

Technology Use Cases in Award-Winning Advertisements

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Abstract

The paper discusses the functions of technological developments in advertising campaigns that have received accolades for creativity and plot originality. The analysis aims to investigate shifts in the assimilation of innovation into the advertising narrative, while discerning the roles of technology, artificial intelligence, and novel digital mechanisms in creative storytelling formats. Available specialised literature has pertained either to technical considerations of the nature of programmatic advertising enhancement or to a marketing-centric approach that discusses the diachronic evolution of digital tools in relation to advertised products and services. To capture how contemporary commercial storytelling incorporates technology, the dataset consists of advertising campaigns that received the highest distinction for creativity in 2024 at the most prestigious advertising festival worldwide. By leveraging technological advantages, brands managed to navigate both the finite, cold, autonomous nature of algorithms in a highly subjective, warm, interpretative realm and the instrumental delivery of efficient results through the processing of substantial amounts of data. Conclusions examine the plot stages (brand challenge, story development, campaign resolution) that have been altered by new technologies, whether systemic or tactical, in the commercial tale's unfolding, as well as the type of impact at the brand or consumer level. The study presents the complexity of narrative purposes achieved through technological advancements within the campaign plot, opening future exploration of the intersection of analogue tales and digitally led storytelling anchors.

Keywords: advertising, storytelling, technology, innovation, creativity

Introduction

New technologies have benefited from an extensive series of three-fold lines of research: scientific, philosophical, and literary. Coffin (2022, 617-620) adopts a maieutic approach to contemporary ontological, technical, and ethical interrogations on the nature of artificial intelligence (AI) infusions in the advertising discourse. Programmatic advertising attracted significant academic interest, with advertising and new technologies predominantly analysed from an operational or technical standpoint (Samuel et al. 2021, 16; Deckker 2025, 1791; Taylor 2025, 982). In a volume dedicated to the inventory of technological progress throughout history, scholars discuss the cumulative development of technological objects, describing the process of digitising data in terms of convergence (Headrick 2009, 142-143).

The concept of ubiquity in digital advertising is fertile in relation to enhanced mobility over extended distances, rather than the expansion of contexts for human interaction (Okazaki 2012, 383; Dutta et al. 2024, 3794).

Digital media attends to the idea of mandatory participation, constant exposure, and permanent appearance. With interactivity and automation as core traits of programmatic advertising, the analytical focus of specialised research was on technological efficiency, while the storytelling dimension of creative advertising was modestly examined in relation to new technologies (Li 2019, 333-336; Taylor 2025, 983). The study of advertising narratives has primarily focused on story grammar, drama, and transformation, while the examination of advertising technologies has delivered tactical, media-related instruments analysed from an optimisation perspective (Escalas 1998, 267; Queensberry and Coolson 2014, 442). Specialised literature predominantly investigates the techniques and formats by which algorithms influence consumer behaviour along online and offline paths to purchase (Kietzmann et al. 2008, 263-267; Murugan and Kumar 2024, 1075). In a functional analysis of marketing praxis, Qin and Jiang (2019, 341) reflect on how technology and artificial intelligence influence the advertising process in three critical areas: unveiling consumer insights (consumer behavioural patterns), creating advertising products (predictive analysis, planning and buying media (personalised ads), evaluating impact (real-time optimisation) (Ciuchita et al. 2023, 233-235; Ul-Haq et al. 2025, 4).

The purpose of the exploratory study is two-fold, as specialised literature mainly focuses on technical specifications or on instruments for commercial optimisation, leaving space for exploration of new technologies in the narrativity realm (Roca et al. 2017, 832-833). First, it educates on the new persuasion techniques employed through technological interventions in contemporary commercial discourse, whether at the brand level or from a consumer standpoint. Secondly, it explores the purpose of innovation in the advertising plot, whether it is at the story's premise, during its narrative unfolding, at a creative level, or as an instrument that amplifies appeal to the target audience (Rosengren et al. 2020, 40).

New media channels, social network platforms and technologies have changed the way advertising creates meaning and how consumers interact with a fictional brand realm (Herrmann and Ford 2023, 112-114). The architecture of the story can travel additional spaces, intrigues, and characters (Dessart 2018, 291). The real world and the virtual one are no longer distinct units, with internal cohesion and integrity: they blend into a hybrid story. Advertisers explore novel formats to optimise targeting, segmentation, personalisation, and persuasion metrics, whether through digital advertising or by inserting technological cues in the brand universe (Okazaki and Barwise 2011, 69; Ciuchita et al. 2023, 239).

As with most technological revolutions at their debut, attention is paid to advertising innovations' immediately visible effects and on the most lucrative fields of work (Ehrenberg et al. 2002, 9). Baudrillard justified the fascination for automation on the grounds of experiencing it as a fundamental desire, "as the imaginary truth of the object, in comparison with which the object's structure and concrete function leaves us cold" (Baudrillard 1996, 111). Automation specialists distinguish three layers of innovation-led prostheses: physical ones (characterised by materiality), prostheses that enhance our sensorial abilities (television, social media, radio), and those that amplify our cognitive abilities (Bharti et al. 2024, 195-196). In the context of extensive computational environments, the blending of empirical and logical arguments has effects at economic, social, and philosophical levels (Marcus 2007, 84-85). Advertising rarely invents genuine technological breakthroughs.

Rather, it monitors inventions from various realms and markets and connects them with a brand story (Galmés et al. 2016, 83). The conversion of creative ideas into innovative items implies „two distinct and sometimes antagonistic processes: idea generation and its implementation” (Derda 2024, 36). It stimulates product development, encourages format-driven innovation, and fosters technological applications (Murugan and Kumar, 2024, 1074).

A literature review of digital advertising trends highlights that video content displays higher effectiveness scores than other advertising formats, as it stimulates participation and immersive experiences (Araujo et al. 2020, 437). Video materials resort to both visual and audio stimuli, rendering a more emotional encounter with the brand story (Santoso et al. 2022, 449-450). Additionally, the proliferation of social media features is associated with higher engagement in brand conversations, leading to improved consumer loyalty indicators (Doorn et al. 2010, 256). Increased response rates through social media platforms can improve brand likeability metrics (Dovaliene et al. 2016, 206). Personalisation is another trend scholars monitor, as it increases conversion rates (Kaličanin et al. 2019, 474). When used in conjunction with AI technology, these tools offer a more efficient and accurate assessment of competition and consumer data (Lee 2015, 3; Prihatiningsih et al. 2024, 138-139).

The paper's fundamental interrogation concerns how innovative artefacts influence specific narrative components and the storytelling units that require technological intervention. Furthermore, the study aims to explore whether the functions of technology are used to enhance a certain brand benefit (tangible or intangible) or to augment consumers' receptivity towards the commercial proposal (ranging from attention span to behavioural change) (Breibach et al. 2014, 597; Huang and Rust 2020, 37-38).

Theoretical Considerations

Part of non-traditional media, innovations, and technological infusions in advertising display a considerable idiosyncrasy, evoke power dynamics, and reflect a high degree of objectivity. Online advertising, compared to traditional media, offers measurable performance indicators, can be easily adjusted or augmented based on real-time feedback or AB testing, and is considerably more fertile ground for direct, personalised marketing messages (Wilson et al. 2004, 253; Bharti et al. 2024, 196). „Wireless advertising”, in Barnes' terms, is built on devices that are highly personal to users, carried on person; consequently, contextual metrics (including time and space) are more easily interpreted and measured, customers can obtain services when and where they need them, and applications are exceptionally interactive by nature, engaging and portable (Barnes 2002, 401).

Brands use new methods to deliver the message through media technology innovation (self-destructing online messages, GPS-monitored advertising), the discretionary use of available technological advancements (flying holograms, light projection takeovers), and the creative reassembling of new realms (fluorescent bike painting, ingenious water coolers). The proliferation of technology inserts in the advertising discourse has been heightened by the expansion of new devices (smartwatches, iPads) and new online social venues (Snapchat, TikTok) (Dovaliene et al. 2016, 207; Hill 2021, 570). These digital media assets amplify advertising executions through RFID location technology, QR codes, augmented reality, Bluetooth content, programmed sensors, and AI (Cochoy, 2020, 7). Scholars have identified three AI roles in advertising rhetoric, classified according to the degree of difficulty of the mission: mechanical AI (automating repetitive and routine tasks,

such as clustering algorithms), thinking AI (recognising patterns and processing data to reach novel decisions or conclusions, such as speech or facial recognition), feeling AI (mediating human interactions or analyzing emotions, such as chatbots that imitate human speech) (Huang & Rust 2020, 32-33; Dutta et al. 2024, 3798). When used for data collection, mechanical AI adds transparency; when used for market analysis, thinking AI drives data-driven marketing research, while feeling AI, used to optimise target understanding, simulates emotions, raising data security and ethical issues.

Machine-learning instruments are sociotechnical artefacts, characterised by newness, connectivity, and speed. They lead to endless updates and tests, nurturing a permanent beta state (O'Reilly 2005). Automation offers a metaphorical perspective on the nature of organic systems, as digitally-led technology is based on real-time insights and personalised recommendations (Perez-Vega et al. 2021, 903-905). Reviewing constructivist technology studies, Bijker argues that the condition for the proliferation of technological frames is the beginning of interaction around an artefact (Bijker 2010, 68-73). Contemporary advertising invites consumers to react to these artefacts, whether online or offline (Sarasvuo et al. 2022, 548).

In traditional advertising tales, brands occupy the central role of the story, while brand managers and advertising agencies assume the paternity of the story, sharing the authorship status (Shankar et al. 2010, 7). These narratives follow the standard marketing plan structure of beginning, middle, and end (Tevi et al. 2025, 855-856). In contemporary advertising, the consumer is invited to alter the story through co-creation, either by participating in short-term, contextual activations or by influencing the grand story resolution (Sarasvuo et al. 2022, 545-546).

Since consumption is a social experience, it is best conveyed in a narrative format, often through media multiscreening, so that individuals can reference these stories to familiar representations (Herrmann and Ford 2023, 116). Some of these narrative strategies have been explored in relation to advertising platforms, neuromarketing, and audience segmentation tools (Oktan 2018, 167). Specialised literature dedicates considerably more space to the uses of hyperreality as a tool to disrupt the clutter and to increase the differentiation factor of the advertisement (Oktan, 2018, 68; Huang, 2019, 190; Konzack, 2025, 179-181).

Narrative advertising comprises three distinct functions. It materialises symbolic meaning: intangible, abstract, conceptual product attributes are translated in a manner that is relatable to consumers (Padgett and Allen 1997, 53; González 2008, 808). Furthermore, consumers are stimulated to participate in the communication act, playing the role of co-authors and even creating standalone universes with their own narrative integrity and stylistic coordinates (Adaval and Wyer 1998, 208-210). The purpose of these ontological dynamics is to enhance viewers', users', or shoppers' involvement (Huang & Rust, 2020, 35). Since the construct of participation focuses on the receiver, it aligns with the requirements of consumer relevance: how individuals interact with, perceive, and feel about the brand story is reflected in sales figures, online reviews, social media sentiment, and brand power overall. Lastly, advertising narratives serve an experiential function, as consumers can learn from the evolution of various scenarios and from different characters' developments (Dessart 2018, 290; Ono and Ono 2024, 909). Taylor and Schneider (1989, 178) advance a cognitive theory based on event simulation: this framework helps organise our experiences while elevating problem-solving skills and emotional regulation.

Materials and methods

Materials

The objects of study consist of a series of media products, in the form of case study movies or storyboards, featured on the Cannes Lions Awards official website. The selected advertising campaigns that industry professionals have acknowledged during the most prestigious advertising festival worldwide – Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity (Tur-Viñes et al. 2024, 467-468). For 71 years, this advertising festival has been honouring the most creative brands across the globe, awarding trophies for communication efforts that demonstrate a type of creativity that transcends category norms (Galmés et al. 2016, 97). The selected works for analysis are the 2024 Grand Prix winners, to assess commonalities in the use of technology, shifts in discourse, recurrent functions, and areas where innovation-led instruments strategically impact the brand narrative. During June 2024, the Cannes Lions Awards recognised 30 advertising campaigns with Grand Prix trophies across 9 categories and 34 sub-categories; 4 campaigns received distinction in two categories (Specsavers, Orange, Xbox and Renault).

Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity hosts 9 different sections: Classic Advertising, Strategy, Engagement, Entertainment, Craft, Experience, Health, Good, and Titanium. Each of these sections consists of subcategories that have been monitored based on the “Love the Work More” website, an initiative of Quynh Tran and Toan Mai, who compiled dedicated lists of all Grand Prix, Titanium, Gold, Silver, and Bronze Cannes Lions-winning case studies. The website is a partial replica of the official Cannes Lions “Love the Work” website and offers access to the campaign materials on a no-subscription basis (Tran and Mai 2025).

Methods

The qualitative study adopts an interpretive research approach to award-winning advertising case studies across all 9 categories of the Cannes Lions Awards, and the technique used is content analysis (Cannes Lions Awards 2024). The exploration follows the sample content on two distinct dimensions: the implication of technology in 4 different storytelling stages (brand challenge, strategic tension, creative idea, campaign result) and the nature of its influence, whether at brand benefit level – tangible or intangible –, or at consumer level – AIDA model (Kim et al. 2011, 257; Tristante et al. 2023, 12576). Each case study is accompanied by the brand name, campaign title, entrant category in the Cannes Lions competition, innovation used, impact type, and storytelling stage (see Table 1).

For the consumer impact examination, the AIDA marketing model was used as a standard framework for examining consumers’ receptivity across 4 stages (Pashootanzadeh and Khalilian 2018, 637; Fortenberry et al. 2019, 137; Weng et al. 2021, 2-3). Developed by Elias St. Elmo Lewis, the AIDA model (the acronym stands for attention or awareness, interest, desire, action) is one of the most extensively-used marketing techniques (Li and Yu 2013, 48). The framework follows the hierarchy of effects, ranging from cognitive, affective or emotional, and behavioral (Kim et al. 2013, 365; Rehman et al. 2018, 302-303; Herrmann and Ford 2023, 113).

For the second layer of analysis, the study used the distinction of tangible and intangible brand benefits as fundamental categories for the consumption process (Dwivedi

et al. 2021, 5; Sharma et al. 2023, 737). Since the Cannes Lions Awards submission template does not require a gradual, guided format, case studies can follow an arbitrary story arc. The case studies present the advertising campaigns in a compelling, structured manner, yet not confined to a rigorous storytelling matrix (Tur-Viñes et al. 2024, 462-463). However, most storylines typically revolve around a formal structure that contains an initial step, namely the brand challenge (exposition, premises), the strategic tension (intrigue, plot friction), the creative idea (action, climax), and the final step, the campaign result (outcome, resolution) (Koslow et al. 2003, 105-107; Kilgour et al. 2013, 168).

Table 1. Overview of the advertising campaigns awarded the Grand Prix distinction at the Cannes Lions Advertising Festival in 2024

Category Grand Prix: Brand and Campaign Title	Campaign Content Synopsis	Innovation Technology	Impact Type: Brand or Consumer	Story Stage
I. Titanium: <i>DoorDash – All The Ads</i>	DoorDash hijacked Super Bowl ads so viewers could win all the advertised items.	Ad Optimisation: Real-time cart update	Consumer: Action	Creative Idea
II.1. Strategy Creative Strategy: <i>KPN – A Piece of Me</i>	–KPN collaborated with a music celebrity to highlight the consequences of online shaming through lyrics.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
II.2. Strategy Creative Effectiveness: <i>Heinz – It Has to be Heinz</i>	–To prove the brand is iconic by outsourcing the decision to a neutral judge, Heinz rendered ketchup images through AI prompts.	Artificial Intelligence image generation	Brand: Intangible Benefit (leadership)	Strategic Solution
III.1. Classic Audio & Radio: <i>Specsavers – The Misheard Version</i>	–Specsavers re-recorded a famous song with altered lyrics to get people to book hearing aid medical checks.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
III.2.A. Classic Film: <i>Orange Women’s Football</i>	–Orange revealed gender bias in football by altering the original women’s game performance behind male players’ figures.	Computer-Generated Imagery	Consumer: Attention	Brand Challenge
III.2.B. Classic Film: <i>Sydney Opera House – Play it Safe</i>	–To celebrate 50 years of brave musical performances, Sydney Opera House created an ironic song about the opposite value: cowardness.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
III.3.A. Classic Outdoor: <i>Magnum – Find Your Summer/ Stairs</i>	–To counteract the idea that cold months are not compatible with ice-cream, Magnum found areas with rays of sun during winter days.	Ad Optimisation: Real-time data	Consumer: Desire	Creative Idea

III.3.B. Classic Outdoor: <i>Pedigree Adoptable</i>	–To democratise dog adoption, Pedigree transformed shelter-dog images into studio-quality photos.	Targeting and Ad Optimisation: Real-time data, Computer-Generated Images	Consumer: Action	Strategic Solution and Creative Idea
III.4. Classic & Publishing: <i>Coca-Cola – Recycle Me</i>	–To promote recycling, the brand transformed crushed cans designs into official logos.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
IV.1. Engagement Creative B2B: <i>JCDecuax – Who is Marina Prieto</i>	–The brand demonstrated the effectiveness of media support by turning a lesser-known character into a celebrity.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
IV.2. Engagement Creative Data: <i>Mastercard – Room for Everyone</i>	–Mastercard helped Ukrainian businesses grow by pinpointing complementary Polish businesses.	Big Data: Opportunity Analysis	Brand: Intangible Benefit (inclusivity)	Strategic Solution and Campaign Result
IV.3. Engagement Direct: <i>Xbox – The Everyday Tactician</i>	–Xbox got a skilled football gamer hired by one of the most famous football clubs.	Data processing: In-game data points	Brand: Intangible Benefit (competitive)	Creative Idea
IV.4. Engagement Media: <i>Mercado Libre – The Handshake Hunt</i>	–The campaign branded all Black Friday content with the brand logo (a handshake) to offer discounts.	Machine-learning algorithms (on-screen sensors)	Consumer: Action	Creative Idea
IV.5. Engagement PR: <i>Specsavers – The Misheard Version</i>	–Specsavers re-recorded a famous song with altered lyrics to get people to book hearing aid medical checks.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
IV.6. Engagement Social & Influencer: <i>CeraVe – Michael Cera</i>	–The brand nurtured a conspiracy about CeraVe manufacturers, to prove that the product is done exclusively by professionals.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
V.1. Entertainment Grand Prix: <i>WhatsApp – We are Ayenda</i>	The ad documented the life of the Afghan National Women Football team, on their path to escape the Taliban occupation.	Data encryption	Brand: Intangible Benefit (Indispensable)	Campaign Results
V.2. Entertainment for Gaming: <i>Xbox – The Everyday Tactician</i>	Xbox got a skilled football gamer hired by one of the most famous football clubs.	Data processing: In-game data points	Brand: Intangible Benefit (competitive)	Creative Idea

V.3. Entertainment for Music: <i>Johnnie Walker (Diageo) – Errata at 88</i>	To undo a historical error, the brand told an unknown story and created a platform for an unsung hero.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
V.4. Entertainment for Sport: <i>Orange Women’s Football</i>	Orange revealed gender bias in football by altering the original women’s game performance behind male players’ figures.	Computer-Generated Imagery	Consumer: Attention	Brand Challenge
VI.1. Experience & Brand Activation: <i>Pop Tarts – The First Edible Mascot</i>	To break the clutter of yet another football mascot, Pop-Tarts created the first edible one.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
VI.2. Experience Creative Business Transformation: <i>Philips – Refurb: Better than New</i>	To reduce resource waste, Philips sold only refurbished products rather than new ones.	A. R. installation Business model change (circular e-commerce)	Hybrid Impact – Consumer: Action Brand: Intangible Benefit (mindful)	Brand Challenge and Creative Idea
VI.3. Experience Creative Commerce: <i>Renault – Cars to Work</i>	Renault helped financially constrained individuals by requiring car payments only after employment.	National program innovation (new leasing model)	Hybrid Impact – Consumer: Action Brand: Tangible Benefit (car)	Strategic Solution and Campaign Result
VI.4. Experience Innovation: <i>KVI Brave Fund Inc. – Voice 2 Diabetes</i>	A platform analysed simple consumer voice samples to democratise access to diabetes diagnosis.	Machine-learning Data science (voice samples)	Consumer: Action	Campaign Result
VI.5. Experience Luxury & Lifestyle: <i>Loewe, Suna Fujita – Loewe x Suna Fujita</i>	A luxury European fashion brand partnered with an artisanal ceramics studio from Japan.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
VII.1. Health & Wellness: <i>Dramamine – The Last Barf Bag</i>	Dramamine created an ode to a competitor (barf bag) that was no longer needed because of the new product’s efficacy against nausea.	Product repurposing (new use of bags – merchandise)	Consumer: Attention	Creative Idea
VII.2. Health Grand Prix Good: <i>UN Women – Child Wedding Cards</i>	Lions Support a bill that protects child marriage by getting kids sending wedding invitations to lawmakers.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
VII.3. Health Pharma: <i>Siemens Healthineers – Magnetic Stories</i>	The brand turned frightening MRI sounds into audiobook stories for children undergoing medical procedures.	Deep learning algorithms	Consumer: Desire	Strategic Solution and Campaign Result

VIII.1. Good Glass – The Lion for Change: <i>Vaseline (Unilever) Transition Body Lotion</i>	Unilever created a dedicated skin product to aid skin imbalance of transgender women.	Clinical trial (new product testing dermatology)	Hybrid Impact – Consumer: Action Brand: Tangible Benefit (lotion)	Campaign Result
VIII.2. Good Grand Prix: <i>Reporters without Borders The First Speech</i>	To mark the anniversary of a democratic icon, the brand drew attention to dictators' false promises in their speeches.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
VIII.3. Good Sustainability: <i>Renault – Cars to Work</i>	Renault helped financially constrained individuals by asking for car payment only after employment.	National program innovation (new leasing model)	Hybrid Impact – Consumer: Action Brand: Tangible Benefit (car)	Strategic Solution and Campaign Result
IX.1. Craft Design: <i>SOL Cement – Sightwalks</i>	To help visually impaired people achieve independence in city navigation, SOL Cement created a new code language (lines) on walking tiles.	Tactile signage (new product testing architectural design)	Consumer: Action	Campaign Result
IX.2. Craft – Digital: <i>Spotify Spreadbeats</i>	Spotify proved to business decision-makers that a 4-minute music video can be created using only cells of Excel spreadsheets.	Digital Archaeology, ASCII, Synchron Algorithms	Brand: Intangible Benefit (creativity)	Creative Idea
IX.3. Craft – Film: <i>Hornbach – The Square Meter</i>	Hornbach supported those living in tight confines by exploring the potential of a microcosm.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
IX.4. Craft Industry: <i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung – The 100th Edition</i>	To highlight the danger of right-wing extremism, the newspaper showcased stories of survivors from tyrannical regimes.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

As highlighted in contemporary research frameworks (Nederstigt and Hilberink-Schulpen 2017, 3; Araujo et al. 2018, 440; Kerr and Richards 2020, 194; Bharti et al. 2024, 198; Muraro and Kononova 2025, 4), the examination of the 9 categories exhibits the intersection of conventional advertising storytelling and narrative techniques demanded by the infusion of technology. The findings discuss the sweet spot between cold, specialised digital tools and the analogue sphere of narrative style, nuanced characters and plot twists. Out of all 30 Grand Prix-winning campaigns, 18 incorporated new technologies or product innovation in their storytelling line. The brand that did not opt for digitally-led innovation either resorted to conventional TV stories (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Reporters without Borders, Hornbach), musical cues that aid the rendering of their message (Sydney Opera House, Specsavers, KPN), traditional visual or audio effects-editing (Coca-Cola,

Johnnie Walker), or disruption-based performative acts (UN Women, Loewe and Suna Fujita, Cerave).

Considering the impact on consumer behaviour, technology amplified the audience's receptivity in 11 campaigns. Following the AIDA model (Metili 2023, 195), the most accessed step was „action”, as reflected in the case of DoorDash, Pedigree, Mercado Libre, Orange, KVI Brave Fund Inc., and SOL Cement. For only five brands, technology augmented brand benefits, exclusively intangible ones (Heinz, Mastercard, WhatsApp, Xbox, Spotify). The 3 brands that displayed hybrid technological impact (Philips, Renault, and Vaseline) prompted the „action” step of the AIDA model.

Six brands that received the highest distinction at the Cannes Lions Awards were commended for commercial transformations beyond convention, without machine learning or digital methods at the centre of their campaigns (Berlo et al. 2022, 281). SOL Cement reinvented a physical item (tactile cement tiles), thereby creating a richer urban signalling system to improve mobility for visually impaired pedestrians. Unilever's brand Vaseline constitutes a breakthrough in dermatology and a case where the product is the advertisement itself: Vaseline became the first clinically validated skincare product for transgender women in Thailand, following a two-year complex medical testing (Joshi et al. 2025, 9). Dramamine, a medication for motion sickness prevention and nausea relief, paid tribute to its obsolete alternative, a barf bag, through an educational documentary featuring doctors, flight attendants, historians, and a pop-up exhibition in New York City. Additionally, Dramamine repurposed the barf bags, suggesting alternative uses (puppets, gloves, popcorn bags, envelopes) and selling the redesigned items online. Renault introduced a new car leasing model to help job seekers in remote areas, allowing car payments to be made only after the probation period had passed.

Innovation that was not digitally-led showcased improved social services, new medical product developments and repurposed commercial products. The storytelling arch was influenced at the creative idea level (SOL Cement), as a strategic solution (Renault), and also at the fourth level, as a campaign result (Dramamine, Vaseline, Renault).

The use of new technologies for executional or peripheral purposes amplified the brand narrative or highlighted a certain commercial feature (Galmés et al. 2016, 83). JCDecaux proved media channel effectiveness by growing the popularity of a less notorious figure, after promoting the Instagram profile of a 100-year-old grandmother from Galicia; social media content has, compared to traditional media, proven to have a longer shelf life (Fortenberry et al. 2019, 142). Philips reinvented its e-commerce model by prioritising the promotion and sale of refurbished items rather than new products, thereby encouraging the circular economy (Gutentag and Russell 2024, 50). Xbox merged the virtual and real worlds by helping a football club recruit one of the most skilled data analysts in the Football Manager videogame (Groza et al. 2015, 70). Restaurant takeout platform DoorDash demonstrated its delivery versatility by allowing users to add to the cart instantly; each item featured in other commercials during the Super Bowl broadcast. One lucky promotion participant won all of the advertised products. This technique stimulated conversations about the Super Bowl event (Spotts et al. 2014, 458) by employing the availability and salience heuristics, specific to major events (Kim et al. 2013, 135). To promote ice-cream sales in the winter months, Magnum created a film that glorifies the scarce rays of sunlight across the United Kingdom and digital billboards that tracked sunny spots in the city, using real-time data of the sun's position. The logo of Mercado Libre, a leading electronic commerce

platform, portrays a handshake, so during Black Friday, the brand displayed QR codes with discounts whenever a handshake was featured on-screen. Kim and Cheon (2025, 4) argue that QR insertions serve as attention-grabbers, yet they contribute to media multitasking, overwhelming cognitive processes within the messaging landscape.

A total of 6 Grand Prix campaigns used technology and innovation to amplify the core story. JCDecaux and Philips assimilated new technologies to aid the brand challenge, while Xbox, DoorDash, Magnum and Mercado Libre used innovation to amplify their creative solutions. To Bolin's mediatization theory (2016, 5259-5261), these brands interacted within (Xbox), with (Mercado Libre, DoorDash) and through (Magnum) technological devices and assets.

The most influential contributions are digitally led innovations, which play a pivotal role in shaping the story. These are substantial technological infusions into the campaign narrative, defining the brand challenge or the resolution. In an attempt to fight stereotypical thinking and gender bias within the football fandom, Orange altered reality, hiding female players' identity behind AI-manipulated male footballers' figures (Roth-Cohen and Gvili 2025, 3). Heinz, the Grand Prix winner in the Creative Effectiveness section, demonstrated the brand's category leadership by prompting Artificial Intelligence to generate visual versions of „ketchup” and revealing results that bore a striking resemblance to the brand's iconic design shape. Pedigree used machine learning, CGI, proximity data, and digitally rendered images to promote the adoption of shelter dogs across various media. Technology enabled the brand to make immediate alterations based on adoption status through Computer Generated Imagery – a powerful tool in shaping the digitisation of cultural industries (Sun 2023, 26).

Mastercard created a digital platform that shows complementary business locations for both Polish and Ukrainian entrepreneurs, a model that generates growth based on the category affinity of proximity locations. Siemens Healthineers pioneered a technology that synchronised the most frequent MRI sounds with sounds of children's stories, creating audiobooks that rewrite the sound sequences of medical scanning. For its business audience, Spotify proved that even Excel spreadsheets of a media plan can, after complex video coding, turn into a powerful music video. WhatsApp highlighted its data privacy superiority through a compelling documentary on how Afghan women escaped the Taliban assault by exclusively sharing highly sensitive data through WhatsApp text and audio messages. Following the classification of needs facilitated by smartphones – utilitarian, hedonic, social –, WhatsApp fulfilled a strictly pragmatic function (Kim et al. 2013, 361; Dovaliene et al. 2016, 207-208). KVI Brave Fund Inc. transformed the findings of a groundbreaking academic research done by Klick Labs, which revolutionises diabetes detection by combining artificial intelligence with voice technology, into a digital screening tool that makes diagnosis more affordable and accessible. This digitally-led section supported storytelling at every step. The Orange campaign was influenced at its first narrative layer (brand challenge). Heinz, Pedigree, Mastercard, and Siemens Healthineers have substantially influenced their strategic solutions. Spotify aided its creative idea, while WhatsApp and KVI Brave Fund Inc. diffused technological innovation at a brand result level.

Local campaigns which presented foreign cultural content also included data related to cultural background, domestic statistics, and local impact. In this asymmetrical context, the use of technology is even more valuable as a tool that calibrates the narrative and aligns

the presentation of advertisements with universal storytelling norms. In a predictable fashion, there is also the case of hybrid storytelling instances, where glocalisation encompasses both homogenous and heterogeneous socio-cultural cues (Hermans and Kempen 1998, 1118).

Results and discussion

Technical infusion renders a sense of virtual energy, as gadgets are components of meta-functional systems. The universe becomes both operational and remediable through the technical object, whose function is to solve psychological or social friction; consumption is a means of socialisation (Doorn et al. 2010, 254). Automation aims at echoing the supra-functionality of consciousness in the object (Baudrillard 1996, 194). In terms of advertising rhetoric, automated tools infuse the story with dynamism, and with the novelty factor.

In relation to the AIDA efficiency model, Grand Prix campaigns have predominantly employed technological infusions to influence consumers in the last stage of the model: action. Innovation stimulates behavioral responses such as lead-generation or in-channel purchase (Doorn et al. 2010, 255). When the technological impact was reflected at a brand level, the purpose of innovation was to complement the brand's equity (intangible assets), either by signalling support for a social cause, or by enhancing positive perceptual indicators, such as leadership or inclusivity.

Five of the brands that received accolades used technology to support more than one step of the creative campaign. Pedigree made use of technology both at a strategic and at a creative level, Renault, Mastercard and Siemens Healthineers were influenced in the second storytelling stage, as well as in the brand result step, while Philips embraced technology both in the initial phase and at the strategic solution stage.

The narrative of three Grand Prix-awarded campaigns influenced the story in the initial phase (context or brand challenge). Orange, JCDecaux and Philips creatively used innovation at the beginning of the brand story, to shed light on stereotypes, prove the influence of a media channel or aid a more sustainable commerce model (Ibeama et al. 2025, 234-235). JCDecaux is the only example that used technology at this stage to directly highlight the brand's superiority, Philips had a composite mission (commercial and environmental), while the campaign for Orange targeted social change.

Brands that assimilated technology in the second story stage – the development of the narrative – nurtured the strategic evolution of the story (Heinz, Pedigree, Mastercard, Renault, and Siemens Healthineers). Structural use of technology helped commercial narrative by proving a brand's category leadership, showcasing live updates of adoption shelters, supporting growth through entrepreneurial collaboration, improving social conditions for vulnerable consumers, and alleviating pain during medical procedures (Mortimer 2008, 105-106). Innovative technology was integral to how the ads unfolded, with Renault being the only brand to rely on a financial model innovation.

The creative execution of the story, the third narrative dimension, was assisted by technology in the case of DoorDash, Magnum, Pedigree, Mercado Libre, Dramamine, Spotify, and Philips. Innovation was used to consolidate brand strength in the delivery sector, drive ice-cream sales, prove leadership in e-commerce, reinforce the taste of products in the brand portfolio, foreground product superiority in front of an outdated alternative, persuade stakeholders' of the brand's musical potency, and highlight resource waste in the durables

category. With the exception of Philips, all awarded campaigns that used technology at the executional layer did so explicitly for commercial purposes.

Finally, seven campaigns displayed technology-driven impact at the last step of the narrative arch, when the brand story altered the plot reveal, the outcome, or the campaign result (Mastercard, WhatsApp, KVI Brave Fund Inc., Siemens Healthineers, Vaseline, SOL Cement, and Renault). Their purposes included harnessing business cooperation, demonstrating data privacy superiority in critical situations, democratising access to medical services, improving the psychological well-being of underage patients, creating a basic hygiene product for a minority segment, improving the lives of visually impaired people, and financially helping unemployed citizens improve their job-seeking options. In this specific resolution section, all the analysed campaign stories have dramatised brand impact that transcends commercial interests, either in medical or in social realms (Chu 2025, 796).

The predominant technological innovation tools that have been used are machine-learning algorithms, big data processing – a valuable consumer knowledge aggregator –, and real-time data analysis (Chen et al. 2017, 429). With respect to the classification detailed by Huang and Rust (2020, 38), mechanical AI has been used to automate specific functions, such as in Heinz's *It has to be Heinz* or Siemens's campaigns. Thinking AI has been rendered explicitly in Pedigree *Adoptable* and in Mercado Libre's *Handshake* advertisements, whereas feeling AI did not stimulate any direct execution. AI also employed additional secondary roles, as in the case of DoorDash advertisement, winner of Titanium Grand Prix. The objects of the study do not indicate any predilection for a specific industry sector that benefited from the use of new technologies – different layers of technological infusion proved fertile for food brands, telecom services, durable products, entertainment platforms, and banking products.

Innovative tools, as parts of the advertising narrative, can enrich conventional storytelling by functioning as portals for transformative action, bridges that harmonise distant worlds, or efficient outsourcing instruments (Eynon and Young 2021, 167-170). Critics of machine-learning technology argue that new technologies heighten social inequalities by amplifying discrimination and discouraging democratic participation. The hyperludic function of the gadget is also justified by its mobility, a central element in its notorious evolution (Merrin 2014, 7). In the above-mentioned case studies, the advertising narratives used AI and new technologies specifically to bridge seemingly incompatible worlds, facilitate access to medical services, and create a smooth connection between demand and supply.

The limitations of the analysis include the lack of dedicated academic literature on advertising storytelling and new technologies, in stark opposition to its technical investigations (Tur-Viñes et al. 2024, 470). Furthermore, the paper examines only a narrow pool of data, which consists of marketing groups eligible against international advertising festival criteria. Each festival case submission implies consistent budgets, notoriety thresholds and previous experience with delivering mandatory documentation, leaving aside less visible brands and communication efforts (Kübler and Proppe, 2012, 61; Runge et al. 2012, 34-36). The intentions of the analysis focus exclusively on narrative patterns in advertising, as influenced by technological tools; the insertion of technological instruments objects is not approached through technical or ethical lenses, thus limiting itself to an interpretation tributary to the narrative realm (Galmés et al. 2016, 83). Lastly, the data corpus consists of advertising case studies sourced from the official website of the Cannes

Lions International Festival of Creativity 2024 (The Cannes Lions Awards 2024). This post-rationalised version of the campaign unfolding may lead to a retro-fitted rhetoric, crafted specifically to appear more original, award-worthy, and less predictable (O'Connor et al. 2017, 210, ; Kilgour et al. 2013, 165).

Conclusions

Technological interventions within the advertising discourse either facilitated consumer behavioral change (the „action” step from the AIDA framework), or amplified intangible brand benefits that further built brand equity. This specific use case of technology, disproportionately accessed compared to the display of tangible benefits, highlights the fact that innovation has a higher degree of compatibility with non-physical, abstract, or invisible brand assets.

The analysis of the case studies reveals that the first story step (brand premise or story conflict) assimilated new technologies in order to set the ground for fighting prejudices, demonstrating efficiency in real-time, or tracking customer acquisition orders. In this first step, the brands that incorporate innovation hold a common intention: they transform the reality, whether by camouflaging a stereotypical image, depicting the evolution of a future notorious figure, or by switching the priority to promoting used resources over new ones.

In the case of communication campaigns that involved new technology used for the strategic development stage of the tale, brands reaffirmed their leadership status, facilitated pet adoption, encouraged business cooperation, and improved social and medical circumstances for vulnerable consumers. The purpose of technology was predominantly to bridge worlds and to increase accessibility to seemingly unattainable products and services, whether basic goods or medical care.

Technological use for the creative development of the story consolidated the brand proposition, highlighted the product's efficiency, strengthened the brand amplitude, and shed light on environmental issues. Innovation, in this case, aimed at accentuating brand value and product differentiator.

Lastly, in the final stage of the narrative arch, brand stories featured resolutions about cooperation, safety, comfort, fundamental needs, and improved social lives. This layer identifies a different function of new technologies, that of pragmatic, utilitarian, effective solutions that transcend the initial activity sector. Performative distinctions in the nature of the storytelling display dynamics of identity and power (Stapleton & Wilson 2017, 61). Brands acclaimed for creativity aim both at refreshing their equity through inserts of innovation and at generating a sense of community by narrowing ontological gaps and nurturing new spaces, virtual or physical (Beauvisage et al. 2024, 1115).

New technologies lack rigorous regulation and proper ethical norms, leading to a plethora of perils of social, cultural, and economic impact (Strycharz and Segijn 2022, 577; Ryan 2025, 857). Complexity, limited accuracy in the case of multiple target audiences, and the hazardous nature of the end creative result are just a few disadvantages mentioned by scholars (Ali & Shah 2011, 43-45). Nonetheless, leveraging technology's operational value and its intrinsic advantages can lead to rich, powerful brand stories or to efficient solutions for social demands. Technological infusions in the advertising discourse can narrow the distance between consumers and brands, either in an almost instantaneous form, or by lowering the difficulty level in accessing a certain need or desire (Yaseen 2023, 120).

While the current examination opens the path for further multidisciplinary research on the intersection between analogue storytelling and innovative tools, the most fertile contribution of new technologies within advertising story plots stems from two major areas: a much-needed degree of objectivity and instrumental effectiveness (Galmés et al. 2016, 88-89). In the contemporary creative advertising frame, new technologies function as legitimate sources of validation for subjective truths (Puccio and Cabra 2012, 197). They represent a means to diminish the gap between different vulnerable communities and access to social services, an efficient outsourcing tool that can save resources, or a premise for novel stories, products, or services.

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