

THE ROLE OF BRANDED MOVIES IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Thea Skhiereli

key words: *branded content, content marketing, communication channels, new media, corporate media, branded media, branded movies.*

Illustrations: *pp.280-282*

The Branded Content Marketing Association (BCMA), a leading global member association, offers the following definition of branded content: “Branded content is any content that is related to consumer’s perception of the brand.”¹

The association has also developed a holistic concept of branded content; according to this concept, in the new, digital era, not only a marketing product created, funded and therefore fully controlled by the brand should be considered a branded content, but also any content related to the brand, created and shared by consumers.

To clarify the terms: Content refers to any material used in marketing communications that is important for brand image and awareness, created in text, audio or visual form. As for the term *brand*, it refers not to the product or service produced under a particular trademark, but first and foremost to the strong value system associated with it. A successful and strong brand is distinguished by the fact that, in addition to services and products, it also offers customers additional existential values. This determines its firm position in the minds of consumers, which shapes emotional attachment and loyalty to the brand, and the results are ultimately reflected in the brand’s increased revenue. Representation of these values and characteristics to the customer is the main goal of branded content.

In the new digital era, when the consumption of media and digital technologies has changed fundamentally, brands are increasingly in need of effective communication campaigns, searching for new ways of communicating, new themes and forms. It is obvious

that branded content has become the main weapon of marketing communications in the changed media landscape. Brands themselves have become a kind of media platforms creating more successful communication channels than a traditional media to represent their content (corporate websites, broadcast channels on YouTube, interactive pages on social networks: Facebook, Instagram, and the like). The number of brands to start producing content will increase even more in the future. Consequently, the competition will intensify and the creativity of the branded content, its quality will become even more important. Branded content will become a value itself not only for the brand, but also for the audience and the owners of communication channels or media platforms.

Let’s examine the importance of one of the most diverse types of branded content, branded movies, in marketing communications.

Branded movies, as well as branded content in general, establish an emotional connection with the customer by telling a story about the company that reflects the brand’s values and philosophy. Unlike traditional advertising, which operates by the algorithm “see-buy,” the branded content impacts the audience with the “feel-do it” model. Its goal is not to increase sales but to create an associative perception of brand values in consumers.

Since 1836, when the French newspaper *La Presse* began selling advertising space, the goal of advertising has always been to attract the customer’s attention to a particular product and increase sales. For the past twenty years, more and more companies around

¹ https://www.thebcma.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/BCMA-Research-Report_FINAL.pdf

the world have been refusing traditional advertising in favor of other marketing tools, including branded films. Short feature film, a documentary, animation, TV series—video content produced by companies replaces traditional advertisement. Brands create pop-up cinemas, collaborate with traditional filmmakers, create their own studios, and become media.

Branded movies are not a direct stimulus to sales. It is a marketing tool, which helps a brand to deliver its uniqueness and values to its audience. Its goal is to establish an emotional connection with the customer with an unforgettable story that revives the product, gives it a prominent individuality and shows the distinctive predominance of the brand.

In 2001, in the pre-YouTube era, the German auto manufacturer BMW began releasing a series of short feature films, *The Hire*. The number of movie views on the internet reached 11 million in 4 months, sales rose by 12% in the first year. The project lasted for 15 years. To shoot the film, BMW invited famous directors: Guy Ritchie, Alexandro Gonzalez Inarritu, Wong Kar Wai. The list of actors involved in the project is no less impressive: Mickey Rourke, James Brown, Madonna, Marilyn Manson. Every film in the series showed the advantages and individuality of the BMW car.²

The branded movie in the landscape of such a conservative business as the banking industry proved to be as effective: the short science fiction film *Beyond Money* was created for the Spanish bank Santander. The film tells the story of a woman who sells the most precious things to her, memories. The main goal of the integrated advertising campaign was to obtain and influence a new segment of the customer, the millennials. The film sparked a long and active discussion about the real value of money and human values in general. The financial results turned out to be more impressive than expected. In the first week after its release, the film was seen by 7.3 million people in cinemas, social networks, television, video services, on the Bank's website, and more. The brand's idea and values acquired a philosophical meaning, thus expanding its boundaries. For the first time in the Bank's 160-year history, there

has been a record increase in customers (including young customers).

The modern consumer now has expectations from the brand of not only the best product, but also an unforgettable story related to it. To create such a story, the traditional form of advertising is no longer enough, and the consumers are becoming less and less of a TV audience and switch to computer or mobile device screens. This kind of demand led to a need to create video content to be distributed via Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and company websites. On these platforms, the user chooses what to watch, which content and ad.

In order for the impact of branded movie on the viewer to be effective, it is essential to include an eternal theme, an original story, an emotional background. The success of a film is determined by collaboration of famous directors and actors. Fashion Films are the most prevalent trend of branded content. Fashion houses are increasingly using short feature films to establish an emotional connection with the customer.

Here are some interesting examples of the branded content created in the fashion industry:

During his 36-year career, creative director of Chanel, Karl Lagerfeld, along with unforgettable collections, has created exceptionally interesting short feature films as a director. The films show the uniqueness of Chanel by telling the biography of its founder. In the 2015 film *Once and Forever*, Geraldine Chaplin, Kristen Stewart and François Marthouret play the lead roles. The short documentary by Karl Lagerfeld shows the creative behind the scenes of a biographical film about Gabrielle Coco Chanel. The film *Reincarnation* (2014) describes an episode in the life of Gabrielle Coco Chanel in Salzburg, where a designer meets a porter dressed in a jacket with contrasting stitches and sewn-on pockets, whose attire had become an inspiration for the legendary Chanel dress. Keira Knightley and Clotilde Hesme play the lead roles in the film *Once Upon a Time* (2013). The storyline follows Coco Chanel as she opens her first store in France. *The Return* (2013) tells the story of Coco Chanel's return to the high fashion world after a 15-year hiatus.

2 <https://www.bmw-m.com/en/topics/magazine-article-pool/oscars-2018-bmw-m-in-the-movies.html>

Sophia Loren starred in a movie of Dolce & Gabbana shot by Oscar-winning director Giuseppe Tornatore in 2016 as part of the company's new perfume advertising campaign. The marketing topics of Dolce & Gabbana are constantly linked to traditions and coexistence of generations. Consequently, when the company invited three of the greatest masters of Italian cinema (Sophia Loren, Giuseppe Tornatore, Ennio Morricone) to the set, it was another confirmation of loyalty to eternal values, respect for Italian culture, and the film became an unforgettable Italian story.

In 2013, Wes Anderson directed an eight-minute short feature film, *Castello Cavalcanti*, for Prada Fashion House. The movie takes the viewer on a journey through director's imagination, bringing Italy of the 1950s to life. This film, like other works by Anderson, is remembered by viewers for its impressive storytelling, beautiful shots, and vivid colors. Thus, Prada is associated with impressiveness, beauty and colorfulness for the audience.³

Legendary Italian brand Salvatore Ferragamo released a series of short feature films *Walking Stories* in 2013, dedicated to the history of the brand. The series was published on the company's website at two-week intervals. The eight-episode miniseries, shot by Italian director Luca Guadagnino, stars 75-year-old American actor and top model Lauren Hutton.

The film describes a love story with a happy ending despite many contradictions. The action takes place in three cities, which are especially important to the brand: Los Angeles, where the legendary "shoemaker to the stars" was born; Shanghai, a symbol of future prospects, and Florence, the birthplace of the brand, where everything, including shoes, is uniquely beautiful and a true work of art. Everything in the film—images, dialogues, music, colors—is a representation of the brand's eternity, strength and distinctive elegance.⁴

The filming of *The Tale of Thomas Burberry* cost the company Burberry \$14 million. It tells the story of the life of the brand's founder, Thomas Burberry. The film describes a unique moment, the invention of Gab-

ardin, a lightweight, tough, waterproof fabric used to sew military uniforms. The film was seen by 15 million people. Its success is primarily due to its brilliant cast (Domhnall Gleeson, Sienna Miller, Lily James). Director Asif Kapadia made it possible for the audience to experience the triumph of success, the sweet taste of love and the bitterness of betrayal with the main character in the three-minute film.

The examples above are a clear confirmation of how branded content, branded films in particular, increases loyalty of the audience and how successfully it manages to accomplish multifaceted communication tasks. In order to maintain effective communication, brands need to create unforgettable, inspiring, interesting stories that will leave no one indifferent. Advertising and marketing image messages should be subliminal in this story. It may not even show a specific product—sometimes the brand name is only mentioned in the subtitles—but the main thing is that the viewer remembers the story, acquires an experience that exceeds expectations. There are studies showing that interesting video content causes the same neurochemical reaction as personal relationships. "Love hormone" oxytocin is secreted in the human brain. Stories related to the brand and emotions also define audience's emotional attitude towards its products and services.

Traditional advertising is increasingly replaced by impression marketing, organic advertising, branded content and content marketing. People need brands for self-assertion, self-expression, they consume not an item, but a story, a value, an icon. Accordingly, they choose the products and services of the companies that match their values and views.

That is why brands are no longer calling on potential customers to buy, but are primarily offering values. Consequently, in branded content, including movies, the main character is not a product, but the value that the brand embodies. In this way, branded content creates the desired perception of the brand and customer's loyalty to it, which ultimately affects the success of the business.

³ <https://www.prada.com/ww/en/pradasphere/films/2013/castello-cavalcanti.html>

⁴ <https://group.ferragamo.com/en/news/2013/2013-10-07-walking-stories-short-movie>

REFERENCES:

- Bly R., The Content Marketing Handbook: How to Double the Results of Your Marketing Campaigns, 2020.
- Kotler P., Armstrong G., Principles of Marketing, 8th European Edition, London, 2020.
- Pulizzi J., Native advertising, Content Marketing Institute. ganTavsebulia veb-gverdze: <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2015/08/native-advertising-content-marketing/> - gadamowmebulia (26.05.2020)
- Pulizzi J., Can we please stop using branded content?, Content Marketing Institute. ganTavsebulia <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2015/10/stop-using-branded-content/> - gadamowmebulia (26.05.2020).
- Zak P., How Stories Change the Brain, Greater Good in Action. ganTavsebulia [http:// greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_stories_change_brain](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_stories_change_brain) - gadamowmebulia (26.05.2020).
- Zak P., Why Your Brain Loves Good Storytelling, Harvard Business Review, 28.10.2014. ganTavsebulia <https://hbr.org/2014/10/why-your-brain-loves-goodstorytelling/> gadamowmebulia (26.05.2020).
- https://www.thebcma.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/BCMA-Research-Report_FINAL.pdf-gadamowmebulia (26.05.2020)
- Одден Л., Продающий контент. Как связать контент-маркетинг, SEO и социальные сети в единую систему, Москва, 2014.
- Эйнштейн М., Реклама под прикрытием. Нативная реклама, контент-маркетинг и тайный мир продвижения в интернете, Москва, 2017.