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White Paper

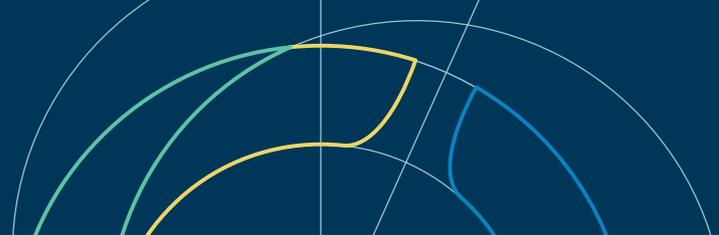
# The Art and Science of Digital Storytelling: The Five 'R's of Creative Advertising

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# The Art and Science of Digital Storytelling: The Five 'R's of Creative Advertising

Everyone has a story. Whenever we meet someone for the first time, we tell them our stories so that we can unpack and present a version of ourselves that other people can get the measure of. We signal our beliefs, tastes, competencies, and aspirations by presenting stories that demonstrate where we came from, how we got here, and where we are going.

Brands use stories in the exact same way. Good marketers know this, and they know how important stories are when it comes to demonstrating the how, what, and why of a Brand's offering. Marketers also know that stories can help guide users through the

buyer's journey, and that their advertising should take users on a voyage from initial introduction, through to increased awareness, buying intent, and loyalty – with relevant messaging at every stage.

Technology should follow the precepts and ground rules of good advertising. Adform's creative technology, including retargeting, dynamic ads, cross-device targeting and sequential messaging, underpinned by an intelligent use of data, is purpose-built for effective and impactful storytelling. Rather than common, linear storylines, we can now build complex story frameworks, capturing the right

user's attention, in the right place, at the right time, on the right device, with the right array of messages. Stories are no longer stuck on one set of rails but are capable of more and more unique variations.

**Technology should follow the precepts and ground rules of good Storytelling.**



**Our tech supports storytelling by following the five overlapping precepts of creative advertising (or the Five 'R's):**



**Real Time**



**Reporting**



**Reach**



**Relevance**



**Reaction**



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## Real Time



In today's world, transactions in digital advertising occur within milliseconds. Automation has meant that data can be analyzed and executed well within the blink of an eye, leading to instantaneous ads that can make use of a variety of data sources.

When it comes to storytelling, the immediate nature of modern advertising opens up a host of opportunities for creativity.

**Generate hundreds of highly tailored creatives that incorporate multiple real-time data streams.**

### Dynamic Ads

A pivotal way real time advertising can support creativity is through Dynamic Ads, which helps improve efficiency and optimization, as well as personalization. In short, a Dynamic Ad allows for the delivery of multiple variants of the same ad through automation, making it possible for the same advert to say different things depending on who it is being delivered to.



Let's say you operate an airline and want to create a campaign that showcases different flight options based on the travel interests of your audience. Rather than create thousands of different ads, you can create one advert and ensure elements such as text or graphics change depending on who is seeing your ad, or which flight plans are operating at any given time.

Not only do dynamic ads save a huge amount of time, but they can also

make use of real-time data streams, allowing you to create hundreds of highly tailored creatives that incorporate date and time-based data, behavioral messaging, geo data, demographic data, and customer relationship management (CRM) based data for high impact messaging. As a result, you can put your offline data to use, close customer loops, and create a sequence of messaging which illuminates the brand's core message.

So, your travel company, for instance, could take live data on flight options and then send relevant holiday packages and pricing to users depending on their travel interests, browsing activity, location, and so on. This unlocks a myriad of options available to advertisers, and that's before we even dissect the creative layer where JavaScript, CSS, video, audio, and APIs, are all changeable elements when using Dynamic Ads.



## Product Feeds

Product feeds allow you to deliver customizable ads that reflect users' interests based on information gathered about the individual user's on-line activity such as browsing history, purchasing activity, in combination with other data feeds such as demographics and geography.

Product feeds should not be overlooked when it comes to storytelling. As the methodology becomes more sophisticated, you can subvert the nature of how the feeds are used in conjunction with the creative message, resulting ultimately with a box of tricks to tell a multitude of stories.

## Real Time Feeds

As well as product feeds, there are also a plethora of different ways you can make use of real time data. It's simply a matter of how imaginative you want to be. Weather targeting started as a prosaic showcase of what digital could do, but it has since become a way of communicating with a user who is reactive to natural emotional stimuli by allowing ads to work with nature. In practice this might mean using weather feeds to inform your clothing ads; consider the enhanced persuasive power of an ad showcasing a summer dress when it's hot and sunny outside as opposed to in the midst of a fall rainstorm on a cold and overcast day.

Through the power of data, ads can adopt a degree of sentience. These become living, breathing ads, adapting to real time events, and communicating with content that is fluid and changing.

**By allowing ads to shape themselves with live data, they inevitably gain a degree of sentience. They react to real-time events and blend into the Users' lived experiences.**



**Product Retargeting is designed primarily for e-commerce marketing but can be useful in other cases as well, particularly combined as a hybrid solution with Dynamic Ads:**

- **An e-shop where the user expresses interest in certain products** (applies to any website with a products catalogue).
- **A website where dynamic products were generated based on a user's interaction**, e.g. insurance quote data entered by the user, or user's login data.
- **A website where banner content is constantly updated**, e.g. online betting websites where odds are displayed in a banner and are changing very often.





## Reporting



As global ad spend is slated to shoot past \$630 billion by the end of 2018 (emarketer), companies find themselves tasked with ensuring that as little of that money as possible is going to waste. This is why transparent and independent reporting on the effectiveness of campaigns is essential when it comes to telling impactful stories.

### Attribution

With a variety of channels joining the digital marketing mix, it can be increasingly difficult to measure which touch points are the most successful

in convincing prospects to engage, click, or purchase. The dominant attribution model in the market is last-click which can be unreliable and inconsistent. When it comes to last-click, the studies indicate that 50% of conversions involve more than a single touch point, and 20% of conversions involve more than five interactions with an ad. Attributing a sale to the last click before purchase therefore presents an incomplete picture of your marketing efforts.

The ideal attribution model should take a look at any type of interaction, on any channel or format, across any

device both offline and online, with the ability to carefully monitor the path-to-conversion.

**Transparent and Independent reporting on the effectiveness of campaigns is essential when it comes to telling impactful stories.**



**For best practice when it comes to Attribution, we recommend the following:**



#### To Keep the Overview

**Use Data** - Don't take anything for granted and **don't rely on assumptions**. Take a look at the master data and try to get a good overall picture. If you have a Business intelligence team then ask them to take a deeper look, if not then hire a consultancy to do it for you. Don't rely on what you think might be true.



#### To Be Complete

**Tracking** - Spend some time setting up your tracking. This is important otherwise you are stitching together different tracking solutions which lead to break offs in the data stream and you will be unable to collect everything you need. **Set-up consistently across all channels** for a holistic interpretation of all of your touch points.



#### To Be Unbiased

**Be Neutral** - Try to ensure your exploration of the data is unbiased. Partnering **with an independent and neutral provider** can help ensure the stats are not vanity metrics and are not interpreted in favor of one channel over the other.



## Reporting and Storytelling

Data from accurate reporting on user interaction with an ad can be used for intelligent retargeting and can help execute complex and adaptable campaigns. There are many ways a user can interact with an ad – the use of complex components (anything from hot spots to 3D imagery) brings about custom events that can be logged in an ad server logger. From this, real-time segments can be built, which can be actioned and correlated with creative to build the story. It is the relationship between the analytics, data and creative which builds the fundamental story framework.

**Data from interactions enables stories to react and change in a symbiotic dance with the user.**

You can see this in action in the case below. In the example, Toyota created a rich media campaign which allowed users to experience the CHR model through creative assets such as a gallery and 360° viewing experience. Users were then retargeted with relevant follow up ads depending on where they had abandoned the creative. With the addition of look-a-like modelling to expand reach, the clever use of re-targeting saw an incremental increase in test drive applications of 30%. Purchase was never a KPI in itself, but 4 users went beyond the target of test drives to actually buy a CHR.



### 1<sup>st</sup> Encounter / Gallery Retargeted

With a creative that prompted to examine the inner panel of the CHR.

### Viewing / 360° Design Retargeted

To view the vehicle configuration page to customize and create their own dream CHR.

### Test Drive / Form Filled Retargeted

With a shorted form to fill out via a landing page for those who were close to completing the original form.

### DMP / Lookalike Modelling

**30% incremental form application.**

Ads were shown to those who had similar characteristics to the original audience who filled out the form.

## Reach



The third 'R' that we will investigate is 'Reach'. As Advertising Technology enables access to more and more channels advertisers can extend their scope and speak to more users. With new mediums comes the potential for more interesting and emotional storytelling, and advertisers have a responsibility to adapt their messaging to make best use of these different channels.



### Cross Device

As users continue to hop across multiple devices during their daily internet browsing, reaching the same user across mobile, tablet, laptop and desktop becomes an ever-present challenge, particularly when understanding their preference for using each device. With purchase, for example one user might favor their mobile via an app, whereas another may prefer their laptop. It is a challenge that must be met for the sake of efficient retargeting, frequency capping, and in order to measure a user's interaction with the ad. Cross device is also fundamental for successful sequential messaging across difference devices, a mainstay of modern storytelling.

For a company like Adform, we bridge this challenge by aggregating as many deterministic datasets as possible in

our DMP, then augment with several probabilistic cross-device data providers. This solution means that Adform and other independent providers can expand their cross-device reach further than 'walled garden' companies that rely heavily on deterministic data from user login information.

### Lookalike Modelling

Another beneficial way to increase reach is through look-a-like modelling. Using the Adform DMP, as well as third party data providers, advertisers can analyze a primary data set (say, customer data) and discover common characteristics which they can then use to build a new, larger data segment. This was used to great effect in the Toyota CHR case we have already analyzed, and is becoming a pivotal part of ad solutions. Having so much data running through Adform's connected product suite allows for significantly extended reach by way of lookalike modelling.

**Targeting users across devices is essential for efficient retargeting, frequency capping, and measurement.**



6.30 AM



9.00 AM



12.00 PM



6.00 PM



11.00 PM



## DOOH



By 2019, Digital-Out-of-Home (DOOH) is set to capture 40% of all ad spend (PwC). Targeting consumers on-the-go in an environment that is free from ad fraud, is 100% viewable, and can circumvent ad blockers, is proving to be increasingly appealing to advertisers. The medium also offers inventive ways of reacting dynamically to the environment, with ads able to change depending on factors such as weather conditions, local events, and social media trends. Unlike the tactile and intimate relationships we have with a mobile phone, the DOOH screen is a large canvas which calls for more theatrical messaging.



## Audio



Last last year, Audio Ad revenue spiked 42% (IAB), highlighting the growing appeal of tapping into this developing audience. With platforms such as Spotify announcing over 170 million active users, this channel is proving to be a welcome addition to advertisers' omni-channel strategy, with many DSPs allowing users to purchase audio inventory in the same workflow as display and mobile. Audio is a sleeping giant, and with vocal synthesis emerging along with the use of personal assistants, two way conversations with ads are not far off. As we are creatures meant to converse verbally and not through the means of keyboards and virtual

keypads, this represents an organic development in advertising which nevertheless relies on the same storytelling structures of the past.



## Augmented Reality



Whether we understand the experience to be called Augmented Reality (AG), Mixed Reality (MR), Extended Reality (EX), or any other phrase, we now have a more visually alluring way to connect with users. Advertisers with their eye on the future have begun to explore the many ways the real and digital worlds can intersect through AG. If you are an alcohol brand, for instance, and you're proud of your brewing heritage, you could allow users to scan your products with their phones and then experience a virtual tour of your company's distillery. Or, if you are a sunglasses brand, you can harness device cameras and filters to see how users look in your latest line of shades. Augmented Reality can capitalize on the ubiquitous nature of smart phones to open up unlimited possibilities; the only real limit is the imagination of the advertiser. We're increasingly seeing augmented reality move out of apps into the web, and, as file handling capabilities rise exponentially, augmented reality will see realistic and tangible scale. We can foresee AG gradually linking to other forms of advertising and forming a pivotal part of the marketing and sales funnel as the user goes from experimentation and exploration through the cycles of purchase and brand affinity.



## Virtual Reality



Virtual reality is proving to be an exciting prospect for advertisers. The new medium allows advertisers to create a distraction free, immersive, 360 ad environment for users. With an enriched user experience comes the potential for new measurement and analytics; as well as the standard metrics commonly shared with video such as views, unique views, interaction time, etc., you can now try out heat maps and get a more complex picture of a user's behavior way beyond the movement of a mouse. With the adoption of other VR sensors to incorporate taste and smell, users will be engulfed by virtual worlds and Advertisers have to be careful not to overwhelm the user or risk negative brand association. Initial advertising in this realm has been heavy handed, but with the adoption of standard assets deployed over layers in the VR realm, suddenly the less-is-more approach is seeing real interest.

VR has suffered from a number of teething problems with the current iterations: device differentiation, device size, cost, development times, negative medical connotations, previous perceived failed executions of the past to name but a few. However, if we look at the cycle that data-driven storytelling creates: data building creative experience - leading to complex interactions - leading to data, it isn't too far-fetched to assert that we will soon see self-creating VR based on this very cycle. With advanced data science, we are likely to create the stories ourselves as we interact with VR environments.



## Relevance



The key driver behind the digital advertising revolution has been the gift of personalization. Advertisers are no longer shouting into the void, but can tell stories to users that they can safely assume have at least some interest in their offering.

This ecosystem, the delivery chain through which advertisers can show the right ads to the right users, is powered by Data Management Platforms (DMPs) which act as the brain behind the Stories. DMPs bring together fragmented offline customer relationship management (CRM) data along with online behavioral, demographic, and campaign data to unify user profiles and allow advertisers to find users with a vested interest in their messaging.

### The Hero's Journey

To examine the way online behavioral data can be used to increase relevance, let's take the phenomenon of personal home assistants (Alexa, Google Home, etc.) and see how companies such as these could create campaigns that make use of behavioral data. Personal assistants are something that will permeate other environments too, notably automotive, where hands free communication is a practical need and large car manufacturers have already started to invest with proprietary and third party tech. When coupled with the advent of driverless cars and the use of smart screens, we are slowly arriving at a place where cars are hubs

for visual information and two way communication.

At Adform, we have been building these capabilities into advertising experiences. Advertisers have created ad units with personal test interfaces and cloud speech APIs allowing users to experience the home assistant in a variety of different virtual environments, from the bedroom to the kitchen. The unit would then capture a vast array of custom events and user interactions to help understand the different ways a consumer could make use of the home assistant. Through these interactions, advertisers can capture relevant data segments that can then be incorporated at campaign level to extend the story into unlimited paths.

The apex of strategies like this is to create that magical cycle as a user goes on a journey of discovery and to capture the journey in a complex AI-led data cycle.

This is very similar to the principle of the Hero's journey, a Jungian construct made famous by Joseph Campbell, where the hero finds themselves on a path of adventure and pitfalls, outside their comfort zone; traversing an emotional voyage into temptation, transformation and ultimately atonement and metamorphosis. This structure accurately mirrors the journey of a user through digital storytelling techniques, using data as the precipitating factor, changing their perceptions of branding through education and intelligent retargeting, all the way to their

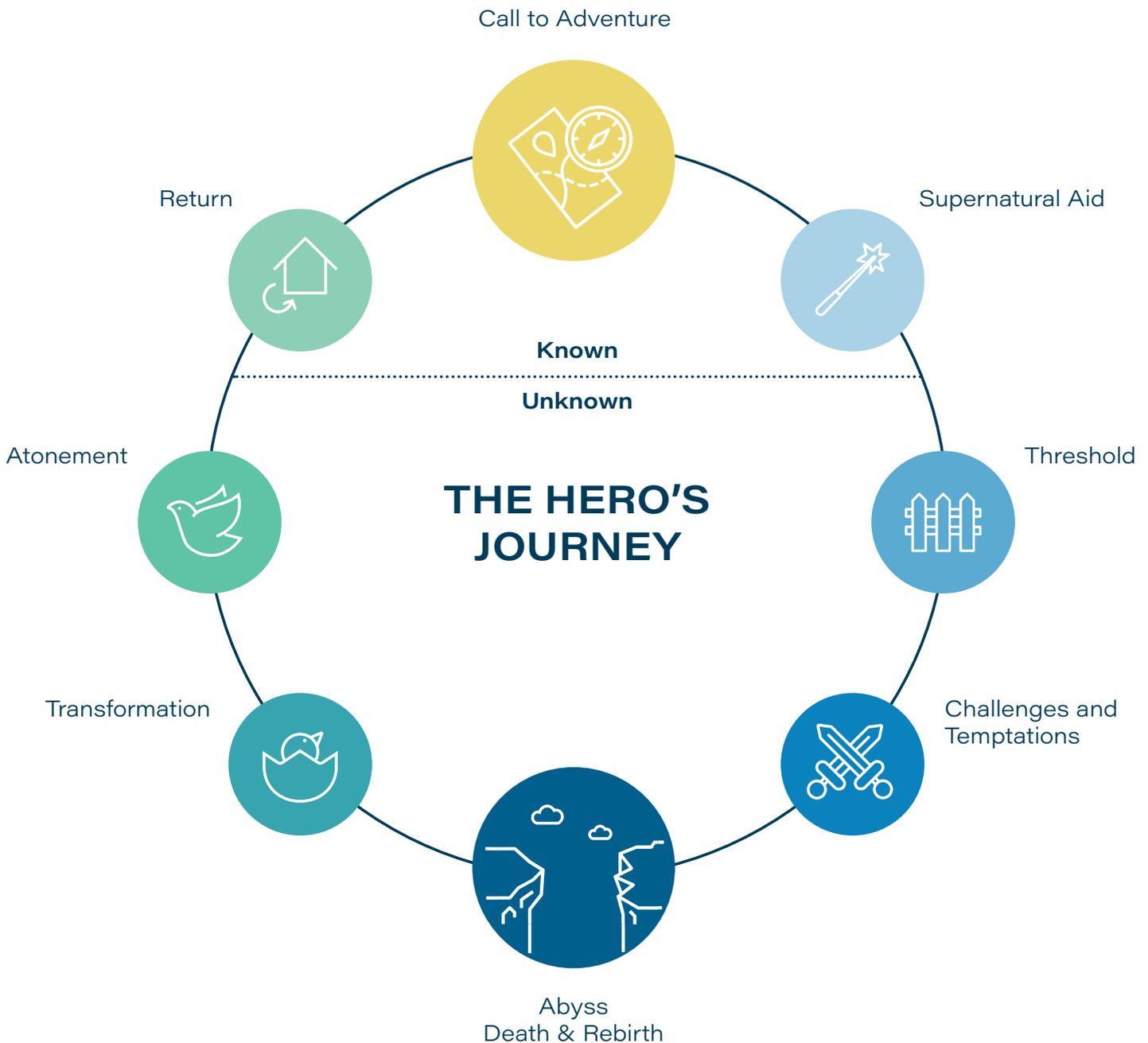
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changed and informed perceptions at the end.

As well as inviting users to go on a journey, the life cycle of an ad itself also reflects a hero's journey. As ads venture out into the digital ecosystem they collect data and feedback information. And, with the added help of back end machine learning, ads constantly evolve and adapt for performance.

The Hero's journey always begins with the call. One way or another, a guide must come to say, 'Look, you're in sleepy land. Wake. Come on a trip. There is a whole aspect of your consciousness, your being that's not been touched.'

Joseph Campbell





## Relevance Across Verticals

If we zoom out of our home assistant example, we can take a look at how data driven advertising can create relevant ads for different verticals.



### Retail

Releasing a new line of shoes? You could find interested users based on behavioral and demographic data and then include a countdown to the product release in your ad unit to build excitement and anticipation.



### Travel

Use a DMP segment to find people within a relevant income bracket, or age range, to showcase mortgage offerings for first time buyers. DMPs can make use of a range of demographic data to determine what stage people are in their life and what financial products may be of interest to them.



### Automotive

If you are a car brand, you could use campaign data to find users who have interacted with your ads, even the models they have built using a configurator, and then use Geographic data to target users with ads that let them know where the nearest car dealership is.



### Finance

Using live weather data from tropical islands you could showcase holiday destinations along with local temperatures to users from your customer relationship management data who have indicated that they are looking to chase some winter sun.

Relevance is the connection and the dialogue. The industry has gone through years of waste but data is bringing about a renaissance that has the potential to bring ads and users closer together. If we think back to the notion of feeds and look at sporting events, Sport is another emotional catalyst. You can safely assume that the national mood is likely to be affected by world cup results so why not use messaging

creatively to reflect what the public are feeling at any given time? Live data can be used to connect your ads with events in the wider world, making them more compelling and allowing them to fit in the viewer's context.

Anything from triggers to real time infographics can create synergistic relationships with the mood and interests of users.

**Data**  
is bringing about  
a renaissance that  
has the potential  
to bring ads and  
users closer  
together.



## Reaction



Ultimately your ads mean nothing unless they have an impact. While we can use data to find the right audience and ensure ads are reaching as many users as possible, your ads need to form an emotional connection with your audience in order to move them to action.

Traditional storytelling techniques have always had an influence on advertising. In 2004, the English Author Christopher Booker, using Jungian

analysis, published a book called “Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories” which identified seven basic types of stories. Here we explore each with a mixture traditional and more recent examples for inspiration.

**Tell me the facts and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever.**

An Old Native American Proverb



### Overcoming the Monster – Apple

Apple played with the novel 1984 while simultaneously positioning themselves as a unique and different company. The famous ad showed the athlete Anja Major hurling a hammer at screen featuring a Big-brother like figure that represented tyranny. The Ad was a classic man vs monster story distilled down to one minute, showcasing Apple's position as a disruptive alternative to PC.

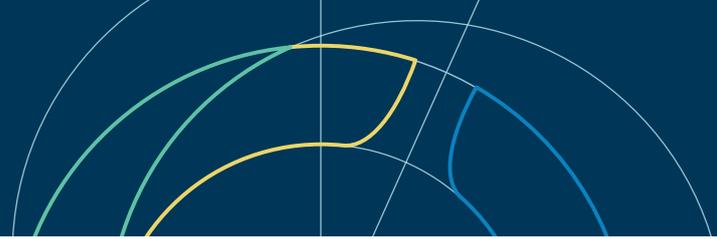
Apple 1984 [Advertisement]. (1984, December 31). Twin Falls, Idaho: KMVT.



### Rebirth – Clarks

Clark shoes played with the notion of rebirth by using ambiguous cocoon/egg imagery to highlight the evolution of footwear. The video ad used a recycling factory to produce a similar effect. The rebirth story was used to demonstrate Clark shoes' capacity for innovation.

NATURE IV. REDESIGNED. REDEFINED. REBORN [Advertisement]. (2017, February)



## Quest – Nike

American NFL player Colin Kaepernick gained both notoriety and hero status by taking a knee during the national anthem as a form of protest against police brutality towards African Americans. Nike tapped into a highly politicised public space by using NFL player Kaepernick as the face of the thirtieth anniversary ‘Just Do It’ campaign. A daring approach that invites users to experience the hero’s quest narrative.

Just Do It [Advertisement]. (2018, September 4). Beaverton, Oregon.



## Journey and Return – John Lewis

In the United Kingdom, the John Lewis Christmas Ad has become an annual tradition. While some find the ads mawkish, many of the campaigns have proven to be a moving addition to people’s festive season such as this 2014, Cannes Grand Prix winning “Monty the Penguin” ad. In the film, we can see a metaphorical journey and return in the form of a young boy’s exploration of the world and realisation that his penguin friend Monty is lonely and needs a companion; culminating in a moving conclusion. The penguin is ultimately used as the device for his emotional awakening as he vicariously and empathetically absorbs the notion of romantic companionship.

Monty the Penguin [Advertisement]. (2014, November 6). United Kingdom.



## Rags to Riches – Porsche

The rags to riches motif often popular in Victorian novels is frequently used in aspirational brands, as can be seen in this cheeky - if not unsubtle - Porsche print ad from the early nineties.

Aspiration [Advertisement] (1992) USA



## Tragedy – Towards Zero

Tragedy is often used for public awareness and third sector campaigns, as can be seen in this award-winning campaign by road safety group Towards Zero. The combined effort of artists and data scientists produced this striking installation of a human body built to survive a low impact crash, a reminder of how vulnerable our bodies really are.

Meet Graham [Advertisement]. (2016, July 20). Retrieved from <http://www.meetgraham.com.au/>



## Comedy – Burger King

Another highly effective storytelling technique is comedy. We see this deployed endlessly in ads and it is highly effective at endearing audiences to brands. Burger King used comedy to take jabs at competitor McDonalds, as seen in the German 'Betraying your Father' campaign, which showed a barely disguised Ronald Mcdonald unable to resist the burgers served by his competitor.

Betraying your Father [Advertisement]. (2002). Germany.

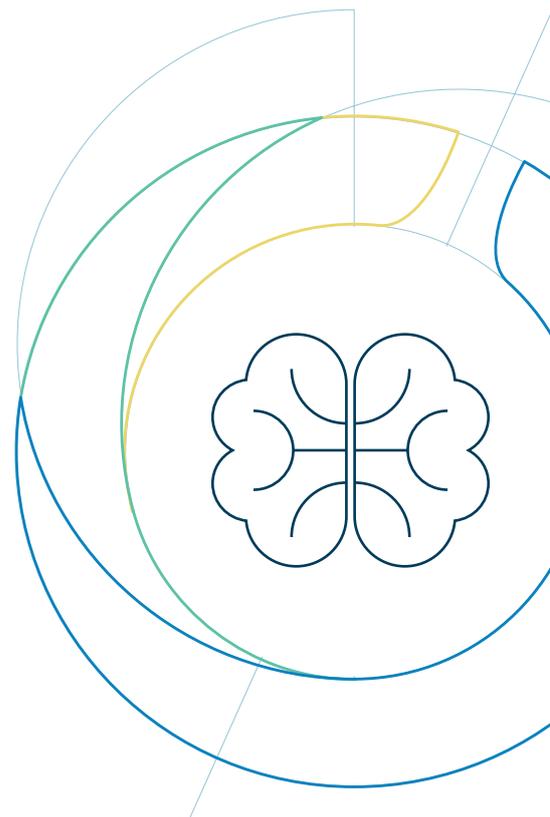
## Storytelling and the Brain

We have so far looked at what the stories are and how they are told, but what about the recipient of the story? It is a fair assertion to say that at the point of receiving input in the form of a story, our brain becomes a fertile factory, led by hormonal and cognitive function.

The empathetic and stimulating parts of this cognitive process come in the form of neural coupling and mirroring. When we are told a story, our ideas become a fertile ground of flourishing thoughts and emotions. We become attached to the story, but can also be detached in our own tan-

genial thought process. In the same way a story can captivate, it can also distract or repel, a lesson brands should take seriously as we move into more immersive experiences.

Then we have the trio of hormones: oxytocin (the empathy hormone), the one new mothers have to allow them to bond with their babies immediately after childbirth), cortisol (the stress hormone) which promotes awareness, and dopamine which catalyzes the memory after emotional stimuli releases it. This triple act allows us to bond to stories, to make them part of us and bring them to life.



## Conclusion

Of course, we also have a brain in the technical storytelling process: the DMP. In the same way our brain assimilates fragmented data to make sense of the story and world it lives in, the DMP has to deal with fragmented data sources, classifications, usage, insights, possession and ownership. But like the brain, the data forms a picture and for the DMP, that picture is the audience.

From infancy, stories have been our way of understanding the world. Certain narrative patterns and trajectories, whether it be rags-to-riches, comedy, adventure, or tragedy, have the capacity to hold our attention and resonate deeply with us.

As advertising technology ploughs fertile fields and seeds the future, it is important that we do not lose sight of the very purpose of the technology we have created. That is, to

support and empower effective storytelling techniques.

The five Rs of Advertising (Real-time, Reporting, Reach, Relevance and Reaction) map out of the different ways technology can support advertisers' storytelling strategy. With the use of live, real-time data, ads can respond to events and harness feeds to provide a more relevant experience to each individual user.

A Data Platform (DMP or CDP), harnessing AI capabilities and working in harmony with an Ad Server and Demand Side Platform (DSP), can help facilitate the continuous interplay between user and advertiser which helps us to tell better stories. Technology has become the conduit in this cycle, as the symbiotic relationship between stories and the people they are told to becomes ever closer and connected.