STORYTELLING IN AUGMENTED REALITY: CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES FOR IMMERSIVE DIGITAL MARKETING

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing, storytelling is the ability to convey content through a well-crafted plot and engaging narrative. As a marketing strategy, storytelling works under the assumption that people retain information more effectively when it is conveyed in the form of a narrative, rather than a mere list of facts. Augmented Reality (AR) disrupts narrative perspectives, shifting stories from third-person to first-person experiences. Augmented Reality (AR) Marketing is considered a "novel, strategic, and potentially disruptive subdiscipline" in the industry, and it can be an important tool to achieve goals in branding, inspiring, convincing, and keeping customers (Rauschnabel et al., 2022).

RESEARCH QUESTION

In this context, this mixed-method research investigates optimal AR storytelling practices in by trying to answer the following question:

What are the best practices and strategies for AR storytelling in Digital Marketing in the context of its evolving technological landscape?

RELATED LITERATURE

As the world becomes more digital, companies will be required to respond to new demands. It is expected that Internet users will become 90% of the world's population by 2030, and that means a higher demand for digital channels for communications and transactions (Kotler et al., 2021, pp. 53). According to Papagiannis (2017, pp.16), AR's scope has expanded beyond mere technology; it now encompasses the delineation of how we envision our coexistence with this novel technology within the real world, and how we craft experiences that hold significance and contribute to human progress. Zhou (2020) claims that utilising AR has the capacity to amplify the links between content, time, and location within constructed surroundings. Similar to other forms of digital storytelling, immersive environments incorporate essential narrative components such as plots, characters, and dramatic scenarios. However, crafting narratives using this technology presents its own set of complexities, mirroring challenges encountered in other digital storytelling forms (Miller, 2019, pp, 550). For Papagiannis (2017, pp. 16), in the present definition, a crucial element that seems to be lacking and which sets apart the forthcoming AR wave is the concept of 'context.'

METHODOLOGY

In this context, this mixed-method research investigates optimal AR storytelling practices in this technology's evolving landscape.

This research employed a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies to gather a complete understanding of the subject.

Firstly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with marketing professionals and AR specialists to understand the current uses, possibilities and limitations regarding the use of AR storytelling in marketing campaigns, and how this technology can be used to provide users with a better experience.
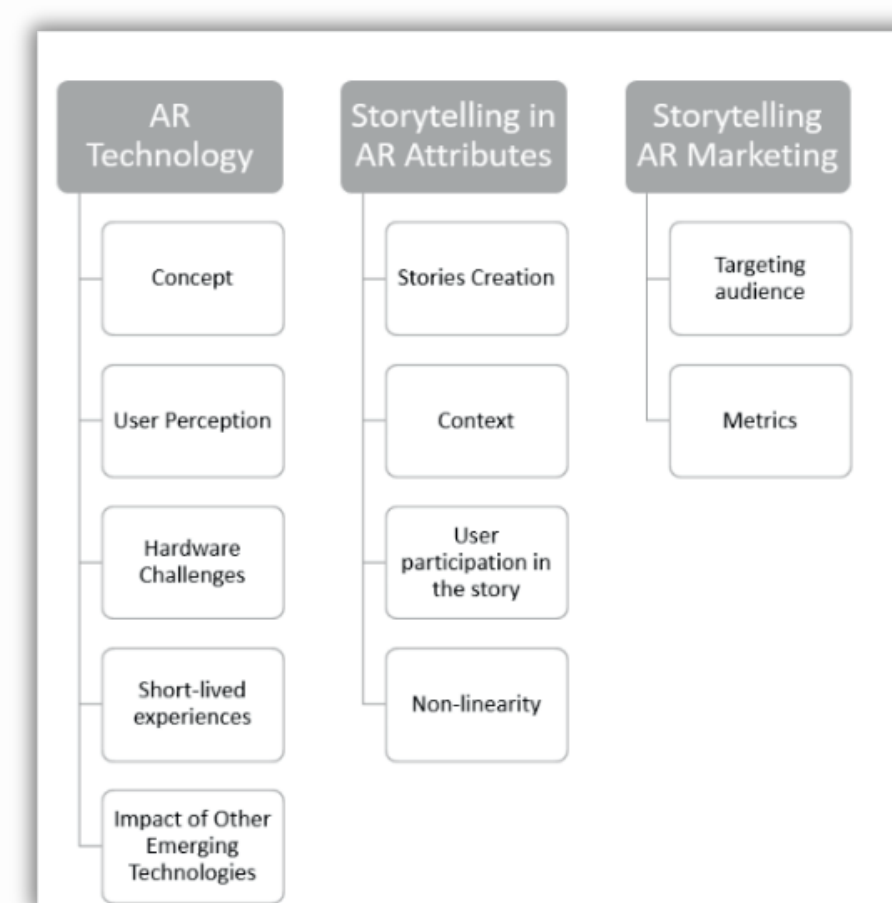
Secondly, a survey was conducted using Google Forms, an online survey platform. Participants were provided with a structured questionnaire to gather insights into their experiences and perceptions of current augmented reality (AR) applications.
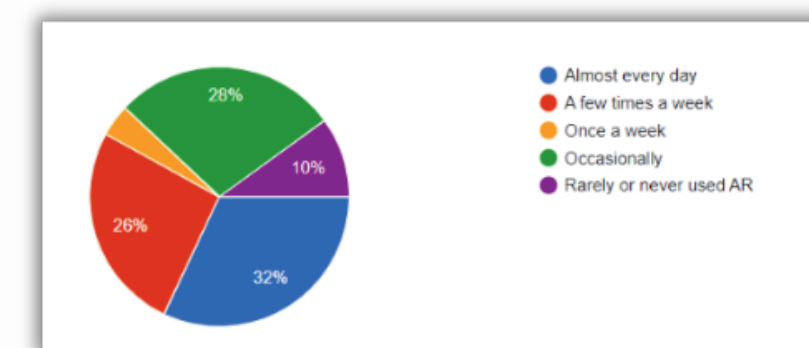
RESULTS

- AR serves as a conduit for forging profound connections with narratives, breathing life into stories and enabling users to immerse themselves in the plot on an unprecedented level.

- Deeper content should be developed to surpass the short- lived "wow effect".

- User context and participation shape successful AR experiences and should be considered in the storytelling.

- Efficient immersive Digital Marketing involves structured audience targeting.

- Consistent performance evaluation is something companies have been lacking, and it should be done using engagement metrics to measure success and find points of improvement in the AR experience.

ANALYSIS

The selected approach for analysing the interviews was Thematic Analysis. This method was utilised to identify, examine, and present recurring patterns within the collected data.

The data collected through this survey was then analysed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the user perspective and adoption patterns of various AR experiences. This visualisations, generated by Google Forms, played an essential role in the data analysis phase, aiding in the identification of trends, preferences, and user behaviours related to augmented reality.
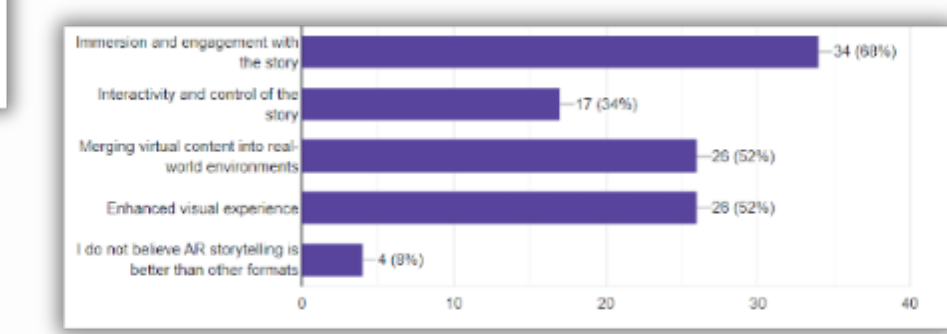

Data Analysis Thematic Map

Frequency of usage of AR applications or devices

What aspects of storytelling in augmented reality could be improved

What makes storytelling in augmented reality more attractive compared to other formats

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the pivotal role of the user's context or environment in the AR experience, suggesting its integration as an integral narrative element.

Moreover, the research reaffirms the importance of incentivising user participation in the narrative, while accommodating the inherent nonlinear aspects of the narrative structure. Also, efficient immersive Digital Marketing involves structured audience targeting and consistent performance evaluation via engagement metrics.

However, this study acknowledges its limitations that can be addressed in future research. A broader and deeper analysis, coupled with an expanded participant pool, could yield enhanced insights into market receptivity and user requisites. Lastly, while this study primarily focuses on AR storytelling in Digital Marketing, the trajectory of technology necessitates future research delving into the domain of ubiquitous AR.

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