

Approaches to Transmedia and Digital Narratives in the Context of Social Advertising

Abstract

Social advertising has become a thriving field aimed at addressing social problems, where transmedia and digital narratives have emerged as promising avenues for shaping future perspectives. This review aims to explore the approaches social advertising takes toward transmedia narratives within the broader framework of digital narratives. The study employed a systematic review methodology, conducting comprehensive searches across multiple online databases without restrictions on timeframe, language, or methodological approach. Initially, 8,425 studies related to the predefined categories were identified. These studies underwent an independent filtering process based on titles, abstracts, and full texts, following established inclusion criteria. Ultimately, 14 studies were selected, providing insights into the use of narratives across diverse media platforms, including films, books, video games, and social networks, within the context of social advertising. The findings suggest that social advertising leverages transmedia and digital narratives as powerful communication tools, capable of crafting compelling stories that engage audiences and persuade them to support social causes. These narratives play a crucial role in responding to the multifaceted crises facing contemporary society.

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Aproximaciones de las narrativas transmedia y digital en el contexto de la publicidad social

Resumen

La publicidad social ha sido un campo en auge que busca encaminar resultados hacia los problemas sociales donde las narrativas transmedia y digital han sido incipientes para el desarrollo de perspectivas futuras. El objetivo de esta revisión fue determinar cuáles son los enfoques desde la publicidad social hacia las narrativas transmedia en el contexto de las narrativas digitales. La metodología utilizada consistió en una revisión sistemática a partir de la búsqueda en diversas bases de datos en línea, sin restricciones de tiempo, idioma o enfoque metodológico. Inicialmente, se identificaron 8425 estudios relacionados con las categorías predefinidas, los cuales fueron sometidos a un proceso de filtrado independiente con base en título, resumen y texto completo. Este procedimiento se efectuó de acuerdo a los criterios de inclusión delimitados. Finalmente, se incorporaron 14 estudios que ofrecieron perspectivas del uso de las narrativas a través de múltiples plataformas mediáticas, como películas, libros, videojuegos y redes sociales dentro de la publicidad social. Se concluye que la publicidad social considera a las narrativas transmedia y digitales como poderosas herramientas de comunicación, capaces de contar historias que cautiven a los consumidores, persuadiéndolos a favor de causas que buscan mejorar la sociedad como respuesta a las diversas crisis que vive el mundo contemporáneo.

Palabras clave:
narrativas transmedia, narrativas digitales, publicidad social, publicidad de bien social.

Introduction

The 21st century marks the peak of communication, characterized by the transformation of traditional media into new media. Technological convergence has integrated content capture, manipulation, storage, and distribution, fostering interactive creation dynamics (Manovich, 2002). One of the most significant aspects of this transformation, as highlighted by Henry Jenkins (2003), is the emergence of transmedia narratives—a form of storytelling that extends across multiple platforms, which enhances consumer engagement and participation.

According to Angulo and Vargas (2021) and Costa-Sánchez and López-García (2021), transmedia narratives are immersive and primarily web-based. A core platform connects various media and content within a project, immersing users in a digital environment. This highlights the relationship between transmedia and digital narratives, where the latter leverages network systems, devices, and digital channels to expand storytelling. Hermann-Acosta and Pérez-Garcías (2019) emphasize the shift from a one-way communication model, where audiences are passive, to a multi-directional model, where audiences assume an active role—a fundamental characteristic shared by both types of narratives. Another key aspect of digitalization in storytelling is its integration into people's daily lives (Drotner, 2008). Individuals are no longer just consumers but creators of their own stories, contributing to the expanding digital narrative landscape. While digital storytelling often centers on individual voices, it is deeply rooted in community-based initiatives (Hug, 2015). This has led to the emergence of social transmedia narratives, which, according to Angulo and Vargas (2021), transcend the fiction vs. non-fiction dichotomy. These narratives incorporate both forms of storytelling but are primarily driven by persuasive intent, in order to influence social behaviors and mobilize communities toward collective action.

Although Kotler and Armstrong (2003) argue that advertising is primarily commercial, it also has the potential to serve a social purpose. Social advertising is a type of persuasive communication that applies advertising techniques to raise awareness and address social issues (Senes and Ricciulli-Duarte, 2019). Alvarado López (2009) highlights that social advertising focuses on topics such as inclusion, health, and environmental sustainability, differentiating itself from commercial advertising through its non-profit objectives. Additionally, Alvarado López (2010) underscores its role in mobilizing citizens toward action and social change, responding to growing public awareness of social issues.

On the other hand, social media advertising involves the strategic use of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to promote products or services through segmentation techniques, data analysis, and algorithm-driven marketing, with predominantly commercial goals (Pahari *et al.*, 2024). While both social advertising and social media advertising use the same digital channels, their core purposes differ: social advertising prioritizes collective well-being and ethical values, while social media advertising focuses on maximizing engagement and financial returns (Arrambide *et al.*, 2012).

Given this context, we identified the need to analyze conceptual and applied approaches to transmedia and digital narratives in social advertising. This article provides an overview of transmedia narratives within digital storytelling, examining their role in advertising strategies aimed at driving social change.

Methodology

A systematic review was conducted using the scoping review approach, following the protocol established by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and the Joanna Briggs Institute (2011). The study adhered to the PRISMA framework for

scoping reviews (Page *et al.*, 2021) to analyze the available evidence related to the research question:

What are the approaches to transmedia narratives within the realm of digital narratives from the social advertising perspective?

The scope of the study was defined based on population, concept, and context, as outlined in Table 1:

Table 1. Definition of Population, Concept, and Context for the Systematic Review

| Category | Definition |
|------------|--|
| Population | Articles, books, book chapters, and thesis works addressing concepts or experiences related to the question. |
| Concept | Use or implementation of transmedia narratives in the context of digital narratives. |
| Context | Framework of social advertising. |

Note: compiled by the author.

To clarify the operationalization of the question, the following concept definitions were established:

Social advertising is a form of persuasive communication that applies advertising strategies to social causes, aiming to promote changes in attitudes and behaviors for collective well-being (Senes and Ricciulli-Duarte, 2019). Unlike commercial advertising, which seeks to generate profit, social advertising focuses on issues such as inclusion, health, and environmental protection (Alvarado López, 2009). Its primary goal is to mobilize citizens toward action

and social change, addressing growing public awareness of contemporary social challenges (Alvarado López, 2010).

The concept of transmedia narratives was introduced by Henry Jenkins, who stated: “We have entered a new era of media convergence that makes the flow of content across multiple channels inevitable” (Jenkins, 2006). Transmedia storytelling involves the strategic distribution of story elements across multiple platforms, offering an integrated and coordinated narrative experience. Each medium contributes uniquely to the development of the story, while users engage with and expand the narrative by interacting with its content and transferring it across platforms. This enriches the storyworld and its characters (Scolari, 2013, 2019). The significance of transmedia storytelling has grown in response to challenges faced by advertising, particularly within the framework of branded content and transmedia strategies (Castelló-Martínez *et al.*, 2016).

Digital media serves as a transformative narrative medium that enhances storytelling by combining diverse communicative elements, creating a multisensory experience that engages and captivates audiences in innovative ways (Abd Rahman y Bakar, 2020). According to Elias and Almeida (2018), contemporary society is shaping a new literary space, where users navigate hyperlinked content to explore online narratives.

Digital narratives integrate various digital tools and media by combining text, images, audio, video, and interactive elements to provide immersive and interactive experiences. These narratives facilitate the exploration of complex topics, promote active learning, and enhance content creation and dissemination. Through advanced digital technologies, digital narratives connect modern audiences with compelling storytelling formats (Kapaniaris and Dimitriou, 2023).

Selection Criteria

Studies were included without restrictions on publication date, language, methodological approach, or study type. Eligible sources encompassed theses, book chapters, and proceedings from academic events that addressed the research topic.

Exclusion Criteria

Studies were excluded if they did not address the defined concepts or fell outside the framework of social advertising or related themes. Additionally, texts focused on commercial advertising within a strictly business-oriented context were omitted.

Search and Selection of Articles

Two researchers conducted independent systematic searches across multiple academic databases, using the following predefined keywords in Scopus, Taylor & Francis, Sage, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, SciELO, RedAlyc, and Dialnet.

Table 2. Defined Keywords for Search Execution

| TERM SEARCH | | | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| | TERMS IN SPANISH | TERMS IN ENGLISH | THESAURUS |
| 4 | <i>Publicidad Social</i> | Social Advertising | Not found |
| 5 | <i>Publicidad de bien social</i> | Non-profit advertising | Not found |
| 6 | <i>Publicidad</i> | Advertising | Advertising |
| 7 | <i>Social</i> | Social | Not found |

| TERM SEARCH | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | TERMS IN SPANISH | TERMS IN ENGLISH | THESAURUS |
| 8 | <i>Narrativa Transmedia</i> | Transmedia Narrative | Not found |
| 9 | <i>Narrativa</i> | Narrative | Not found |
| 10 | <i>Transmedia</i> | Transmedia | Not found |
| 11 | <i>Storytelling</i> | Story telling | Story telling |
| 12 | <i>Contenidos digitales</i> | Digital content | Not found |
| 13 | <i>Medios digitales</i> | digital media | Not found |
| 14 | <i>Medios sociales</i> | Social media | Social Media |
| 15 | <i>Digital</i> | Digital | Not found |

Note: compiled by the author.

Term Combinations

From the previously defined keywords, the following combinations were used to conduct database searches:

1. Advertising + Social + Transmedia Storytelling + Social media
2. Advertising + Social + Storytelling + Digital media
3. Advertising + Social + Narrative + Storytelling + Digital
4. Social Advertising + Transmedia + Digital media
5. Social Advertising + Transmedia Storytelling + Social media
6. Social Advertising + Storytelling + Digital content
7. Social good advertising + Transmedia + Digital
8. Social good advertising + storytelling + Social media
9. Social good advertising + Narrative + Digital content

Selection of studies

The initial selection of records was carried out independently by the researchers. The process began with the elimination of duplicate entries, followed by a systematic review of titles, abstracts, and full texts to assess their relevance to the study criteria. After applying these filtering steps, a total of 14 studies were selected for inclusion in the review. The selection process is visually represented in the following flowchart:

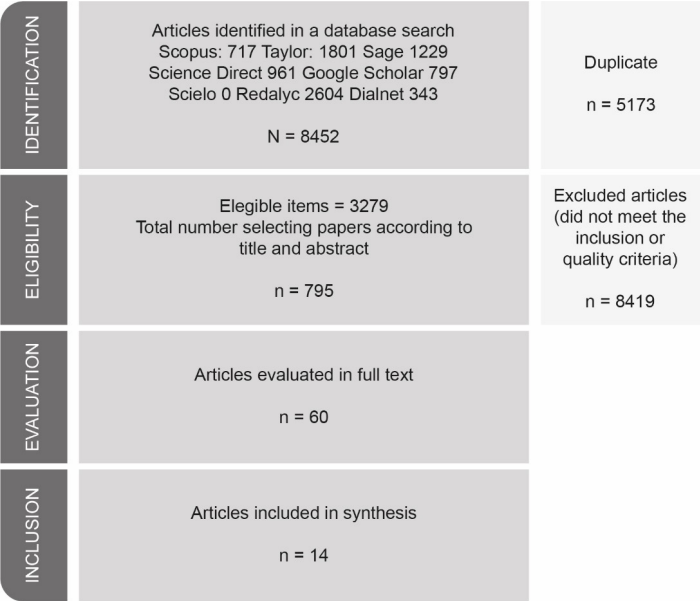


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Systematic Review Process.
Note: created by author.

Following the selection process, all relevant aspects of each study were systematically extracted into a review template. This template encompassed the following elements: *author identification, *publication year and country, *nature and type of study, *methodological approach, and *direct link to the article's website. Additionally, the template included *components of transmedia narratives, *components of digital narratives, *delimitation within social advertising, and *results.

Results

The analysis revealed that half of the selected studies were published between 2019 and 2023, which represent recent and cutting-edge literature (Sánchez *et al.*, 2022; Gutiérrez and Toro, 2021; Ore Saavedra and Torres López, 2021; Costa-Sánchez and López-García, 2021; Forero Santos *et al.*, 2020; Martínez Vásquez, 2020; Rodrigo-Cano *et al.*, 2019). The remaining studies, published between 2011 and 2017, provided foundational perspectives on the subject (Duarte Tello, 2017; Marfil-Carmona, 2013; García López and Simancas González, 2016; García López and Simancas González, 2015; Pence, 2011). The geographic focus of these studies was predominantly Western, with two major clusters: The United States, recognized as the epicenter of advertising, digital technologies, and transmedia narratives, and Latin America, where these concepts have gained traction in countries such as Spain, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru. One study provided an outlier perspective, analyzing a case from Kenya, Africa (García-López and Simancas-González, 2015), highlighting the global expansion of these narratives beyond Western contexts. The interdisciplinary intersection of transmedia narratives, digital narratives, and social advertising has only recently emerged as a focus of academic research. This growing interest is driven by the increasing relevance of these interconnected fields and their adaptation from their origins in developed countries to developing regions. These emerging markets present

unique cultural conditions that emphasize the importance of social themes in advertising.

Table 3. Characteristics of the Studies

| Author | Year | Context | Nature of the study | Type of text | Methodology | Type of Study |
|---|------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---|
| Sánchez Ortega & Toledano Cuervas-Mons. | 2022 | Spain | Theoretical | Article | Qualitative study | Case study, content analysis |
| Pence, H. E. | 2011 | United States | Theoretical | Article | Qualitative study | Topic review, descriptive type |
| Gutiérrez Muñoz, Ó. A., & Toro Ulloa, C. | 2021 | Chile | Theoretical | Article | Qualitative study | Scientific and technological research |
| Rodrigo-Cano, D., Picó, M. J., & Dimuro, G. | 2019 | Ecuador | Theoretical | Article | Qualitative study | Topic review |
| Duarte Tello, M. C. | 2017 | Colombia | Practical | Undergraduate thesis | Mixed Study | Scientific and technological research |
| Forero Santos, J. A., Ríos Cardona, C., Díaz Ospina, J., Mejía Gallo, S., Céspedes Valencia, F., Gallego López, F. A., ... & Betancurth Aguirre, V. | 2020 | Colombia | Theoretical | Book chapter | Qualitative study | Case study |
| García López, M., & Simancas González, E. | 2016 | West culture | Theoretical | Article | Qualitative study | Methodological triangulation: state of the art, case analysis, and oral micro-stories |

| Author | Year | Context | Nature of the study | Type of text | Methodology | Type of Study |
|--|------|--|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---|
| García López, M., & Simancas González, E. | 2015 | West culture | Theoretical | Article | Qualitative study | Methodological triangulation: state of the art, case analysis, and oral micro-stories |
| García López, M., & Simancas González, E. | 2015 | Latin America Africa: Spain, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico and Kenia | Theoretical | Memory, congress | Qualitative study | Case study |
| Marfil-Carmona R. | 2013 | Europe, United States | Theoretical | Article | Qualitative study | Case study, description, and analysis, with a narratological analytical criterion |
| Marfil-Carmona R. | 2017 | Europe and the United States | Theoretical | Doctoral thesis | Mixed study | Case study, narrative interpretation, and content analysis |
| Martínez Vásquez, R. A. | 2020 | Spain | Theoretical | Research work | Qualitative study | Case study, focus group, and expert interviews |
| Ore Saavedra, D. J., & Torres Lopez, L. B. | 2021 | Peru, Latin America | Theoretical | Undergraduate thesis | Qualitative study | Case study |
| Costa-Sánchez, C. y López-García, X. | 2021 | Latin America | Theoretical | Article | Qualitative study | Case study, exploratory work through content analysis in the Latin American context between 2014 and 2018 |

Note: compiled by the author.

Regarding the nature of the studies, the majority were theoretical, even when addressing practical advertising tools. This suggests a strong intent to systematize experiences and engage them in conceptual discourse. In terms of study structure, most works adopted a narrative writing style, aligning with the categories under analysis. Some studies deviated from traditional academic formats, instead following Aristotle's narrative model in *The Poetics* (Ross, 2022), which consists of a beginning, middle, and end. This structural preference reflects a qualitative methodological approach, particularly in works by Costa-Sánchez and López-García (2021), Duarte Tello (2017), Forero Santos *et al.* (2020), García López and Simancas González (2016), García López and Simancas González (2015), Gutiérrez and Toro (2021), Marfil-Carmona (2017), Marfil-Carmona (2013), Martínez Vásquez (2020), Oré and Torres (2021), Pence (2011), Rodrigo-Cano *et al.* (2019), and Sánchez *et al.* (2022). These studies emphasized the role of characters and their narratives, which reinforces the story-driven nature of transmedia and digital narratives.

Additionally, two studies utilized a mixed-method approach, which demonstrates that transmedia storytelling can benefit from quantifiable data (Duarte Tello, 2017; Marfil-Carmona, 2017). This methodological choice provides concrete insights into the impact and effectiveness of narratives within social advertising. In terms of study classification, most texts presented case studies, while two were literature reviews, two were scientific and technological research articles, and two employed methodological triangulation by combining state-of-the-art analysis, case studies, and oral micronarratives. This diversity of approaches suggests that transmedia and digital narratives in social advertising are being examined from multiple perspectives and reflect the field's evolving nature and its multifaceted implications.

Table 4. Delimitation of Transmedia and Digital Narratives in the Context of Social Advertising

| Author(s) | Components of Transmedia Narratives | Components of Digital Narratives | Delimitation in Social Advertising | Results |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Sánchez Ortega & Toledano Cuervas-Mons. (2022) | The campaign “ <i>In Spain We Call It Igualdad</i> ” includes television spots and social media posts in poster and banner formats. | The narrative integrates digital technologies such as social media and virtual platforms. It employs hashtags to create virtual communities and foster collective intelligence. | The campaign raises awareness about gender equality. | The study examines the relationship among advertising, activism, and social narratives within digital communication, focusing on transmedia narratives. |
| Pence, H. E. (2011) | Defines transmedia narratives as stories that unfold across multiple platforms, with each element contributing uniquely to the whole. | The study highlights digital elements such as social media, mobile computing, and augmented reality, which shape transmedia narratives in education. | The study links social advertising to education. | The study discusses the advantages and limitations of transmedia narratives in higher education. |
| Gutiérrez Muñoz and Toro Ulloa (2021) | The transmedia project “ <i>La Ciudad Como Texto</i> ” serves as an archive that reflects the layered nature of urban spaces during the Chilean social uprising (2019–2020). | Digital media document social processes and provide a critical perspective on sociopolitical contexts. | The project subverts market-driven advertising and uses artistic production for social engagement. | The study analyzes “ <i>La Ciudad Como Texto</i> ” and its connection to the Chilean protests, emphasizing alternative applications of transmedia and digital narratives in social movements. |
| Rodrigo-Cano, Picó, and Dimuro (2019) | The study identifies transmedia narratives related to environmental communication and climate change through a literature review of <i>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</i> from 2011 to 2018. | Digital communication channels include social media, online journalism, video games, digital videos (YouTube), and environmental education platforms. | The study critiques <i>greenwashing</i> , where companies falsely promote products as environmentally friendly. It also examines eco-citizenship and environmental education through the <i>Confint</i> campaign. | The study highlights the need for engaged citizens to critically assess sustainability and environmental justice, emphasizing the role of digital literacy. |

| Author(s) | Components of Transmedia Narratives | Components of Digital Narratives | Delimitation in Social Advertising | Results |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Duarte Tello (2017) | The study explores transmedia storytelling, where stories develop across multiple platforms to form a cohesive whole. | Digital platforms and social media support participatory culture and user-generated content. | The study argues that social advertising differs from commercial advertising by delivering messages for the public good. | The findings reveal that many individuals recognize social issues but lack knowledge on how to address them, highlighting the informational role of social advertising. |
| Forero Santos et al. (2020) | The study examines transmedia narratives in anti-cyberbullying campaigns through platforms such as comics, television series, films, and video games. | Digital literacy plays a crucial role in educating youth on responsible media consumption. | The study categorizes public welfare advertising as a tool for promoting behavioral change in society. | The study underscores the significance of technological transfer in published research and its potential to inform the development of academic programs. |
| García López and Simancas González (2016) | The study outlines the epistemological foundation of transmedia narratives and their applications in social advertising. | Digital networks and platforms drive the adoption of transmedia storytelling. | The study positions transmedia storytelling within social advertising and advocacy campaigns. | The study highlights the optimistic discursive strategies of <i>Manos Unidas</i> audiovisual advertising, emphasizing open-ended conclusions and messages of hope. |
| García López and Simancas González (2015) | The study analyzes Ibero-American transmedia projects, including interactive documentaries on social change movements, alternate reality games (ARGs), and protest songs from the 15M movement in Spain. | The study emphasizes the role of digital citizenship and the contributions of art and digital technologies to social transformation. | The study focuses on transmedia storytelling in social movements across Spain, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, and Kenya. | The study references proceedings from the <i>2015 Comunicambio Conference</i> , discussing transmedia's role in social advocacy and activism. |

| Author(s) | Components of Transmedia Narratives | Components of Digital Narratives | Delimitation in Social Advertising | Results |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Marfil-Carmona (2017) | The study investigates transmedia storytelling in advertising and the outreach efforts of <i>Non-Governmental Organizations for Development (NGODs)</i> through case studies such as <i>#FoodShareFilter</i> by Manos Unidas and UNICEF's " <i>¿Me ayudas?</i> " campaign. | Institutional communication and digital media create an interactive user experience. | The study introduces <i>solidarity advertising</i> , distinct from commercial advertising in its focus on social engagement. | The study emphasizes the importance of user participation in transmedia narratives and the role of digital media in fostering social engagement. |
| Martínez Vásquez (2020) | The study examines the <i>TOMS</i> brand campaign " <i>One Day Without Shoes</i> ", structured around the stages of sharing, co-developing, socializing, advocating, and learning. | The digital space serves as the primary medium for campaign execution and user engagement. | The study considers social advertising as a tool for brands to communicate environmental concerns to socially conscious consumers. | The study evaluates the campaign's impact on user behavior and its effectiveness in fostering engagement. |
| Ore Saavedra and Torres López (2021) | The study analyzes transmedia storytelling in the BBVA campaign " <i>Queremos Ser Vistas Lima 2020</i> ", which promotes women's soccer. | The campaign utilizes social media channels such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. | The campaign advocates for gender equality in sports, bridging advertising and social causes. | The study identifies the transmedia components of the campaign and examines how digital platforms contribute to its recognition as a social narrative. |
| Costa-Sánchez and López-García (2021) | The study analyzes 25 transmedia projects developed in Latin America between 2014 and 2018, categorized as <i>social transmedia storytelling</i> . | The study describes how offline social narratives transition to digital platforms, expanding audience participation. | The study defines social advertising as an area that transcends fiction and non-fiction, employing a persuasive and mobilizing intent. | The study presents a content analysis of transmedia narratives, examining authorship, themes, narrative structures, platforms, audience interaction, and monetization strategies. |

Note: compiled by the author.

Components of the Transmedia Narrative

Six studies examined the relation among transmedia narratives, digital narratives, and social advertising. Two of these were particularly noteworthy: one described the proceedings of the *Comunicambio 2015* conference, which brought together Ibero-American projects examining this intersection, and another conducted a systematic review of projects within the Latin American context that incorporated these narrative forms.

The remaining studies analyzed advertising campaigns, most of which were developed by Non-Governmental Development Organizations (NGDOs). Notable examples included *Manos Unidas'* #FoodShareFilter application, UNICEF's "*¿Me ayudas?*" campaign, and BBVA's *Queremos ser vistas Lima 2020* initiative. Campaigns centered on themes such as gender equality and the role of women in society (Costa-Sánchez and López-García, 2021; Duarte Tello, 2017; Forero Santos *et al.*, 2020; García López and Simancas González, 2016; García López and Simancas González, 2015; Gutiérrez and Toro, 2021; Marfil-Carmona, 2017; Martínez Vásquez 2020; Oré and Torres, 2021; Pence, 2011; Rodrigo-Cano *et al.*, 2019; Sánchez *et al.*, 2022).

Two studies focused on environmental issues and climate change mitigation (Martínez Vásquez, 2020; Rodrigo-Cano *et al.*, 2019), while another two addressed urban social issues (Martínez Vásquez, 2020; Rodrigo-Cano *et al.*, 2019). One study examined cyberbullying (Forero Santos *et al.*, 2020). These thematic explorations demonstrate the authors' intent to highlight narratives that address social issues relevant to consumer audiences.

Although the studies varied in their descriptions of transmedia narratives, they all agreed on a core definition: *transmedia storytelling* refers to constructing

a cohesive narrative across multiple media platforms, including films, books, video games, and social networks.

Components of the Digital Narrative

Several studies (Duarte Tello, 2017; Gutiérrez and Toro, 2021; Pence, 2011; Rodrigo-Cano *et al.*, 2019) emphasized the role of digital platforms in shaping transmedia narratives in social and educational contexts. These studies examined communication methods involving social networks, video games, digital videos, augmented reality, mobile computing, and online learning. They concluded that digital platforms facilitate user connectivity, information exchange, and the formation of virtual communities that contribute to collective intelligence (Lévy, 2022), that is, intelligence distributed among the components of a system that facilitates mutual recognition among individuals.

Other studies focused on digital literacy, defining it as the process of educating and equipping young individuals to use digital media responsibly and effectively. Researchers explored key areas such as privacy rights, freedom of expression, access to information, respect for others, and digital citizenship to ensure a safe and ethical online environment (Forero Santos *et al.*, 2020; García López and Simancas González, 2016; García López and Simancas González, 2015).

Some authors argued that digital media serve as the primary vehicle for modern advertising campaigns, linking persuasive communication to digital environments (Costa-Sánchez and López-García, 2021; Marfil Carmona, 2017; Martínez Vásquez, 2020; Oré and Torres, 2021; Sánchez *et al.*, 2022). This perspective underscores how digital platforms facilitate advertising strategies while also fostering networked communities that support digital education and digital citizenship.

Delimitation of Studies in the Context of Social Advertising

In their studies Oré and Torres, 2021, and Yousef, M., Dietrich, T., & Rundle-Thiele, S, 2021. analyzed advertising campaigns designed to promote gender equality. The former examined the *In Spain We Call It Igualdad* campaign (2020), which integrated creative activism to engage the target audience while maintaining the intended message. The latter investigated BBVA's *Queremos ser vistas Lima 2020*, a transmedia campaign advocating for gender equality in women's soccer through an emotionally charged narrative.

Other researchers (Costa-Sánchez and López-García, 2021; Duarte Tello, 2017; Forero Santos *et al.*, 2020; García López and Simancas González, 2016; García López and Simancas González, 2015; Gutiérrez and Toro, 2021; Marfil-Carmona, 2017; Martínez Vásquez, 2020; Rodrigo-Cano *et al.*, 2019) expanded on the concept of *social good advertising*, which seeks to promote values that improve people's quality of life (Orozco-Toro, J. A. and Muñoz-Sánchez, O., 2019). Related concepts emerged, such as *compassionate advertising*, which refers to marketing strategies that demonstrate genuine concern for the safety and well-being of consumers (Wienberger & Lepkowska-White, 2000). Other relevant concepts include social communication, which involves processes of participatory, dialogic, horizontal and inclusive interaction, aimed at sustainable human development and the construction of active citizenships (Saladrigas Medina, de la Noval Bautista, & Portal Moreno, 2021), and *social change*, which refers to modifying societal structures to create more inclusive and equitable conditions (Weber, 2004).

definida como el proceso de difundir mensajes que transmiten significados socialmente significativos (Saladrigas Medina, de la Noval Bautista, & Portal Moreno, 2021) y el cambio social, que se refiere a la modificación de las

estructuras sociales para crear condiciones más inclusivas y equitativas (Weber, 2004).

The review also identified the use of *digital literacy* as a tool to educate young audiences on responsible digital media usage (Forero Santos *et al.*, 2020; Rodrigo-Cano *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, the concept of *Confint* emerged as an environmental education initiative that integrates sustainability into educational frameworks (Rodrigo-Cano *et al.*, 2019).

While some studies did not explicitly define these concepts, they alluded to the social purpose of advertising in the context of transmedia narratives. For example, Pence (2011) examined the implications of transmedia storytelling in higher education, while Marfil-Carmona (2013) analyzed the role of emotional advertising in engaging audiences. The latter study focused on UNICEF's *¿Me ayudas?* campaign, exploring the strategic processes that shaped its message.

The findings illustrate the intersection between transmedia storytelling and socially oriented advertising. This relationship underscores the need for creative and engaging initiatives that generate a lasting societal impact. Advertising campaigns that promote gender equality and collective well-being employ innovative strategies to mobilize audiences toward social change.

Unlike commercial advertising, which primarily seeks financial gain, social advertising prioritizes ethical values and collective benefits. It leverages digital media and platforms to reach broader audiences and foster meaningful engagement. Although both advertising forms share tools and strategies, their objectives differ fundamentally: social advertising aims to transform attitudes and behaviors to achieve the common good.

Results and Characteristics Reported in the Studies

Three studies (García López and Simancas González, 2016; García López and Simancas González, 2015; Gutiérrez and Toro, 2021) identified social advertising as an effective tool for disseminating messages and supporting activism. Gutiérrez and Toro (2021) specifically analyzed *La ciudad como texto* and its connection to social uprisings in Chile, demonstrating that both contexts seek to drive positive societal change, albeit through different approaches. Meanwhile, García López and Simancas González (2016) and García López and Simancas González (2015) confirmed the interrelation between social movements and transmedia narratives, emphasizing their potential to foster social change by increasing public engagement and participation.

Two studies (Forero Santos *et al.*, 2020; Pence, 2011) highlighted the benefits of transmedia narratives in higher education. They identified key advantages such as the creation of immersive and collaborative learning experiences, the expansion of learning channels, and the enhancement of digital competencies, all of which contribute to improved student engagement. Similarly, Rodrigo-Cano *et al.* (2019) underscored the role of education and environmental communication in addressing climate change and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. The study emphasized the importance of fostering critical and engaged eco-citizenship to promote environmental responsibility.

Gender equality emerged as a central theme in studies by Duarte Tello (2017), Oré and Torres (2021), and Sánchez *et al.* (2022). *In Spain We Call It Igualdad* (Sánchez *et al.*, 2022) and *Queremos ser vistas Lima 2020* (Oré and Torres, 2021) illustrated how advertising, activism, and social narratives converge within digital communication. Duarte Tello (2017) further distinguished social advertising from commercial advertising, arguing that the former aims to deliver messages that benefit society as a whole. Collectively,

these studies demonstrated that transmedia strategies for social causes have evolved from the broader movement advocating for women's empowerment.

Authors such as Costa-Sánchez and López-García (2021), García and Simancas (2015), Marfil-Carmona (2017), Marfil-Carmona (2013), and Martínez Vásquez (2020) emphasized the significance of digital citizenship and the contributions of art and digital technologies in shaping it. Their findings demonstrated how Non-Governmental Development Organizations (NGDOs) have adopted new communication strategies to maximize engagement and optimize budgets. Prominent examples included the *#FoodShareFilter* mobile application by Manos Unidas and UNICEF's *¿Me ayudas?* campaign. The authors also emphasized the shift in responsibility for social consciousness from brands to consumers, positioning the latter as the primary agents of change. Finally, Marfil-Carmona (2017) analyzed transmedia narratives in audiovisual advertising campaigns between 2014 and 2018, focusing on their distribution via social networks. The study highlighted the role of social and solidarity advertising in increasing visibility through digital platforms.

Discussion

148

This article analyzed a series of studies that examine persuasive advertising with a social focus, reinforcing the inseparable nature of the advertising-society dyad. This symbiotic relationship suggests that advertising and society are interdependent and mutually necessary (Senes and Ricciulli Duarte, 2019). The literature employs various terms to describe these processes, including social advertising, public welfare advertising, and solidarity advertising. Additionally, concepts such as social communication and social change converge in their shared emphasis on the societal purpose of communication, aligning with the perspectives of Deshmukh and Srivastava (2021). According to these authors,

social advertising seeks to develop narratives that articulate societal concerns and propose viable solutions.

Within this framework, transmedia and digital narratives emerge as essential tools that enable the construction of compelling stories capable of engaging consumers. Digital narratives facilitate content creation and dissemination through hypermedia communication, allowing audiences to shift from passive recipients to active participants in the co-creation of collective knowledge. This transformation fosters the formation of virtual communities and promotes the development of collective intelligence (Hermann-Acosta and Pérez-Garcias, 2019).

Hermann-Acosta and Pérez-Garcias (2019) further suggest that digital narratives serve as the foundation for transmedia narratives, which integrate multiple communication modalities—auditory, visual, and hypertextual—across various platforms supported by digital technologies. This aligns with the findings of this review, which highlight how transmedia storytelling enhances advertising narratives by strategically deploying content across multiple platforms. Each platform contributes uniquely to crafting a message that fosters social consciousness. This process not only integrates advertising into everyday life but also enables audiences to critically engage with their social realities, utilizing creativity and digital skills to drive meaningful change (Venkatesh, 2021).

For advertising professionals, digital narratives provide a strategic link between the social objectives of the field and two predominant advertising approaches of the 21st century: transmedia storytelling and hypermedia communication. The findings indicate a professional landscape where advertising plays a crucial role in addressing contemporary global crises while aligning with evolving communication dynamics in the information and knowledge society.

The integration of transmedia narratives in social advertising presents a promising opportunity to transform how social issues are communicated, fostering a deeper and more interactive connection with audiences. However, the effectiveness of this approach relies not only on its ability to transcend platforms but also on how well social messages are strategically embedded within the content flow. While interactivity and participation are fundamental, it is equally important to consider how diverse audiences interpret and engage with these messages, given the variability of cultural and social contexts.

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Although media convergence theoretically strengthens message resonance, practical challenges such as information saturation and overexposure to specific topics may hinder audience engagement. As contemporary audiences become increasingly fragmented and skeptical of commercial messaging, social advertising must provide meaningful experiences that extend beyond superficial persuasion to generate tangible shifts in attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, the real challenge of transmedia narratives lies not just in capturing attention but in fostering real-world change. This requires advertising initiatives to be designed with a critical perspective that sensitively and responsibly addresses prevailing social inequalities and challenges.

Additionally, the ongoing evolution of digital media demands continuous adaptation—not only in terms of the technological channels used but also in the development of media literacy among audiences. Empowering audiences to critically and constructively engage in social change processes is imperative to maximize the transformative potential of social advertising.

A key recommendation for researchers is to further explore and expand knowledge on social advertising and its intersection with transmedia and digital narratives. One notable limitation in existing studies is the lack of rigorous, high-quality research. To address this, methodologies typically applied in health sciences have been employed in this review, providing a systematic approach to identifying, organizing, and analyzing data to enhance research accuracy and reliability.

Conclusions

This study has identified multiple designations within the social advertising domain, each interconnected with digital and transmedia narratives. Despite their variations, these designations converge in their fundamental goal of promoting social well-being and addressing global challenges through communication strategies that engage and mobilize audiences.

From the perspective of social advertising, the integration of transmedia narratives in the digital sphere has facilitated the development of campaigns that leverage multiple media platforms. This approach enhances audience participation and fosters greater engagement with social change and transformation. By disseminating messages across various channels, social advertising effectively amplifies its reach and impact.

Furthermore, social advertising must underscore the critical role of creativity in conjunction with corporate social responsibility. A deeper understanding of how brand communication contributes to shaping a more equitable and sustainable society is essential. Additionally, the significance of digital literacy and digital competency remains paramount, particularly in the realms of environmental education and higher education, where these skills are instrumental in fostering informed and responsible digital citizens.

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