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Sponsored consumer-generated advertising in the digital era: what prompts individuals to generate video ads, and what creative strategies do they adopt?

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates individuals' motivations to create sponsored video ads in response to corporate online advertising competitions, and the creative strategies they employ when so doing. The findings from two studies that combined qualitative (42 semi-structured interviews and netnography) and quantitative (content analysis of 1,102 ads) research methods showed that individuals are motivated to produce sponsored video advertising by six factors: learning, enjoyment, self-expression, remuneration, recognition and influencing others. In turn, these motivations can be categorised as intrinsic, extrinsic, rational and affective, leading to a typology of four advertising creators. It was found also that individuals tend to use narrative forms of advertising more when creating commercial ads, and expository forms more when creating nonprofit ads. The study demonstrates that individuals are willing to co-create and transmit brand value by producing sponsored video ads, and have become an essential element of marketing communications in the digital era. Organisations may benefit from sponsored CGA by gathering consumers' insights, through improved individual-organisation relationships and by obtaining promotional material that might persuade audiences and stimulate online conversations.

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Introduction

Since the late 19th century, advertising contests have invited individuals to create slogans, jingles, catchy phrases, brand stories, and ads. Publishers initially sought to attract advertisers by deploying advertising competitions in magazines to train their audiences to read ads through rebuses, puzzles, quizzes, games, and challenges (Garvey 1996). Later, corporations began using this tool to drive sales (Ryan 2005) and increase individuals' involvement with brands (Taylor and Kopp 1991).

These campaigns traditionally have been conducted through corporately controlled media. However, the advent and evolution of social media have shifted the paradigm

from unilateral integrated marketing communications (IMC) to a multidimensional paradigm characterised by multiple touchpoints, both corporately controlled and consumer controlled (Vollero, Schultz, and Siano 2019). The current digital media ecosystem, which is characterised by continuous public, real-time online social interactions between consumers and consumers and between consumers and organisations, has also changed individuals' motivations to contribute branded content, that is, advertising (Gensler et al. 2013).

Thus, sponsored consumer-generated advertising (CGA) competitions, on which the present study focuses, represent a new form of advertising contest, distinct from those conducted in the past two centuries. These new contests typically involve organisations calling on consumers to co-create brand value in the digital public sphere through a democratised social media-based interactive process in which multiple actors participate. We define sponsored CGA as incentivised, user-generated online video content related to brands, products, services, causes and organisations, developed with promotional, persuasive or awareness-raising intent, created in response to calls made by the sponsoring entities. The term 'sponsored' is used in this research to reflect the incentivising role of the organisations which invite individuals to produce advertising. Incentives offered to winners in advertising competitions range from cash prizes to trips, event tickets, grants and valuable sets of products, among others.

There are multiple examples of sponsored CGA, conducted by both profit and nonprofit organisations. For instance, Trend Micro, a multinational cyber security company, has sponsored the 'What's Your Story?' contest every year since 2011. The contest encourages youths to create videos about the safe and responsible use of technology. After a public voting period, and a final judging phase, the contest winners are announced on the company's digital channel. The winners are awarded cash prizes ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 USD. Doritos, from 2006 to 2016, in the USA ran its popular 'Crash the Super Bowl' campaign, which rewarded its annual winners with 1,000,000 USD. An example from the nonprofit side is the 'Project Yellow Light Scholarship Contest', which encouraged students to create short public service announcements aimed at raising awareness about the dangers of texting while driving.

The role of the organisation in these initiatives includes defining the contest rules, which may include setting creative parameters related to ad structure and content, the mechanics of the competition, the reward system and the criteria for choosing the winners; participants work as creatives, producers and content distributors. In this research we differentiate sponsored CGA contests from other related phenomena, such as crowdsource advertising projects. CGA contests are omnichannel initiatives taken by sponsoring organisations to encourage the general public to co-create brand value; they are not addressed exclusively at specific online communities of creatives.

Sponsored CGA is attracting growing research attention (Knoll 2016). Sponsored CGA campaigns provide companies with consumers' insights (Roth and Kimani 2014), enhance consumer-brand relationships (Olsen and Pracejus 2020) and lower the cost of generating ads. Furthermore, CGA videos, when distributed online by both the sponsor and the creator, inspire brand-related conversations (both consumer-consumer and brand-consumer) that contribute to build brand meaning and from which organisations can receive feedback (Campbell et al. 2011). Ultimately, sponsored CGA videos

generate more positive consumer attitudes and behaviours than their company-created counterparts (e.g. Hansen, Lee, and Lee 2014; Hautz et al. 2014; Lawrence, Fournier, and Brunel 2013). Therefore, marketers need to understand what motivates individuals to co-create brand value in the digital age (Haarhoff and Kleyn, 2012) by producing sponsored video ads (Burmam 2010; Steyn et al. 2011), and what creative strategies they use in the production process (Gensler et al. 2013).

Our research goal was threefold. First, as individuals want their ideas to be seen and heard in the digital media when co-creating value with organisations (Erevelles et al. 2008), we aimed at shedding light on their motivations to participate in sponsored CGA competitions. Unlike the sponsored advertising contests ran in printed media in earlier times, and the more recent social media-based brand contests, sponsored CGA contests request participants specifically to make video ads, a format which usually requires participants to devote a certain amount of time, creativity and effort. Moreover, it should be noted that, unlike advertising contests run on specific crowd-source platforms, individuals participating in sponsored CGA may be publicly acknowledged to be digital media-based brand ambassadors (Vollero, Schultz, and Siano 2019). Furthermore, most competitions invite the public to vote for the best works. Consequently, the producers may be mentioned and cited in the public dialogues between individuals, and between individuals and firms, that branded content often generates on social media (Campbell et al. 2011; Nyangwe and Buhalis 2018).

Second, it may be that contest participants have different motivations, based on the nature of the sponsoring organisations. Therefore, this study did not focus solely on the commercial sector, as nonprofit organisations are increasingly adopting advertising co-creation strategies (Dibb and Carrigan 2013) and have, over the last few years, doubled their digital advertising budgets (Statista 2019). Furthermore, studies into sponsored nonprofit CGA have demonstrated its effectiveness in terms of attitudes towards the cause being promoted, and have called for further research in this sector (Orazi, Bove, and Lei 2016; Paek et al. 2011).

Third, we focused strongly on the producers' creative processes to identify which advertising formats (e.g. expository vs. narrative) they adopted in their video ads. Video ads tend to express the knowledge, thoughts, experiences and values their creators derive from the promoted product or cause (Ertimur and Gilly 2012; Fox, Nakhata, and Deitz 2019). Therefore, we considered it imperative to examine the creative forms that their producers used in these sponsored ads. The classification of formats used in this study draws on the literature on the creative message strategies used in advertising (e.g. Boller 1990; Deighton, Romer, and McQueen 1989; Wells 1989), as discussed below.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. First, we briefly review the different types of CGA contests that have been staged to date, and the literature on consumers' motivations to engage in value co-creation activities and on advertising creative message strategies. These lead to the proposition of a research question and two hypotheses. Then, a research programme combining qualitative and quantitative methods is described. Some 42 semi-structured interviews with creators of sponsored video ads, and netnography, were carried out. Netnography is a nonobtrusive qualitative technique which involves the discretionary collection of ethnographic information in the context of the Internet (see Kozinets 2002). Thereafter, the results of a

quantitative content analysis of 1,102 sponsored video ads are presented. Finally, we discuss the research findings, managerial implications, the limitations of the study and further research directions.

Background

Advertising contests: a brief lookback

Advertising contests have been, since the late 19th century, a popular tactic used to increase consumers' involvement with advertising, product knowledge, brand reputation and sales (Garvey 1996; Roth 2013a). In 1897, a US-based magazine asked its readers to produce advertising materials in a contest that would 'award ten dollars to the writer of the best original advertisement of any article advertised' (Woman's World and Jenness Miller Monthly 1897). Later, in the early twentieth century, other American publications, for example the *St. Nicholas* magazine and *Ladies' World*, acting in the interests of advertisers, invited adults, children, and even schools, to undertake creative ad-based tasks. As Garvey (1996, p. 78–79) argued, in reference to this period:

The advertising contests encouraged readers to bring advertising materials into their lives, to incorporate brand names and advertising slogans into their conversation and writing, and to see the world through a new set of categories ... In these contests, the magazine overtly offered advertising itself, rather than the thing advertised, as a desirable commodity, something the reader would want to invite into the home and learn more about.

These advertising contests were a technique through which publishers attempted to demonstrate to advertisers that their ads were a source of knowledge and influence, and to show that their magazines were the best media in which to advertise. These initiatives became even more popular in the 1950s and 1960s. Companies in virtually all sectors, not just publishers, as in the previous decades, asked consumers for poems, limericks, rhymed jingles, slogans and stories relating to their products/brands (Ryan 2005). Advertising contests in newspapers and magazines allowed companies to acquire new ads from the public and to sell more products (Roth 2013a; Taylor and Kopp 1991). 'Fifty thousand contest entries represented fifty thousand purchases that might not have occurred otherwise' (Ryan 2005, p. 23); most contests required consumers to provide proof of purchase to enter.

Participation was always incentivised with prizes, which ranged from the symbolic to household appliances, jewellery, automobiles, vacations and significant cash rewards (Roth 2013b). The advertising contests were open to all, and they became a profitable sales promotion technique that enhanced consumers' involvement with brands and built retail traffic (Reynolds 1960; Taylor and Kopp 1991). Contestants participated to win prizes (Ward and Hill 1991), have fun (Watson and Barban 1974) and even, in the case of students, to learn how to make ads (Marra 1988). The phenomenon became so big that a *National Contesters Association* was born in the United States, and specialised publications began to appear to provide consumers with guidance about the contests, rules and deadlines, for example *Weekly Contest Tips*, the *Contest Magazine* and the *Contest Worksheet* (Contestsandsweepstake's Weblog 2007).

Nonetheless, as quickly as they became popular, their popularity declined due to the advent of sweepstakes, which were much easier and cheaper for companies to organise (Roth 2013b).

The advent of the Internet led to a new type of advertising contest designed to crowdsource the production of ads by communities of talented individuals interested in undertaking this form of creative task. Thus, companies, through crowdsourcing advertising projects, outsource the production of ads to communities of skilled individuals that participate by generating commercials; the winning producers are rewarded based on the contest rules, and the companies use the advertising material produced for their own gain (Brabham 2008; Estellés-Arolas and González-Ladrón-De-Guevara 2012; Roth and Kimani 2014). Unlike the competitions ran during 'the contest era' of the 1950s and 1960s, crowdsourcing initiatives are not open to everyone, nor are the public generally aware of their existence. As the focus of interest is only on the resulting output (i.e. the ad), companies commission these projects on third party platforms specialised in creative crowdsourcing, such as Zooppa, Tongal and Eyeka. Creative consumers registered in crowdsource communities engage in these projects mostly to earn money and recognition, for socialisation and to generate peer feedback (Brabham 2012; Horovitz 2009; Zeng, Tang, and Wang 2017).

The present study examines advertising contests run by entities in the social media era. In the new social media, individuals, entirely independent of any commercial influences, generate and share video ads (Berthon, Pitt, and Campbell 2008; Pehlivan, Sarican, and Berthon 2011), brand-related reviews (Hamby, Daniloski, and Brinberg 2015), brand-related posts (Mayrhofer et al. 2020; Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian 2012) and brand parodies (Sabri and Michel 2014); these messages impact on their receivers' beliefs, attitudes and behavioural intentions (e.g. Hansen, Lee, and Lee 2014; Hautz et al. 2014; Lawrence, Fournier, and Brunel 2013; Mayrhofer et al. 2020; Pehlivan, Sarican, and Berthon 2011; Steyn et al. 2011; Thompson and Malaviya 2013). Campbell et al. (2011) noted a decade ago that ten percent of the ads on YouTube were consumer-generated (Campbell et al. 2011), and the trend seems to be increasing as new tools for video content creation (e.g. augmented reality, filters and lenses) and a plethora of platforms built exclusively on UGC and content sharing, such as Instagram, Twitch and TikTok, continue to emerge (IAB 2019) and are increasingly used (IAB 2021). In fact, 500 hours of video content was uploaded onto YouTube every minute in 2020 (Statista 2020).

Organisations, not content to restrict themselves to just listening, monitoring and managing what is said about their brands in social media (Gensler et al. 2013), are running digital media-based advertising contests that prompt the public to generate video ads that benefit the brand, that is, sponsored CGA. Unlike crowdsource advertising contests, these initiatives are openly published on sponsors' digital channels with the specific intent of attracting new contributors who might add value to the brand. Therefore, sponsored CGA constitutes another element of a new multidimensional IMC scenario that is characterised by the continuous interplay of multiple brand-focussed conversations between brand-value co-creators on different communication channels (Vollero, Schultz, and Siano 2019).

Brand value co-creation through sponsored CGA

Value co-creation has become a joint, social, collaborative online process, based on the production of value by multiple actors through voluntary contributions, which results in reciprocal wellbeing (Vargo and Lusch 2016). From the service-dominant (S-D) logic viewpoint, the consumer is always a value co-creator (Vargo and Lusch 2004).

One way to engage individuals in value creation, and turn them into brand ambassadors, is through sponsored CGA contests (Nyangwe and Buhalis 2018; Vernet and Hamdi-Kidar 2013). Companies are recommended to integrate these initiatives, which are consistent with the multidimensional IMC approach, into their marketing communications programmes as part of the brand-value co-creation process (Vollero, Schultz, and Siano 2019).

The output of sponsored CGA contests are video ads created by individuals who follow the sponsor's guidelines; as such, they will ideally project a desirable brand image from the sponsor's point of view. It has been shown that, thereafter, when distributed in the digital media by both sponsors and creators, they generally impact positively on their audiences' attitudes and behaviours (Ertimur and Gilly 2012; Hansen, Lee, and Lee 2014; Hautz et al. 2014; Lawrence, Fournier, and Brunel 2013; Orazi, Bove, and Lei 2016; Paek et al. 2011; Thompson and Malaviya 2013). Although the present study does not focus on the effects of sponsored ads, some findings in this area that support the adoption of CGA are briefly discussed below.

Sponsored video ads created in response to digital media-based advertising contests are generated by ordinary members of the public. Thus, they are perceived as more credible, trustworthy and authentic than social media-based firm-generated content (Lawrence, Fournier, and Brunel 2013). Similar results have been obtained in tourism and mobile devices settings; when viewers were told that ads were consumer generated they reported higher degrees of source credibility, trustworthiness and expertise, and developed more positive attitudes towards the ads and more positive behavioural intentions (Hansen, Lee, and Lee 2014; Hautz et al. 2014). Furthermore, when comparing viewers' perceptions of sponsored (incentivised) and spontaneous (non-incentivised) CGA, Ertimur and Gilly (2012) found the former to be regarded as more credible and professionally produced, albeit less authentic and less likely to prompt the audience to engage with the brand.

Nevertheless, the literature on the effects of CGA provides mixed results. On the one hand, Steyn et al. (2011) found no differences in ad likeability between individual-generated and firm-generated video ads. On the other, the scepticism-identification model of Thompson and Malaviya (2013) demonstrated that ads produced by individuals have two effects. First, their results suggested that when viewers know that an ad has been produced by an individual they identify more with the creator. This, in circumstances where the viewer is given background information about the ad creator, and also feels loyalty and commitment towards the brand, creates positive ad and brand evaluations. Conversely, when the viewer is told that an ad has been produced by an individual, (s)he can become sceptical about the competence of the ad creator. This, in circumstances where the viewer does not share similarities with the creator, and does not feel loyalty and commitment towards the brand, can lead to negative ad and brand evaluations.

The effects of CGA have been very little studied in the nonprofit sector. In studies that have been undertaken, Paek et al. (2011) demonstrated in the child abuse prevention context that, where the viewer perceives similarity with the ad creator, (s)he develops more positive attitudes towards, and attributes more importance to, the cause than when the content is produced by expert organisations. Orazi, Bove, and Lei (2016), in the public health context, examined the potential of CGA strategies to drive positive social change. Their study demonstrated, in particular, that disclosing that an ad was CGA provoked more positive ad evaluations and negative attitudes towards unhealthy eating.

Motivations to co-create

As Vernet and Hamdi-Kidar (2013) demonstrated, calling for advertising co-creation is not enough, in itself, to ensure consumer engagement, since co-creation behaviours in digital environments are based on multiple factors. Building on human motivation schemes we identify two dimensions that describe individuals' motives for creating sponsored CGA: (i) individual-based factors, intrinsic or extrinsic; self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci and Ryan 1985; Ryan and Deci 2000); (ii) compensation motives, rational or affective; taken from the literature that has examined reasons to engage in brand-related UGC in social media (Krishnamurthy and Dou 2008).

The SDT of Deci and Ryan (1985) proposes that motivations can be distinguished by the level of the individual's feelings of autonomy. Intrinsic, autonomous motivation 'refers to doing an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself ... the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one's capacities, to explore, and to learn' (Ryan and Deci 2000, 70–71). In contrast, 'extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain some separable outcome' (Ryan and Deci 2000, 71).

The literature that has examined traditional advertising contests run in magazines has demonstrated that individuals engage in these type of sales promotion initiatives for both intrinsic (e.g. for the play value) and extrinsic reasons (e.g. to get feedback from professionals/to win prizes) (e.g. Marra 1988; Ryan 2005; Taylor and Kopp 1991; Ward and Hill 1991). In the consumer creativity domain, Dahl and Moreau (2007) and Fernandes and Remelhe (2016) showed that consumers participate in creative activities that entail product use for intrinsic reasons—personal accomplishment, to learn, to reinforce their self-identities and express themselves, to enjoy and achieve engagement and relaxation through the creative process—and extrinsic reasons, such as publicly demonstrating accomplishments and for community motives (sharing knowledge/opinions with others with common interests). Similarly, research into individuals' motivations to participate in online crowdsourcing contests and new product development projects found that their main external drivers were economic rewards, social recognition, social interaction with like-minded peers and career advancement, and that self-expression, learning and problem solving were their main intrinsic drivers (Brabham 2012; Estellés-Arolas and González-Ladrón-De-Guevara 2012; Hoyer et al. 2010; Hutter et al. 2011; Roth, Brabham, and Lemoine 2015). In a public sector setting, Parvanta, Roth, and Keller (2013) found that online users engage in social and health communication crowdsourcing projects to have fun, to experience

the fulfilment of performing something that contributes to benefit society, and to earn money.

In the brand-related UGC arena, Christodoulides, Jevons, and Blackshaw (2011) and Christodoulides, Jevons, and Bonhomme (2012) identified four motivating factors for creating UGC: co-creation (consumers producing brand value jointly with firms, thus becoming an integral part of the value-creation system); empowerment (exerting control and influence over brands and other consumers); self-concept (expressing and presenting one's self-identity); and community (interacting and developing a sense of belonging). De Vries et al. (2017) later examined consumers' motivations to both create new branded content and to contribute to content initially generated by others (through commenting, sharing and/or liking) on social media. They showed that while entertainment (an intrinsic motivation) and remuneration (an extrinsic motivation) drive both these types of brand-related behaviours, the intrinsic motive of self-expression is associated more with content creation, and that the extrinsic motive of socialising is more associated with making contributions to activities initiated by other consumers. More recent studies have confirmed these findings. For instance, Sung, Kim, and Choi (2018) demonstrated that brand-selfie posting behaviours are a way consumers express themselves, and Sun, Dong, and McIntyre (2017) showed, in an online social shopping community setting, that monetary rewards motivate product review contributions only among members with few connections on the platform, since the more active members are purely intrinsically motivated.

Unfortunately, very little literature specifically about individuals' motivations for creating sponsored video ads in digital media exists. Based on interviews with creators who, unsolicited, generate and share video ads online, Berthon, Pitt, and Campbell (2008) concluded that consumers are mainly driven to do so by three factors. First, tech-savvy individuals generate ads for the intrinsic enjoyment they derive from the creative process itself. Second, some individuals are motivated by self-promotion. That is, some creative individuals see producing advertising as a means of advancing their careers and/or to increase their portfolios. Third, some individuals create ads to influence and change others' perceptions through the messages they transmit. More recently, Poch and Martin (2015) suggested that intrinsic altruism and external economic incentives positively influence intention to produce CGA.

The literature review did not allow us to identify specifically which motivational factors underlie individuals' motivations to produce sponsored CGA. First, unlike traditional advertising contests run in printed media, individuals who take part in sponsored CGA contests assume a public role of active brand value co-creators, as in most competitions the social profiles of the participants, and the ads they create, are exhibited on digital platforms, especially during the public voting phases. They do so in a digital, real-time media context where multiple conversations involving multiple actors and public interactions (both consumer-consumer and firm-consumer) revolve around the brand, the sponsored ads and the creators (Campbell et al. 2011; Pehlivan, Sarican, and Berthon 2011). These differences between traditional advertising contests run in printed media and the advertising contests in digital/social media are also evident in crowdsource contests, that is, contests limited by their sponsors to talented

creatives approached through specific online communities. In these latter cases neither the contests nor the output (i.e. the ads) generally enter the public sphere, that is, outside the crowdsourcing platform.

Second, studies into individuals' motivations to create brand-related UGC and unsolicited ads have shown that they may be different to their motivations to create sponsored CGA. The first type of study, which examines individuals' motivations to create brand-related UGC on social media, mainly focused on written product reviews, brand-related articles, and brand photos (e.g. De Vries et al. 2017; Naeem and Ozuem 2021; Sun, Dong, and McIntyre 2017; Sung, Kim, and Choi 2018) but ignored advertising content published in video format. The second type of study, which examines why individuals create and share unsolicited ads in online brand communities and video sharing sites, is scarce (Berthon, Pitt, and Campbell 2008; Muñiz and Schau), and these studies did not consider any incentivising or sponsoring action.

Advertisers need, therefore, to understand why individuals participate in these contests (Burmam 2010; Gensler et al. 2013; Steyn et al. 2011). Increasing their understanding will help them design effective sponsored CGA contests that both improve organisation-consumer relationships and co-create value. Moreover, sponsors may benefit from the video ads generated by these individuals through their positive effects on the audience, given that they are perceived as UGC. Ultimately, this latter effect may help organisations obtain consumers' insights, and increase their interactions with the public through the online conversations and open dialogues that these type of ads provoke in the digital ecosystem (Campbell et al. 2011; Pehlivan, Sarican, and Berthon 2011). Thus, we pose the following research question:

RQ. What motivates individuals to co-create value in digital media by producing video ads in response to sponsored advertising competitions?

Advertising creative message formats in sponsored CGA

When producing advertising individuals' knowledge about the promoted product or cause is expressed through a creative strategy and a creative message format; these decisively influence the way receivers process information, and its effectiveness (Deighton, Romer, and McQueen 1989; Shimp 1976; Stern 1994).

Traditionally, advertising messages have been classified into general dichotomies. Some of the most used classification systems split advertising messages into informational (also referred to as 'expository' or 'rational') and transformational ('emotional') (e.g. Chiou 2002; Ju-Pak 1999; Puto and Wells 1984). Other scholars (e.g. Boller 1990; Deighton, Romer, and McQueen 1989; Wells 1989) have argued that advertising formats are continuums with expository forms at one end and narrative forms at the other. In general, expository, informational messages are based on facts, arguments and, presumably, verifiable information. The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983) and the heuristic-systematic model (HSM) (Chaiken 1980, 1987) propose that expository ads are processed analytically based on their argumentative quality and other aspects related to their logical approach and/or the evidence they present. On the other hand, transformational and narrative ads link the consumption experience with psychological characteristics (Puto

and Wells 1984), specifically through storytelling; thus, viewers process ads narratively through being ‘transported’ (Green and Brock 2000) into their story worlds due their empathy with the story’s characters and the imaginative power of the plot (e.g. Escalas 2007; Van Laer et al. 2014). Individuals’ responses and processing of advertising should, therefore, be examined in the context of the different creative formats used in the messages (Boller 1990; Bruner 1986; Stern 1994).

This dual classification has prompted the development of several typologies of advertising creative message formats (for details, see Deighton, Romer, and McQueen 1989; Laskey, Day, and Crask 1989; Shimp 1976; Stern 1994; Wells 1989). Nonetheless, as has been noted in academia, it is difficult to identify an operational proposal that effectively classifies ads into one, single category, since most typologies overlap strategic (content) and tactical (form) message elements. Table 1 displays two advertising creative message strategies, and five formats, based on the message sender’s viewpoint and the use of characters and plots. This typology was developed by Deighton, Romer, and McQueen (1989), with inputs from Stern (1994) and Wells (1989). It is designed to ensure unidimensionality, exhaustivity, exclusivity and independence in the codification of a sample of ads based on their creative format. Hence, ads may first be classified as expository, or narrative. Thereafter, they may be classified into five formats. As Laskey, Day, and Crask (1989, p. 38) noted, a ‘two-stage approach combines the advantages of a simple dichotomy with the precision of more complex classification schemes’.

Corporations that sponsor CGA competitions may wish to identify what creative message strategies and formats individuals employ when producing advertising. By assessing what is communicated and how it is communicated, companies may learn about individuals’ perceptions of the brand, while non-profits may learn about individuals’ understanding of and beliefs about the sponsored causes. This knowledge may guide the development of future advertising campaigns. As previous studies have shown, individuals report their consumption experiences when producing ads (Ertimur and Gilly 2012; Muñiz and Schau 2007; Shimp, Wood, and Smarandescu 2007) and express their understanding about a particular cause (Parvanta, Roth, and Keller 2013) or a brand’s personality and values (Fox, Nakhata, and Deitz 2019). On one hand, they may do so through arguments and demonstrations (that is, expository advertising) that present factual, relevant data and information related to the brand, product, organisation, or cause in a clear, rational, and logical manner (Puto and Wells 1984; Wells 1989). On the other hand, they may do so by telling or showing stories (that is, narrative advertising) about one or more characters’ experiences with a brand, product, or cause, emotionally transmitting viewers the experiential meaning and psychosocial consequences associated with brand use or cause engagement (Boller 1990; Wells 1989).

Table 1. Typology of advertising creative message strategies and formats.

Advertising creative strategy	Format	Point of view	Featured characters	Plot
Expository	Argumentation	Telling	No	No
	Demonstration	Telling	No	Yes
Narrative	Storytelling	Telling	Yes	Yes
	Classic drama	Showing	Yes	Yes
	Vignette drama	Showing	No	No

Source: own design based on Deighton, Romer, and McQueen (1989), Stern (1994) and Wells (1989).

Moreover, as different advertising formats lead consumers to different cognitive and affective responses (e.g. Deighton, Romer, and McQueen 1989; Escalas 2007), future studies might evaluate whether the common message formats employed by co-creating individuals are effective in persuading audiences in commercial-oriented versus nonprofit ads, which in turn can help organizations better design future advertising contests.

In the commercial sector, previous television-based research has shown that transformational ads are used twice as much as informational ads (Ysse and Gustafson 1998). Similarly, Shimp (1976) showed that narrative formats were more used in all product categories.

Ertimur and Gilly (2012) conducted the only study that has examined the advertising formats of sponsored video ads created by individuals. They found that sponsored CGA resembles traditional advertising in its creative format, and that most took narrative forms. This result may be because, as many studies have noted, individuals tend to transmit consumption experiences in narrative form (e.g. Kozinets 2002; Woodside, Sood, and Miller 2008).

The advent of social media has increased consumers' use of digital storytelling to create and disseminate brand-based stories (Gensler et al. 2013); and a recent empirical study in the digital media ecosystem noted that narrative individual-created advertising formats are particularly effective in the commercial sector (Van Laer, Feiereisen, and Visconti 2019). Therefore, it seems reasonable to propose that:

H1: Individuals use narrative formats to a greater extent than expository formats when creating video ads for the commercial sector in response to sponsored advertising competitions.

Research into advertising formats has mainly focused on the commercial sector; differences that may arise in advertising created for nonprofit purposes have been neglected. Nonprofit organisations also use sponsored CGA as a co-creation strategy to stimulate social change (Orazi, Bove, and Lei 2016; Paek et al. 2011); therefore, research on consumer creativity is also needed in this area.

In general, commercial advertising appeals to product-related positive emotions (Van Laer, Feiereisen, and Visconti 2019), whereas nonprofit advertising tends more to transmit content to mitigate the negative features or undesirable consequences of behaviours (e.g. climate change, xenophobia, health issues) (Marchand and Filiatrault 2002). Research into consumer information processing has found that conveying information about undesirable implications in a narrative form produces more unfavourable than favourable message evaluations (Adaval and Wyer 1998), and does not impact on behaviour (Shen, Sheer, and Li 2015). Marchand and Filiatrault (2002) demonstrated that expository messages following a rational strategy are more effective when the communication objectives are awareness or comprehension. Similar findings have also been made recently in the digital setting, that is, narrative forms of advertising are less effective in the nonprofit sector (Van Laer, Feiereisen, and Visconti 2019). As persuasion about issues that involve awareness or comprehension is more successful using a rational strategy that deploys facts and arguments, it is to be expected that individuals

will employ expository formats when co-creating ads in the nonprofit sector. Therefore:

H2: Individuals use expository formats to a greater extent than narrative formats when creating video ads for the nonprofit sector in response to sponsored advertising competitions.

Research design

This mixed method research (Molina-Azorin 2016), carried out between November 2016 and April 2017, combined in-depth interviews with 42 ad creators, netnography (Kozinets 2002) and a content analysis of 1,102 sponsored ads produced for 162 CGA competitions. Through two studies it was possible to identify the motivations underlying the creation of sponsored CGA (Study 1) and the creative formats of the ads (Study 2).

A non-probability convenience sampling method was adopted (Figure 1) to collect a sample of sponsored CGA contests from which to select ads and identify the online profile of their creators.

Advertising competitions were identified from websites that publish contests online (e.g. onlinevideocontests.com), marketing news sites and search engines. We selected only sponsored CGA competitions which met the following criteria: (i) publicly announced by the sponsors through their official digital channels; (ii) not addressed to professionals; (iii) allowed open access to the rules for participation; and iv) that publicly displayed the winning ads. Some 162 advertising competitions conducted during 2015 and 2016 were finally selected. We also identified, where available, the

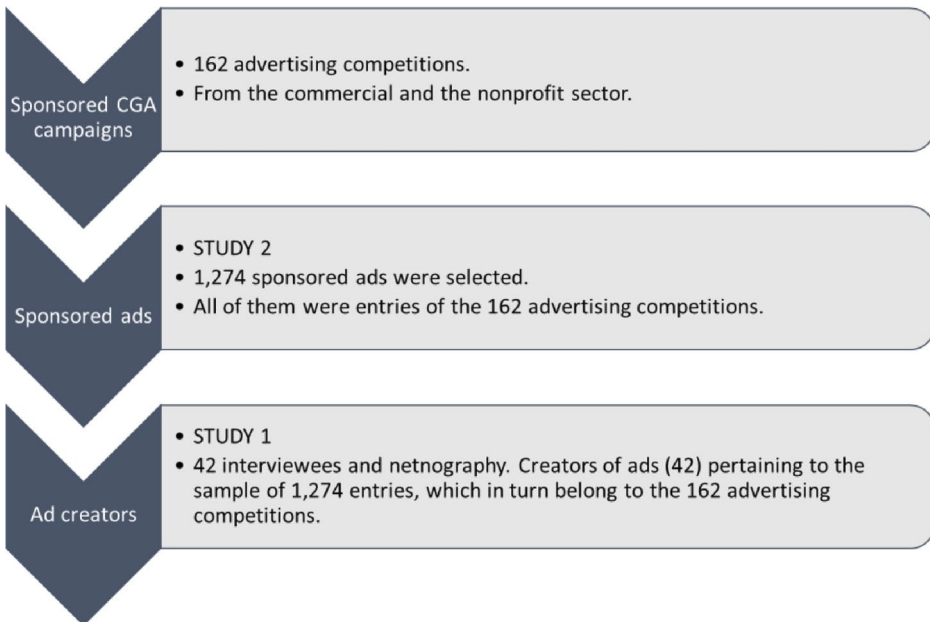


Figure 1. Sampling strategy.

public profiles of the ad creators who participated in the contests; this allowed us to conduct interviews and undertake the netnography analysis of Study 1. We also identified the web links of the published ads as these were needed to carry out the content analysis of the advertising messages for Study 2.

Each competition was rated by one of the authors of the present study and an external academic based on the operating rules published on the sponsors' websites. The unit of analysis was the advertising competition, and the coding categories were its geographical area, sector, segment, target, winners selection system, type of incentive, and number of winners. Before rating the sample, the external academic received a briefing about how to code the competitions and completed a pre-test, rating a sample of 10 advertising competitions not included in the final sample. A prior face-to-face session between the coders was also held to discuss the process.

The two coders agreed on 100% of the classifications for geographical area, sector, winners selection system, type of incentive, and number of winners for each competition. Based on the Cohen's kappa coefficient, this is an almost perfect level of agreement ($\kappa=1$) (Cohen 1960). They also agreed on 74.7% of the classifications for the segment ($\kappa = .71$) and 89.5% of classifications for the target ($\kappa = .84$) of the advertising contests, which shows a substantial and almost perfect level of agreement, respectively. Afterward, the coders discussed the discrepancies in a face-to-face session and obtained a single classification for each category of the 162 advertising competitions.

Table 2 shows the sample distribution by sector and geographical area.

The coding information of the 162 competitions showed that 74% were conducted by nonprofit organisations and 26% by commercial entities. Regarding the segments, social causes were the largest category in the nonprofit sector (24.7%), followed by the environment (16.6%), health (15.4%), education (12.3%) and cultural issues (4.9%). In the commercial domain, mass media and entertainment was the largest category (6.2%), followed by the food and beverages (3%), beauty and personal care (2.5%), retailing (2.5%), financial and legal services (1.9%), household goods (1.9%), sports and leisure (1.9%), technology (1.9%), tourism and transport (1.9%), games (1.2%) and utilities (1.2%).

The guidelines of the sponsored contests showed that the general public was the main target of the sponsored CGA campaigns (45.7%), followed by students (33.3%), people under 30 years old (17.9%) and customers/members of the sponsoring organisations (3.1%). The commercial versus nonprofit scope of the campaigns was shown to be a significant factor ($\chi^2_{(3)} = 27.75$, $p < .001$), as the first were mainly targeted at the general public, and the latter at students (40%).

The competition winners were determined by jury decisions in 51.2% of the sample, by a public vote and jury decision in 42% of the cases and by means of

Table 2. Sample of sponsored CGA campaigns.

Sector	Geographical area		Total
	USA	Worldwide	
Nonprofit	59	61	120
Commercial	20	22	42
Total	79	83	162

public voting in 6.8%. Some 50.6% of the competitions offered money prizes to the winners, 29.6% non-economic incentives and 19.8% a combination of both. Sponsor type was found to be a significant factor ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 8.09$, $p < .05$) in relation to the rewards, as most nonprofit organisations offered economic incentives (56.6%), while commercial entities preferred to offer non-economic prizes (45.2%). Finally, the organisations awarded prizes to an average of four contestants per competition ($X = 3$; $s = 3.2$).

Study 1: Motivations for creating sponsored video ads

To explore consumers' motivations for creating sponsored ads (RQ1) we carried out a qualitative study. To ensure reliability and validity we combined in-depth semi-structured interviews with ad creators and netnography (Kozinets 2002). The data gathered from the sample of CGA competitions allowed us to identify the sponsored video ads and, therefore, the profiles of the creators who uploaded the ads onto the video platforms (e.g. YouTube and Vimeo); thereafter, the creators were invited, through private messaging, to participate in the study.

In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews, lasting between 30 and 80 minutes, were conducted with ad creators via Skype or phone. A script containing semi-structured questions was developed to ensure the research topic was adequately addressed. The questions were sufficiently generic to not condition responses; the form, order and manner of posing the questions were left to the discretion of the researcher.

The sessions began by the interviewer introducing him/herself. Thereafter, the participants were asked for permission to record the interview and briefly informed of the research topic and the reason why they had been approached. Providing this information increased the validity of the responses (Brink 1993). The interviews began with generic and informal questions to establish good communication between the interviewer and the interviewee and, thus, create a comfortable, intimate atmosphere. The interviewers tried throughout the sessions to gather information as spontaneously as possible, and to ensure good interaction with the interviewees. As the interviews progressed, the questions became increasingly specific and focused on what motivated the interviewees to create video ads to participate in sponsored CGA competitions. The interviews ended when the interviewers felt they had elicited sufficient information about the research topic, and the interviewees had had the opportunity to make suggestions/raise issues not previously addressed. Last, the respondents were asked to provide sociodemographic information.

The interviewers took notes during, and drafted memoranda following, each interview; this information was later analysed as primary data. After interviewing 42 ad creators, data saturation was achieved and, therefore, the interviewing process concluded. Some 26 interviewees had participated in nonprofit CGA competitions, and 16 in commercial sponsored CGA campaigns. Of the participants, 16 were Spanish, 14 North American, 2 Mexican, 2 Argentinian, 2 British, 1 Irish, 1 Austrian, 1 Chilean,

Table 3. Sample demographics. Study 1.

Gender	Age					Total
	16–22	23–29	30–36	37–43	44–50	
Men	15	5	3	4	4	31
Women	6	2	3			11
Total	21	7	6	4	4	42

1 Venezuelan, 1 Ecuadorian and 1 Indonesian. The sample distribution by gender and age is shown at [Table 3](#).

Netnography

The netnographic analysis was undertaken without the researchers actively interacting with the subjects, as in previous research in the CGA (Ertimur and Gilly 2012; Muñiz and Schau 2007) and brand-related UGC domains (Schivinski, Christodoulides, and Dabrowski 2016). Once a subject confirmed (s)he was willing to participate in the study, a search was made for his/her public profiles in social media, personal websites, blogs and video channels. We collected the corresponding web links in an Excel file; before and after each interview the interviewees' online activities were examined. A total of 162 digital spaces pertaining to the 42 interviewees were finally observed, including 80 social media profiles on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, 61 video channels on YouTube and Vimeo and 20 personal websites. All relevant information was collected and incorporated into memoranda to be analysed in conjunction with the interview data.

Data analysis

The primary data for analysis comprised of 34 hours of interview recordings, field notes and memoranda. As widely acknowledged, analysis of data through different forms (e.g. interviews and netnography) enhances internal reliability (e.g. Kirk and Miller 1986). The data analysis was conducted using Atlas.ti 8.0 software, which has been previously used to analyse advertising content (Okazaki and Mueller 2011). Using McCracken's (1988) 5-step method as an analytical framework, in an initial stage the primary data were reviewed twice to sort the important from the unimportant material. Short segments capturing valuable information about RQ1 (i.e. 'utterances') were identified, and coded as 'observations', which constituted the units of analysis. In a second stage, the quotations were grouped into preliminary descriptive and interpretative categories, based on evidence from the data, the research theoretical framework and the literature review. As a result of this coding process a preliminary system comprising 99 categories (i.e. preliminary codes) emerged. In a third stage we examined the categories and identified connections across them to develop pattern codes; the system was refined when necessary. As a result, 583 quotations were associated with 44 codes which, in turn, we grouped into 11 'code groups'. The fourth stage involved the determination of basic themes. The coded data were again reviewed and compared across codes and group codes; contradictions

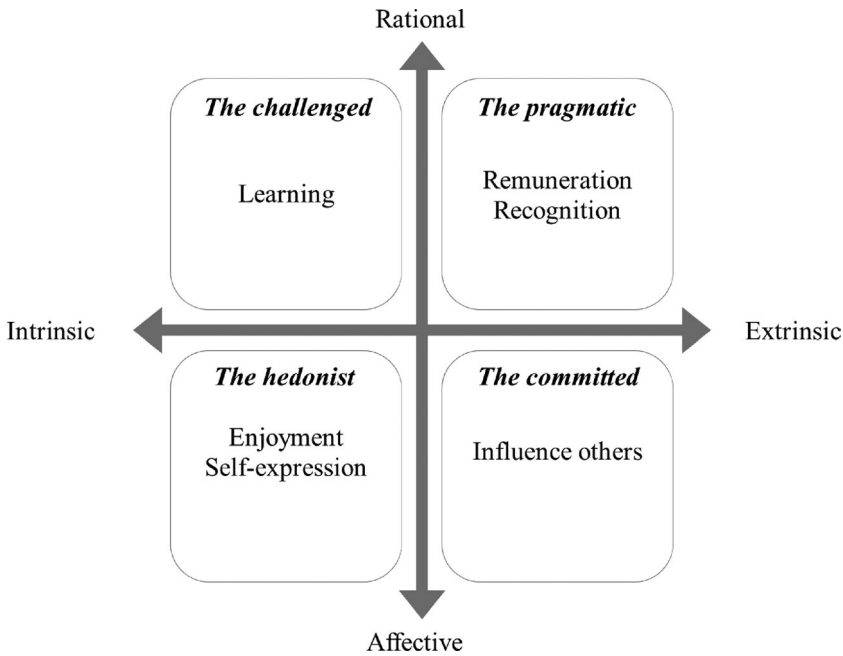


Figure 2. Typology of ad creators and classification of motivations for the creation of sponsored CGA.

and possible coding errors were corrected. The data were re-examined in a fifth stage and comparisons were made across participants and qualitative methods (i.e. interviews and netnography), which led us to address contradictions across themes that emerged from the previous phase. Once the predominant themes were identified, we addressed the general properties of the consumer typologies shown in Figure 2. The procedure resulted in constant back-and-forth comparisons and analyses both within the different passages, and within data derived from the in-depth interviews and netnography.

Results

The data collected through the in-depth interviews and netnography showed that individuals are motivated to generate sponsored video ads by six factors. These can be classified, following SDT (Deci and Ryan 1985), based on the source of the motivation (i.e. intrinsic or extrinsic) and, following Krishnamurthy and Dou (2008), based on users' reasons to participate in UGC activities on social media (i.e. rational or affective). The data analysis also differentiated four types of individuals who create sponsored video ads, as shown in Figure 2. Their main features are as follows:

The challenged

Learning. Challenged individuals create ads to learn, practice and develop their skills. They like producing audio-visual content and enjoy the learning process. Although rationally fulfilled, their motivation is intrinsic, since it is based on taking

part in the activity itself.

Matulla (21 years) considers himself as inquisitive and self-taught, and reported that when creating an ad for a competition 'my motivation was to learn ... I wanted to put into practice all the techniques I had used before'. Similarly, *Ben F.* (freelance videographer, 24 years) said that he created ads 'to practice ... honing the skills that I learned and trying to really master them'. *Javier* (a 19-year-old student who makes short comic videos as a hobby) said that he just wanted 'to learn ... I don't care if people watch it'.

Challenged individuals are interested, curious about creative activities and, therefore, they see advertising competitions as learning challenges, which prompts them to make video ads. *Ben F.* reported he was motivated 'just to see if I could make the commercial and if it would turn out well ... to work on a new challenge. It was something I'd never tried before ... Trying to create something and trying to make it good'. Similarly, *Bob B.* (37 years) said he made the ad for a competition 'because it was a challenge. It was, like, can you make an animation in one day? I think that when you're learning these challenges are the best'.

The hedonist

The hedonists were intrinsically and emotionally motivated by enjoying and expressing themselves, and felt pleasure and fulfilment through producing video ads, and did not seek external outcomes.

Enjoyment. Hedonists feel motivated by the fun they have when producing ads. *Constanza* (33 years) participated in an advertising competition sponsored by a cinema festival that encouraged individuals to create the promotional ad for its 2016 event. She saw the contest as an opportunity to have fun with her mother. 'My mom always wanted to be an actress ... I did it like a game with my mother ... It was like...we'll die laughing'. Similarly, *Ornela* (a 30-year-old YouTube enthusiast) decided to make a sponsored ad for a campaign aimed at promoting her city because she thought she would enjoy the activity: 'I did it, like, let's have a good time ... to have some fun ourselves while recording our bullshit'.

Ricardo (44-year-old physician, father of three) participated in a contest sponsored by Lego. To him, 'The idea was funny, my children have Lego, so I thought about involving them ... I thought the process was funny ... I did everything from scratch'. Similarly, *Jacob*, a 30-year-old screenwriter who won 1 million USD in the 'Crash the Super Bowl' advertising contest sponsored by Doritos, participated for the first time in an advertising competition because:

It was a great opportunity to get some friends together, you know, make something new, a bit of fun regardless of the competition... just be with a group of my best friends, was a lot of fun ... and get my dog in the commercial.

Self-expression. Hedonists also make video ads because of the personal emotional pleasure they get from the creative process itself. Their motivation lies in 'just

creating it (the ad) ... it's satisfying' (*Daniela*, 23-year-old advertising student); 'It's what I like the most. I mean, it fulfils me' (*Eric*, 24-year-old freelance videographer). As *Novia* (24 years) reported, 'The process of how the images I took became movies was really cool... a personal pleasure'.

In more detail, *Matulla*, who composes and produces his own music videos, said:

I have a physiological need, so to speak, which is to free my mind creatively, whether using art, video, or with songs... I really like expressing myself... Every so often things occur to me, and I need to give them life, and the only way to give them life is either by expressing them in letters or expressing them in the form of a video.

These individuals got satisfaction and fulfilment through expressing their creativity, just as do artists. They defined the activity as 'the way I can develop my creativity' (*Joseph*, 18 years); 'a creative outlet, like music and art' (*Feinstein*, 16-year-old brickfilm hobbyist); 'a way of art, or expression' (*Noelia*, a 21-year-old audio-visual design student). Similarly, *Rachel* (a 34-year-old psychologist, self-taught video-making enthusiast) explained her feelings when giving free rein to her imagination:

When I'm concentrated and doing something that entertains me and helps me express myself, I really feel like I've gone to the movies with friends ... I feel even better, more fulfilled, more at ease ... and satisfied ... You don't want to stop until you finish it.

The pragmatic

Pragmatic individuals are extrinsically motivated. For pragmatics creating sponsored video ads is a means of achieving external outcomes, separable from the development of the activity itself. The performance of the activity is rationally based and calculated to gain practical, utilitarian benefits, such as remuneration and/or recognition.

Remuneration. Some of the individuals participated in the CGA competitions only to win the prizes offered by the sponsor. Many of these prizes are monetary, and these individuals are, thus, motivated by the economic incentive. *Gabriel* is a 31-year-old multimedia communications manager who participated in a competition sponsored by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). He indicated:

Actually, I was looking to win, so I did my best ... Because I wanted to go on vacation and when I saw the prize they offered ... I said, no kidding, I'll do it, I'll even do 2 or 3 videos to participate.

Alex (19 years) also exhibited a similar motivation, explaining that the cash prize 'was, like, the first reason why I participated since I was looking for money for college'. However, some individuals were motivated to create ads by the non-economic, but valuable, prizes on offer. *Joseph* collects Lego toys and participated in a Lego advertising campaign because the prize 'was a set you can purchase on their website, but it was signed by the designers ... it was worthwhile'.

Scott Z. is a 37-year-old cinema and television director and producer who won 1 million USD in another 'Crash the Super Bowl' campaign sponsored by Doritos. Apart from the economic reward, *Scott Z.* received other non-monetary prizes, which really encouraged him to participate in the contest:

Airing during the Super Bowl, to me, it was the biggest motivation... Obviously, winning a lot of money is always a nice thing, so I'm not saying no, that wasn't good, but my goal wasn't to look around and figure out how to make money quickly ... if the prize had been, you know, 50,000 dollars, or no dollars, but you still are aired during the Super Bowl, I would still have done the same.

Recognition. Pragmatic individuals participated in sponsored CGA campaigns also to obtain social recognition. This was the case with *Sergio S.*, a 34-year-old banker, who describes himself as 'addicted' to making videos, and whose YouTube channel has attracted nearly 10 million views, more than 18,000 subscribers and 200 videos. When asked about his motivation to participate in an online advertising contest, he stated:

It's something that people can watch ... You get a lot of visibility, you have even more visibility than if you had uploaded the video, on your own, to your Internet channel, because many more people will see it, companies will see it, other creators will see it.

In addition to such self-promotional behaviour, individuals look for recognition, explicit feedback and public praise. 'It makes me happy when people watch the videos, I know that people are enjoying them, that is the main goal ... I love seeing the audiences' reactions to the videos, I like reading people's comments', said *Hoshpup*, a 20-year-old game design student whose verified YouTube channel has amassed nearly 22 million views and 19,150 subscribers. Similarly, for *Edward* (a 21-year-old audio-visual editing and postproduction student) 'it's also about getting approval. When people tell you, 'oh!' You can really do that? That's pretty cool'. *Sergio I.* (a 23-year-old journalism and audio-visual communication student) also acknowledged that he participated in the competition 'to do a job myself, something I could win and that might help get some kind of recognition'.

When individuals promote their video ads online looking for recognition they target not only peers, but also professionals, to network and pave their way in the audio-visual industry. *Thomas*, a 16-year-old high school student with more than 2,000 subscribers on YouTube, wanted 'to see if the judges of the competition liked my video'. Similarly, *David L.* (a 22-year-old freelance videographer) was motivated 'to aim for something, a prize, or an assessment of the job done... I think recognition is very important'.

The committed

Influencing others. As with professional advertising, individuals create sponsored ads to influence others' perceptions, to raise awareness about an issue and/or to change beliefs. Obviously, the topic of the advertising contest is a key factor for these individuals. As *Verónica* (23 years) said: 'I found the topic interesting, I thought it was important to broadcast about it'. This motivation to influence others is driven by personal and affective commitment felt towards the organisation and/

or cause being promoted, as *Carly* (17 years) reported:

I'm part of an environmental club at my high school ... I've always been very passionate about protecting forests and planting trees, so when I found this contest it really caught my interest ... My main motivation was the cause ... it's very important to me.

This particular motivational factor was identified mainly among those who participated in nonprofit-based advertising competitions. Individuals created video ads to influence others about issues such as public health (prevention of drug abuse), ideologies (e.g. Islamophobia), the environment (forest conservation) and social causes (e.g. gender violence). *Peter* is a 47-year-old Muslim who is worried about the perceptions being formed about Islam and Muslims. He took part in an anti-Islamophobia based advertising competition to 'make people aware once and for all ... that it's not all about what they tell you, there's an alternative'. *David F.* (a 19-year-old audio-visual communication student) participated in an anti-drug abuse campaign 'to see if something can be changed little by little ... to raise a bit of awareness among people, youth, children ... let's change society a little bit'. Similarly, for *Daniela* the motivation was 'to create something to inform and raise awareness'.

Study 2: Advertising creative message strategies and formats

A quantitative content analysis was conducted to identify which advertising creative strategies and formats individuals employed when producing sponsored ads for commercial (H1) and nonprofit campaigns (H2). We selected 1,274 ads, from both the commercial and the nonprofit sector, from the sample of 162 sponsored CGA contests which had been used for Study 1. Some of the CGA competitions showed only the winning ads, whereas others showed all the participating entries; we selected a maximum of 10 ads per campaign ($X = 7.9$; $X = 10$; $s = 2.8$) to avoid over-sampling the latter group.

The codification of the 1,274 ads was undertaken based on the classification shown in Table 1. The unit of analysis was, therefore, the ad, and the coding category was the creative format. This data was thereafter collated into a codebook.

The ads were first rated by two coders, using this codebook, one of the authors of the present study and an external academic with no visibility of the hypotheses. The external academic had previously received training on advertising creative message strategies and how to undertake the coding task. This training had largely consisted of a theoretical briefing developed by one of the authors describing the advertising creative strategies and advertising formats shown in Table 1, and the meanings of their various attributes. The two coders thereafter held a 90 minute face-to-face session to discuss the process. Thereafter, each coder rated, in a pre-test, a sample of 20 sponsored video ads that, in the event, were not included in the final sample. Last, any discrepancies and doubts were resolved.

The coders then rated the sample. They agreed on 66% of the classifications; based on Cohen's *kappa* coefficient this is a moderate level of agreement ($\kappa = .51$) (Cohen 1960). The discrepancies were thereafter discussed by the coders face-to-face and, finally, a single advertising format classification was obtained for the 1,274 ads. To reinforce the reliability of the study, a third coder later rated 1,102

ads from the sample (172 of the ads were no longer available online). The third coder received training similar to the initial coders. The third coder concurred with 83.4% of the previous ad classifications ($\kappa = .77$), which represents a substantial level of agreement. Discrepancies that arose were again discussed in an online session, and a single advertising format classification of the sponsored video ads was achieved.

Results

The results of Study 2 allow us to confirm H1 and H2. Overall, it was found that narrative ad forms are used slightly more (54%) than expository forms (46%) in sponsored CGA. Campaign type is a significant factor ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 37.96, p < .001$), as narrative advertising is much more (70.1%) used in the commercial domain (H1), while expository advertising is slightly more prevalent (51.3%) in the nonprofit domain (H2).

Looking closer at the specific creative formats used, and following the typology proposed in Table 1, it was observed that classic drama and argumentation were predominant, followed by storytelling, demonstrations and vignette dramas. Again, competition scope (commercial vs nonprofit) is a significant factor ($\chi^2_{(4)} = 71.52, p < .001$). *Post hoc* pairwise z-tests using the Bonferroni correction (see Table 4) demonstrated that classic dramas (i.e. narrative advertising) are significantly more used in the commercial domain than in the nonprofit arena, whereas the individuals employed argumentation (i.e. expository advertising) more in nonprofit settings than they did in commercial settings.

Discussion

This study contributes to the value co-creation literature in the digital era in two ways. First, we reveal the existence of four types of online advertising creators, and identify the motivations that drive them to produce video ads in response to company-sponsored contests, in both the commercial and the nonprofit sector. Organisations may benefit from the proposed typology by being able to conduct more successful online advertising contests in terms of both participation rates and the quality of the CGA produced, which in turn influences the receivers of the messages delivered.

Table 4. Sponsored ads by format and scope. Frequencies and percentages.

Advertising creative strategy	Format	Commercial	Nonprofit
Expository	Argumentation	41 (15%) ^b	335 (40.4%) ^a
	Demonstration	41 (15%) ^a	90 (10.9%) ^a
Narrative	Storytelling	37 (13.5%) ^a	115 (13.9%) ^a
	Classic drama	148 (54%) ^b	259 (31.3%) ^a
	Vignette drama	7 (2.5%) ^a	29 (3.5%) ^a
	Total	274 (100%)	828 (100%)

Note. *Post hoc* pairwise z-tests (Bonferroni adjustments). Different superscripts indicate significant differences ($p < .05$).

Second, we identify the creative strategies and formats that individuals employ in their sponsored video ads. It is essential to understand these communication forms to gather insights into individuals' perceptions and beliefs about brands and/or causes (Parvanta, Roth, and Keller 2013). As expository and narrative advertising forms differ in their persuasion modes (rational vs. affective, respectively), organisations may gain insights into the meanings that individuals attribute to the brand, consumption experience and promoted cause (i.e. functional/rational vs. affective). Moreover, identifying the creative strategies and formats that individuals employ in their sponsored video ads may guide future studies into message processing and the effects of sponsored ads. Individuals' responses to expository and narrative advertising formats should be tested using different frameworks; however, hitherto, the research has neglected narrative formats, that is, only elaboration frameworks have been applied, presumably on the assumption that all sponsored ads are broadcast in expository formats (Hansen, Lee, and Lee 2014; Hautz et al. 2014; Lawrence, Fournier, and Brunel 2013; Lee, Lee, and Hansen 2017; Orazi, Bove, and Lei 2016; Paek et al. 2011; Steyn et al. 2011; Thompson and Malaviya 2013).

From the motivational perspective, sponsored CGA contests run on digital media provide benefits to both organisations and ad creators. By engaging ad generators organisations can turn them into brand ambassadors through a process of value co-creation. Furthermore, organisations can acquire video ads cheaper; and, when distributed online by sponsors and creators they perform better than firm-generated ads in terms of positive ad/brand evaluations and behavioural intentions (e.g. Hansen, Lee, and Lee 2014; Hautz et al. 2014; Lawrence, Fournier, and Brunel 2013); these ads, in addition, stimulate online conversations that enhance company-individual interactions. Moreover, sponsored CGA competitions benefit their creators. It was found that participants who co-created value with organisations through producing advertising saw the process as an opportunity for self-development, having fun, expressing themselves, earning money, obtaining recognition and making their voices heard. Thus, the co-creation of advertising through sponsored digital media-based CGA contests is a win-to-win transaction in which individuals and organisations interact to build value and transmit brand meaning.

As Yi and Gong (2013) demonstrated, not all individuals are willing to engage in value co-creation processes to the same extent, nor to produce and publicly distribute sponsored video ads on behalf of organisations, a process that blurs the distinction between firm-initiated content and UGC. Through an analysis of individuals' motivations to participate in CGA, the authors of the present study propose a new typology of sponsored video ad creators. Based on a review of the related prior literature, and the evidence derived from our data, this study sorts motives by their source (i.e. intrinsic or extrinsic) and the reasons why individuals create sponsored CGA (i.e. rational or affective). The resulting grid, as depicted in Figure 2, was developed based on 42 in-depth interviews with ad creators, and through netnography. This research contributes to the body of knowledge of advertising co-creation in the digital media landscape in both commercial and nonprofit settings. Challenged individuals are hobbyist, and curious about advertising and film-making activities. They feel rewarded when learning, practising and honing their audio-visual skills. This result is consistent with SDT (Deci and Ryan 1985), and further demonstrates that producing digital

media-based ads may be perceived as a challenging value co-creation proposition, one which constitutes a source of intrinsic motivation for individuals predisposed to co-create.

Hedonistic individuals are motivated by the enjoyment and fulfilment they derive from producing video ads, a process which lets them give free rein their imaginations and express themselves creatively. Studies examining promotional games (Watson and Barban 1974) and crowdsource projects in the social and health communication arena (e.g. Parvanta, Roth, and Keller 2013) have also identified having fun as a motivational factor for participation. In a finding that goes further than these prior studies, our research demonstrated that participants perceived co-creating advertising with organisations as a creative, self-expressive task that activated intrinsic motivation, just like art and music. This is particularly interesting, as it shows that individuals benefit both when they express their creativity through video ads generated on their own, spontaneously (Berthon, Pitt, and Campbell 2008), and when they do so on behalf of brands and organisations through value co-creation.

Pragmatic individuals create and disseminate video ads for remuneration and to satisfy utilitarian needs, for example, winning prizes; this result is consistent with prior studies into promotional games published in printed media (Ward and Hill 1991), and in the fields of UGC (e.g. De Vries et al. 2017), collaborative innovation (Fernandes and Remelhe 2016), new product development (Hoyer et al. 2010) and crowdsource projects (Parvanta, Roth, and Keller 2013). Pragmatic individuals also produce ads to obtain social recognition, as prior studies have noted in the contexts of innovative collaboration (Brabham 2012) and UGC (e.g. Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011). In the printed media sphere, Marra (1988) found that students participated in advertising contests to get feedback from professionals, and Berthon, Pitt, and Campbell (2008) demonstrated, in the online context, that individuals create video ads to build their portfolios/self-promote. The present study confirms, consistent with these ideas, that individuals want to take advantage of the reach that the sponsors' communications attain through their social media profiles in terms of views, subscribers, comments, reactions and other online interactions. Contestants see co-creation with well-known brands and organisations as a launch pad from which to obtain a large number of responses, get positive feedback from ordinary viewers and professional audiences and value from the co-creation experience. Therefore, sponsored CGA in the multidimensional IMC context converts ad creators into both providers and receivers of value.

Finally, the committed consumer is often personally attached to brands and causes of different natures and, consequently, driven to create persuasive messages to change attitudes and beliefs, as previous studies have acknowledged in non-incentivised settings (Berthon, Pitt, and Campbell 2008; Halliday 2016; Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011). The study's main contribution in this regard is the finding that individuals create digital media-based video ads to openly persuade audiences, in the interests of third parties, in a brand/message ambassadorial role. Sponsored video ads created in response to digital media-based advertising contests are generated by ordinary members of the public. Thus, they are perceived as more credible, trustworthy and authentic than social media-based firm-generated content (Lawrence, Fournier, and Brunel 2013).

Study 2 examined CGA formats by analysing 1,102 sponsored video ads produced for 162 profit and nonprofit advertising competitions. The results of this research contribute to the advertising co-creation literature and the consumer creativity field by providing insights into how individuals co-create brand/message value for both commercial and nonprofit purposes. In particular, it has been shown that narrative/affective creative strategies are favoured for commercial ads while expository/rational strategies are favoured to promote causes.

Individuals, when producing sponsored video ads for commercial purposes, prefer to persuade through stories (narrative advertising), mainly classic dramas and storytelling. This finding is consistent with the results reported in the traditional firm-generated (Shimp 1976) and consumer-generated (Ertimur and Gilly 2012) advertising literature. In addition, it supports H1 and shows that individuals' see consumption experiences as brand value outputs from which to derive affective, symbolic and hedonic benefits. Furthermore, it demonstrates their ability to convert brand value propositions into compelling digital stories to generate responses from audiences, on behalf of companies, through emotional paths.

Conversely, when taking part in CGA contests for nonprofit causes, individuals to a greater extent create video ads based on arguments, confirming H2. To the best of the authors' knowledge this is the first study to compare the commercial and nonprofit sectors in this context; a further contribution of the study, therefore, is our finding that individuals tend to develop persuasive messages based on arguments and objective facts when dealing with delicate issues that involve awareness. This finding demonstrates the individual's willingness to give voice to causes (s)he believes in, through arguments and reasoning, on behalf of organisations. It also shows that individuals see causes as phenomena that must be promoted through persuasion based on reason and objectivity.

Theoretical contributions

Since the advent of digital media, value co-creation has received increasing attention in marketing literature from the S-D logic viewpoint (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2016). As a social, dynamic and interactive process that takes place between organisations and consumers (Merz, He, and Vargo 2009), value co-creation may be undertaken from the initial stages of product ideation to the final marketing communications stage (Verette and Hamdi-Kidar 2013). This research contributes to the literature on value co-creation processes in a multidimensional IMC scenario (Vollero, Schultz, and Siano 2019).

First, we contribute by addressing the following three topics: (i) why individuals produce and disseminate video advertising on behalf of organisations; (ii) what creative message strategies they follow to transmit brand/message value; and (iii) how different types of organisations conduct digital media-based sponsored CGA contests. In doing so we put our lenses on the digital media and the video formats used by individuals to produce CGA in response to organisations' requests. Thus, the present study adds knowledge to the 'little research on the link between the evolution of IMC and the brand value-creation process' (Vollero, Schultz, and Siano 2019, p. 429). In particular, the contribution is based on two key factors. First, our conceptual

proposals for a typology of advertising creators and grouping motivational factors into intrinsic-extrinsic (Deci and Ryan 1985) and affective-rational (Krishnamurthy and Dou 2008) categories. Second, our practical proposals for implementing sponsored CGA programmes (discussed below).

Second, as traditional advertising research has widely acknowledged, advertising messages can be set on a continuum with expository forms at one end and narrative forms at the other (e.g. Boller 1990; Deighton, Romer, and McQueen 1989; Wells 1989). Creative message strategies (expository vs. narrative) and formats determine how audiences process and respond to advertising (e.g. Shimp 1976; Deighton, Romer, and McQueen 1989); thus, different perspectives should be applied when testing the effects of expository vs. narrative messages (Bruner 1986; Escalas 2007; Stern 1994). Research into the effects of sponsored CGA has hitherto considered only traditional elaboration perspectives, presumably on the assumption that all sponsored ads are broadcast in expository formats (e.g. Hansen, Lee, and Lee 2014; Hautz et al. 2014; Lee, Lee, and Hansen 2017; Steyn et al. 2011), but the findings of Study 2, conversely, suggest that not all sponsored video ads adopt an expository creative message strategy. In fact, the narrative advertising format was found to be preferred, particularly in the commercial sector. Although the present study does not focus on the effects of sponsored video ads on audiences, these findings call for further research in this area, as discussed below.

Practical implications

The results of the present study showed that individuals are motivated by different factors when participating in advertising contests. Therefore, both commercial and nonprofit advertisers should carefully consider, on the basis of their goals, who their target is when they design value co-creation programmes through sponsored digital media-based CGA contests. The contest topic, rules, prizes, the platform on which it takes place, among other aspects, determine which type of individual will participate, the number of participants and the quality of the video ads submitted.

Challenged individuals usually create good quality sponsored video ads as their motivations are to learn, to stretch themselves and to develop their capabilities. This is an appropriate target sector for organisations which want to receive a limited number of submissions of relatively good quality in terms of new ideas and technical appearance. Organisations which want to co-create with challenged individuals should set tasks that require a relatively high level of specialisation. Many of the interviewees reported that if the production task was easy, and could be carried out by anyone, there was no value in participating. Contests that set high technical challenges will not attract individuals who do not feel they have sufficient competence to compete, but will increase the quality of the output received, as more competent consumers will be attracted; this group will produce sponsored video ads that will provide more valuable insights, generate more online interactions and persuade audiences better.

Organisations might also encourage the participation of hedonists, who feel intrinsically motivated by the process of producing the video ad per se. This target sector is suitable for organisations which want to attract authentic and highly creative submissions. Rather than providing the technical challenges sought by challenged

individuals, as in the previous case, advertising contests addressed to hedonists should appeal to their creative instincts and their need for enjoyment. On the one hand, although organisations should establish contest rules to, at least, partially control the advertising content, competitions aimed at hedonists should not limit their creative expression, as strict directives and imposed goals will discourage their participation. Organisations staging advertising contests aimed at these creative and artistic individuals should accept a level of loss of control over message content in exchange for more authentic, creative and artistic content. On the other hand, hedonists are also driven by expectations that they will have fun when they produce sponsored video ads with their friends and families. Thus, organisations should add to the creative challenge some amusing activities that participants may perceive as enjoyable, and which have the potential to strengthen their motivation.

Pragmatic individuals see participating in digital-media based advertising contests as a means of obtaining extrinsic outcomes, such as prizes, money and/or recognition. Advertising contests whose main value propositions are the prizes on offer, and the public exposure that the creators of the ads obtain, have been shown often to be very attractive to individuals who perceive the incentives as valuable and the sponsor as well-known, with significant online reach. These kind of contests permit organisations to make an online impact and involve many people in value co-creation. Consequently, companies must devote sufficient resources to manage the public's response, both in terms of online interactions and the mechanics needed to manage the entries and select the winners. It should be noted that engaging more people may prompt more individuals to spontaneously create and spread online messages outside the contest context, which might negatively affect brand equity.

Organisations which aim online video advertising contests at a large group of pragmatic individuals will receive many ads, of all types of quality and format. To ensure a healthy response to their contests, in addition to any incentives offered, organisations should follow digital strategies that allow individuals to publish their creations and engage in dialogues with brands and other users. This strategy might be implemented through specific websites, and in social media through hashtags and specific application programming interfaces (API) in the sponsors' profiles. In this way, organisations can create digital spaces in which to share sponsored video ads, and in which viewers might post comments, which might provide further consumer insights. On the other hand, since individuals also seek validation of their work from professionals, it would be sensible to employ people reputed in the advertising field on the juries that decide on the campaign winners. In fact, several participants reported they had been motivated to create ads only to obtain professional feedback, to network and to interact with the judges.

Finally, committed individuals were most represented in the nonprofit campaigns. They are willing to create and disseminate persuasive video ads on digital media on behalf of organisations if they believe that the cause is worthwhile; thus, they become intrinsic value co-creation agents. As these individuals are personally involved in the cause, and want the message to reach and influence people, co-creation initiatives aimed at this target sector may be useful for organisations hoping to attract video ads generated by ordinary members of the general public, ads that look authentic, even if they are not of high technical quality. These messages express what the cause

means to the ad creator, and therefore they might work both to influence the audience and to provide knowledge and ideas that can guide sponsors' future advertising campaigns. The findings of this research, therefore, suggest that nonprofit organisations should conduct sponsored CGA strategies as a way of listening to the public, to understand their views in depth, and obtain cheap, persuasive video ads through which to drive social change.

Taking into account individuals' use of different creative strategies, and their preferences, identified in the results of Study 2, it can be concluded that the main contribution of that study may relate to theory and future research directions. From a managerial viewpoint, it has become clear that individuals convey brand value propositions through emotion-driven stories, but use rational messages to a greater extent to promote causes. From a motivational viewpoint, we encourage organisations to ask individuals to use narrative advertising in the commercial sector, and expository advertising in nonprofit contexts in online video advertising contests aimed at value co-creation. Specifying preferred creative message strategies based on sector may increase individuals' motivations to co-create; this specification may make it easier for them to express their needs, values, experiences and beliefs in relation to the product/cause being promoted. This could be managed through the contest rules.

Limitations and further research directions

Generalisation of the research findings should be approached cautiously due to the specific cultural and geographical origin of the interviewees, the product categories used and the special causes promoted in the CGA competitions analysed in the research. Furthermore, the analysis focused on video ads. However, it might be valuable to examine other formats, such as TikTok, and/or larger formats, for example, Twitch. The results of the study might encourage future research into the creative strategy of sponsored ads (and the scope of the ads: commercial vs non-commercial) when testing individuals' responses. As is the case in traditional audio-visual advertising, narrative formats predominate in sponsored CGA campaigns and, therefore, narrative frameworks, for example, the transportation-imagery model of narrative persuasion (Green and Brock 2000, 2002), might be applied to better understand the effects of sponsored CGA. In this line of research, it would also be interesting to identify which of the advertising formats that individuals use to create sponsored video ads for the commercial and nonprofit sectors are more effective in persuading audiences, which may lead organisations to more clearly define the formats they request in CGA contests.

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