, wanted to reduce the amount of paper waste in their school by moving work sheets and test papers onto digital devices. In doing so, they also developed an alternative energy source to charge their devices, reducing the reliance on fossil fuel-based energy in their school community, supporting a cleaner, greener environment for all.**

The narrative includes orientation/ setting (who, when, what, where?), complication (what happened, summarized in headlines highlighted in bold type: e.g. *Redesign test sheets, Replace unstainable practices*), characterization (who are the main characters, the students from Warwick Senior High School in Perth, Australia, presented in photos) and a coda, named in the narrative as "conclusion": *This NXplorers project reached beyond the classroom as students learned their idea could foster innovation to create sustainable infrastructure for both their school community, and their local community*. The project consequently contributes to several UN SDGs including 5, 7, 9, 12 and 13.

The case study concludes with a UN SDGs diagram and an imperative, a request for action in a hyperlink: *Discover more about how Shell is contributing to all of the SDGs*

SPANISH CORPORATIONS

Spain has a considerable number of large multinational companies that are very attractive to those who wish to work in a transnational environment that offers numerous opportunities for international mobility. Spanish multinational companies are also recognized worldwide, both for the quality of the products or services they offer and for the marketing culture they create around their business. In fact, they are a determining agent of globalization. In this section, the results of a preliminary multimodal and narrative analysis are presented. We study how the verbal, visual and acoustic modes are used to construe narrative meaning.

TELEFÓNICA

https://www.telefonica.com/es/sostenibilidad-innovacion/como-trabajamos/

Telefónica is a global benchmark with a Spanish stamp. It is the third most successful telecommunications company in the world, with a presence in more than 200 markets. Its services include mobile telephony, data intelligence, Internet, hosting, B2B and many others which, thanks to its diversification, make it one of the most recognized Spanish companies.

The video under analysis highlights the importance of communication since 2021. Before watching it, the viewer sees the following written message: *Debemos ir más allá de nuestra responsabilidad y ser una empresa ejemplar con la confianza de clientes, empleados, proveedores y accionistas* (We must go beyond our responsibility and be an exemplary company trusted by customers, employees, suppliers and shareholders).

Cómo trabajamos
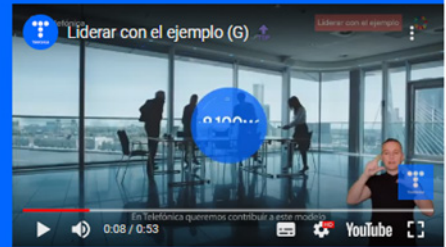
The video uses images of diverse social actors (Van Leeuwen 1996): customers, employees, executives, children, etc. since the images typically advertise the services that Telefónica offers. We see plenty of photo images taken in situ, capturing the surroundings. On the top cluster, we see Telefonica's logo on the left and the Sustainable Development Goals symbol and a slogan: 'Leading by example'. There is also a sign-language interpreter and subtitles throughout the video to ensure that this corporate narrative is also available for everyone. The video includes key statistics in written form in the corporative blue color, for example: 33% of women in management positions, implying that Telefonica takes diversity issues seriously. Displaying numbers in large type and highlighted by a color contrast is both informative and persuasive.
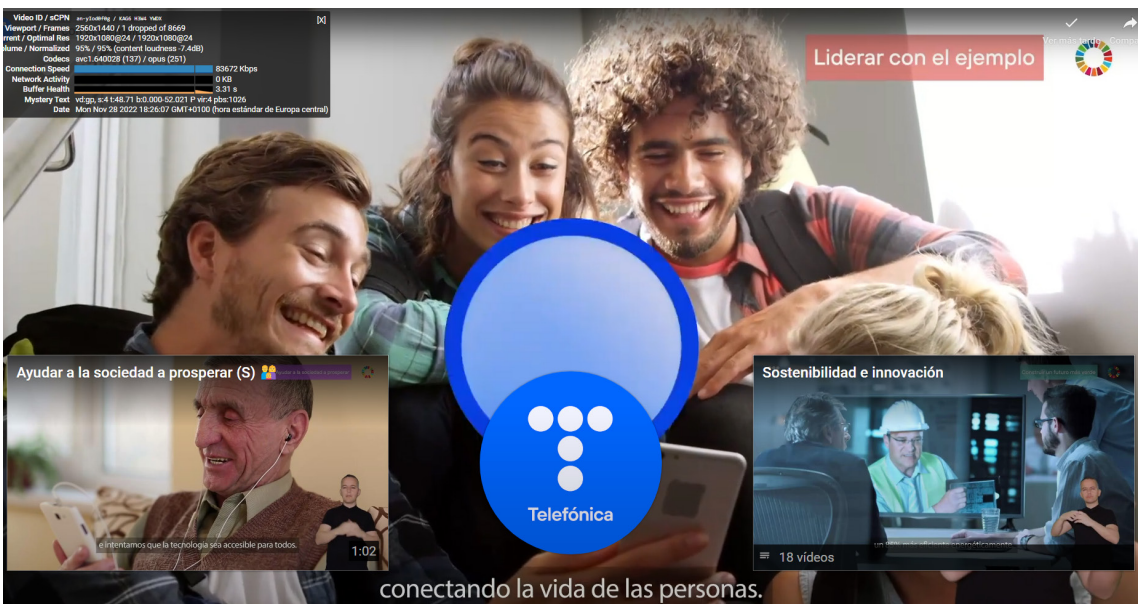
The video concludes with a smiling people and a verbal coda: "We want to make our world more humane, connecting people's lives" and Telefónica's logo prominently displayed in the middle for salience.

REPSOL

Repsol was born as a leading lubricants brand in Spain. The history began to take shape in 1951 when the company Repesa launched a new range of lubricants called Repsol, which soon became one of the most popular brands in Spain. The first brushstrokes of the logo recreated the Repsol "R" and led to the brand being quickly recognized and accepted by consumers.

https://www.repsol.com/en/about-us/history/index.cshtml
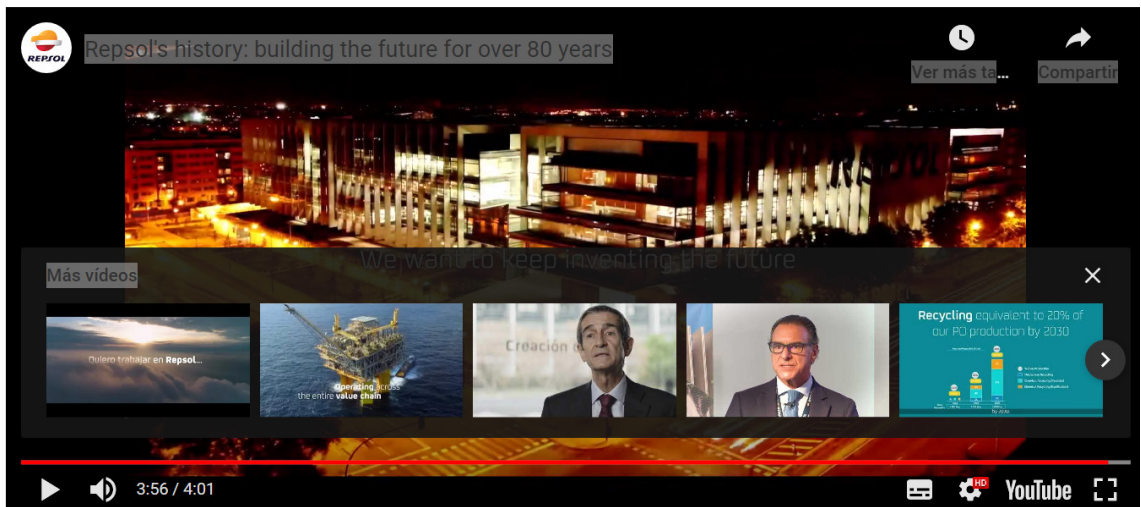
The corporate narrative is called "Repsol's history: building the future for over 80 years".

The video contains testimonies of how Spanish people used petrol and butane from the fifties onwards, accompanied by black and white and color photos that illustrate the verbal content of the video. These video testimonies from employees give the company a human face. They are first-person accounts of life in Spain back then and include a positive evaluation of how Repsol has improved the lives of Spanish people. Their narrative epitomizes Repsol's company values which have made their own. They are proud of the changes accomplished.

The video also includes brief written sentences in English that focus on the company's key messages and values they want to send for international stakeholders: "with butane, heat reaches Spanish homes", "we drive innovation", "pioneers in the international expansion of Spanish companies" and the last one is an appeal to emotion: "we want to keep growing with you". The use of *we* personalizes a huge and impersonal corporation. The pronoun *you* is a direct address to the viewer.

NATURGY

Naturgy Energy Group S.A., formerly Gas Natural Fenosa, is a Spanish multinational natural gas and electrical energy utilities company, which operates primarily in Spain. Naturgy is focused on the commercialization of electricity and gas to the five continents. Since its inception, it has pursued the production of clean energy.

🏠 | El Grupo ⌄   La Energía ⌄   Presencia internacional ⌄
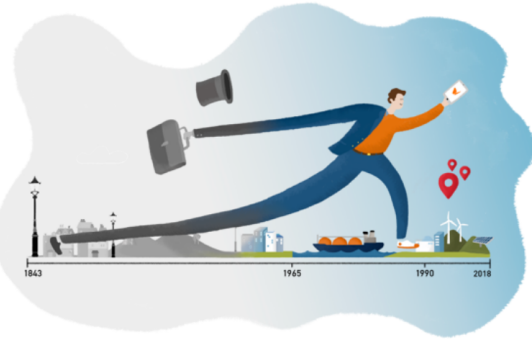
Más de 175 años en el sector energético

En **1843**, nuestro espíritu innovador nos impulsó a iniciar nuestra actividad en Barcelona para llevar por primera vez el alumbrado público a las calles de la ciudad. Ese mismo espíritu nos sigue impulsando hacia un futuro lleno de retos y nuevas oportunidades.

En **2018** cumplimos 175 años con una historia y experiencia que respaldan nuestra solidez y garantizan un futuro que apuesta por el confort y un uso más inteligente de la energía. Por eso, os invitamos a hacer un breve recorrido por nuestra historia y a conocer de dónde venimos para saber hacia dónde vamos.

1843   1965   1990   2018

Naturgy does not use a video but a webpage to narrate its story, which began in Barcelona in 1843 when the company brought street lighting to the city of Barcelona for the first time. Temporality is an important orientating device linked to narrative (Ricoeur 1984). The headline "More than 175 years in the energy sector" is thus a clever marketing strategy: it involves customers' trustworthiness for a long time. This message is reinforced visually by a graph. We see a business executive taking a giant step into the future and the different types of energy used since 1843.

Naturgy's point of view describing the position of the company in relation to its story being told provides the audience with a perspective on relevant events. These important milestones for the company are neatly organized in newsbite format in a lower cluster. Prominence is given to noun phrases by means of typeface: "Internationalization, Business diversification, looking towards the future, 175 years of Naturgy". Keywords are highlighted in bold type: "in the 1990s, gas and electricity, growth in renewable energies". The written mode focuses the viewer's attention to the impact and meaning of those words.

🏠 | The Group ⌄   The Energy ⌄   International Presence ⌄

Internationalization

In the 1990s, Naturgy began one of the most significant stages in its recent history: the leap into foreign markets, beginning in 1992.

Business diversification

Gas and electricity: over the last two decades, and thanks to the group's organic growth as a result of mergers with other companies, the company has diversified and expanded its business.

Looking towards the future

Our challenges are **growth in renewable energies**, promoting innovation and project development in renewable gas, offering sustainable mobility solutions and protecting biodiversity in our operations by implementing best practices.

175 years of Naturgy

175
Naturgy
175 años de compromiso con la energía y la sociedad

Find out more ⧉

They narrate their story from the recent present to the past: They have a recent history section (1992-present) followed by historical stages at the bottom of the webpage, which highlights key information.

Since starting our business, our goal has always been to serve society and offer smart and innovative solutions by opting for avant-garde solutions. In all our years of experience, we have diversified our business and became the first group to integrate gas and electricity in Spain.

The last few years of our history have been marked by decisive changes in this strategy: we have expanded our business to reach into 20 countries, we have led the way in integrating the gas and electricity business as well as the commitment to clean energies and new power generation technologies.

In 2018, coinciding with our 175th anniversary, we also made one of the most significant changes in our history: switching from Gas Natural Fenosa to Naturgy. Our new brand is international, adapted to suit all the global markets where we operate now and will operate in the future, with a focus on innovation, digitalisation, simplicity and globality. With this brand, we are giving ourselves new momentum to be closer to our customers wherever they are and focus on offering simple, easy and environmentally-friendly solutions.

There is a mixture of text and visuals. We see drawings of dissimilar types of people: an old man and lady, a middle-aged man, a student. This means that Naturgy caters for the needs of different customers. These human figures are important in the company's multimodal presentation

NAVANTIA

https://www.navantia.es/en/news/press-releases/prime-minister-pedro-sanchez-presides-the-cutting-of-the-first-steel-plate-of-f-110-class-frigate-for-spanish-navy/

Navantia is a Spanish shipyard company whose history dates back to 1717 and is nowadays an international shipyard corporation.

This is a good example of professional communication. It is writing in a way that is accurate, complete, and understandable to the audience, that tells the truth about the facts in a straightforward and clear manner. Doing this requires research, audience analysis, and mastery of the three interrelated elements of organization, language, and design and illustration.

This small narrative conveys partially one of the aims and functions of Navantia's website: show the new products and launches. The elements (a photo and text) and their arrangement carry more than information. They establish its interpersonal appeal and its indexing of social values (Baldry and Thibault 2006:119). The appraisal of the narrative is determined by the interaction between content, design and navigation options. The arrangement reflects a hierarchy of themes, which refers to the scaffolding of information in the narrative.

In the top cluster, the logo of Navantia is placed on the left side, and six hyperlinks anchors are in the middle: About us, Business Areas, Navantia 4.0, Sustainability, Work with us, News. The use of the imperative: "work with us" is a straightforward request to action which fulfills the website highest interpersonal metafunction: that of attracting employee talent.

The second cluster is a navigational dropdown menu that leads to different sections. The narrative discussed here is in the press releases section. On top, the audience finds the product: F-110 PROGRAM. Next to the photograph, there is the headline: "Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez presides the cutting of the first steel plate of F-110 class frigate for Spanish Navy", written in bigger letters in a

different color creating salience. The picture is an example of intensive identification, which elaborates the features of the Navantia engineers and the Spanish Prime Minister visiting Navantia's premises. The text is divided into small paragraphs with plenty of white space. This facilitates reading the information. The content goes from general to particular: "Navantia has started the construction process of the new F-110 class frigate for Spanish Navy, with the cutting of the first steel plate in an event presided by Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez". The reader later on gets information about the particulars of this program: the construction of five frigates, their cost, etc.
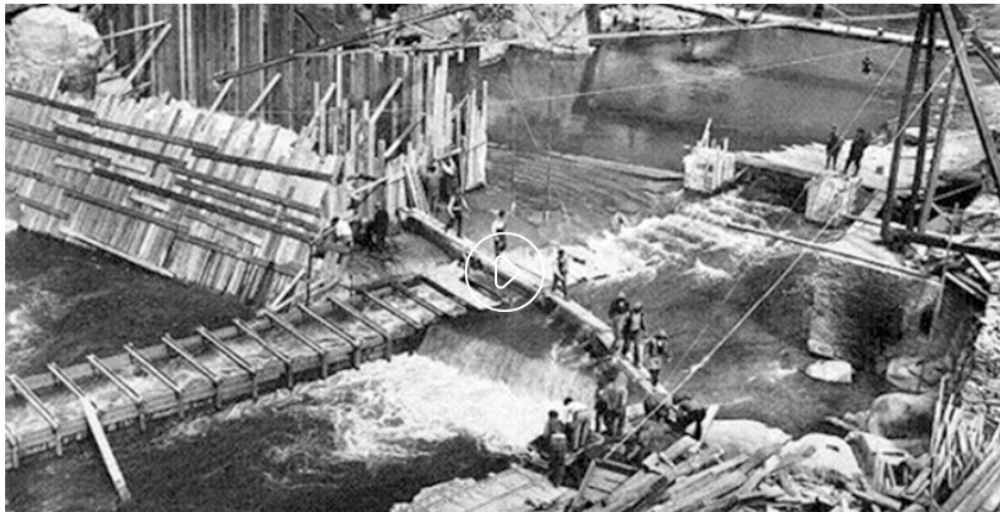
IBERDROLA

With seven sub-holding companies located in Spain, the United States, Brazil, Mexico and the United Kingdom, it is one of the world leaders in wind power generation. Thanks to its plan to expand renewable energies, it wants to invest 75 billion euros by 2025, of which 27 billion would remain in Spain.

Nuestra historia: más de 170 años de crecimiento

#historia

El grupo destaca por su trayectoria de crecimiento y anticipación a las necesidades energéticas de la sociedad.

Iberdrola en tiempo de vals, por Julio Medem. Locución del vídeo [PDF]

https://www.iberdrola.com/conocenos/nuestra-empresa/nuestra-historia

As regards content, Iberdrola explains its narrative in a beautifully crafted video by the Spanish film director Julio Medem in (2013) called "Iberdrola in times of waltz". The video clearly articulates Iberdrola's brand, its unique personality by creating a multimodal ensemble with waltz music, photos in black and white representing the past and color photos from the 1960s onwards. It describes the major milestones in the company's history and the reservoirs it has built over the years. Iberdrola's CEO highlights the number

of hours spent on employee training and the viewer also learns about the inclusion of women in different positions in the company thanks to testimonies from female employees. Interestingly, they use inclusive "we", positioning the employees alongside customers. This inclusive positioning is a way in which Iberdrola can establish shared values and experiences with customers (for instance, the importance of a good education). Finally, the video also shows how Iberdrola supports culture, art and society through different projects.

The text next to the video in Spanish uses keywords such as "effort, talent, compromise" to advertise the electricity and gas services that they sell (as well as implicitly contributing to the brand identity): El *esfuerzo, el talento, el compromiso y la ilusión hacen viva la historia de Iberdrola, un grupo con sólidos pilares a ambos lados del Atlántico. La compañía es hoy la tercera eléctrica en el mundo por capitalización bursátil y la primera de Europa sin participación estatal, así como líder mundial en energías renovables. Una posición construida sobre valores firmes, un proceso de integración que ha supuesto la suma de diferentes culturas y la capacidad para anticiparse a las necesidades energéticas de la sociedad mediante soluciones que preserven el medio ambiente para las generaciones futuras. Ésta es nuestra historia* (Effort, talent, commitment and enthusiasm make alive the history of Iberdrola, a group with solid pillars on both sides of the Atlantic. The company is today the third largest electricity company in the world by market capitalization and the first in Europe without state participation, as well as a world leader in renewable energies. A position built on firm values, a process of integration that has meant the sum of different cultures and the ability to anticipate the energy needs of society through solutions that preserve the environment for future generations. This is our story)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

When the various narratives of corporate discourse previously analyzed are considered, certain features seem to be recurrent. They provide the type of information that the company considers adequate, and also enhance a positive company's image for customers and stakeholders. Corporate storytelling is used to promote a brand or product. Some stories come in the form of text, but the companies are relying more on the videos as the medium of business storytelling nowadays.

A closer look also indicates that it often is the case this informative function a narrative may have is likely to be colonized by promotional functions. This has prompted the re-creation of narratives, a conventional form of discourse, into a dynamic and multimodal form. Corporate narratives may be spoken or written, and in their performance they employ facial expressions, gestures, movement, voice quality, soundtracks, images and different typefaces. It is clear that corporate narratives are not made up of words alone. Digital corporate narratives display some old narrative features, such as linearity, complication or coda, along with new features: some are too interactive and relinquish author control.

The narrative producers attempt to build credibility through their ethical appeal and the reinforcement of the company values. They try to inspire and enlighten customers and stakeholders with an informative and compelling content coupled with a smart multimodal design. They often want to reconstruct a brighter future and pioneering achievements for everyone.

The world continues to grow more complex, straining the efficacy of not only traditional marketing and communications techniques, but how engineering corporations communicate with their entire ecosystem. Marketing experts take care to maximize the features and inherent value of each mode

to develop narratives that incorporate the goals and values of an organization, all while addressing it to multiple types of stakeholders. Corporate narratives are often designed to influence the perceptions of an organization and have a strategic and persuasive purpose. They emphasize empathy and concern for others. Companies seem to care about the needs of others, they know how to make them feel better and are interested in their wellbeing.

The meaning potential of a web-based genre has been explored from both a multimodal and narrative perspective. The oral and the written channel seem to be the leading modes, supported by images. Owing to limitations of space, various logic-semantic relations have not been examined in greater detail, and a limited set of examples has been used for illustration purposes. The music, when present, contextualizes the narrative.

Corporate narratives integrate factual, cultural and emotional meanings in a blend that conveys a powerful story about a company and its development. These narratives may be considered as cognitive artifacts (Herman 2003), as they enhance or improve cognition about these corporations.

Storytelling benefits for companies are clear:

- It gets all employees pulling in the same direction, creating a strong company culture.
- Increases the commitment of both employees and management.
- Provides a clear vision of the type of organization for new employees and potential partners and investors.
- Attracts new talent that identifies with the type of corporate culture that is being projected.

The interpretations provided here must be taken with caution. Further research on a more extended corpus of corporate narratives is needed to confirm if the explanations provided in this study can be confirmed or not and the importance of parameters such as cultural context or a company's narrative style should be taken into account to determine their influence in the narrative structure. Apart from these limitations, it is nevertheless hoped that the multimodal and narrative analysis of these corporate narratives will contribute to deepen the understanding of the complex ways in which different modes and resources contribute to create meaning in these dynamic narratives.

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