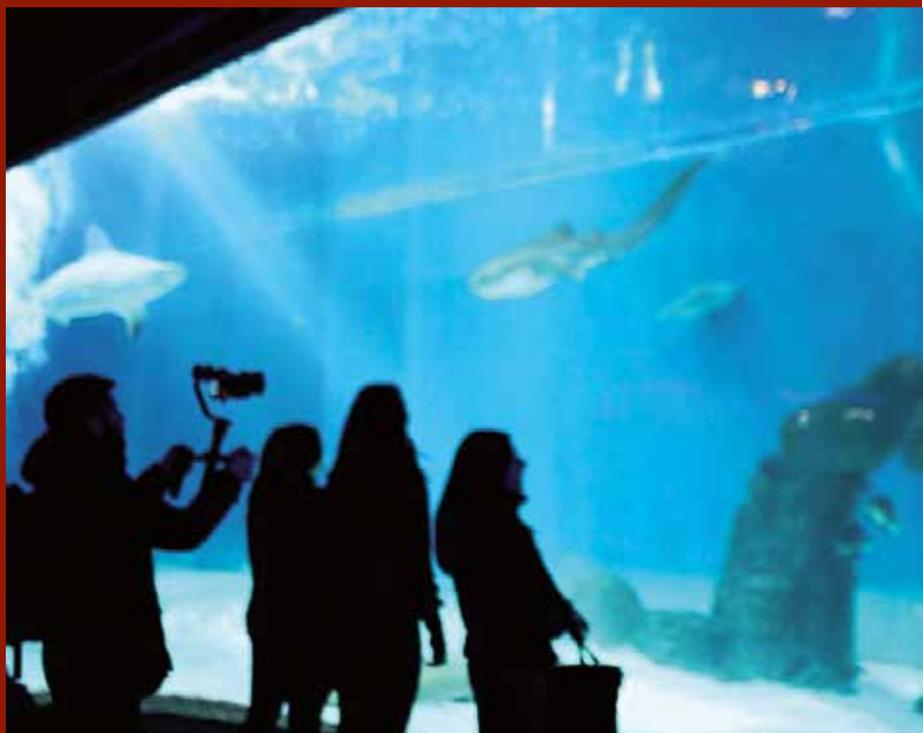


# 2.0 therapeutic support: the storytelling in the pharma industry

Producing entertainment contents, in addition to information contents, is becoming increasingly important in the pharma world. Pharma companies focus on emotions to create empathy with patients and support them in the therapy. Along this line, the Medicom (Medical Comedy) educational TV series dedicated to prevention were developed.

by Elena Marzorati



**“Life is a little bit like a journey against the tide, above all during the illness. But now that I’m well, I can say I really know my skin”. Susanna, influencer affected by chronic spontaneous urticaria.**

Consumers evolution into more informed and aware subjects caused a transformation also in brand communication, requiring a higher effort to conquer their trust. For today’s companies, in fact, a unidirectional promotional communication of their products is no longer enough, but it is essential to involve their consumers differently, also producing contents capable of informing and entertaining them. This is one of the main tasks of storytelling,

since it tells a story or it offers an entertainment experience that enables the consumer to identify himself and discover a product’s usefulness. If these trends involve one of the most risky and conservative industries, such as the pharma one, the challenge doubles since the need for more specific and profiled contents matches with a higher and more conscious communication ethics. Nevertheless branded content also arrived at the pharma industry, abroad it already exists in different shapes

whose common denominator is the widespread use of storytelling. Starting from Novartis, that created the “Living like you” digital review to be closer to multiple sclerosis patients, up to Merck’s “Blue or Pink. A trip to fertility” documentary, to promote fertility therapies. And what about Italy? We’ll talk about it today with someone who has been dealing for many years with developing mini-fictions for some Italian divisions of big pharma companies, in which the key players are first of all the patients.

Here is an expert in branded content and entertainment: Dario Nuzzo.

### Why does storytelling work so well also in the pharma industry?

I'd say it works so well above all in the pharma industry. When it comes to health, a higher relationship of trust comes into play among doctor, drug and patient, thus for a pharma company it is essential to connect to its own emotions to create empathy.

### What are risks and advantages with using a branded content in this field?

When a new concept is created, I speak from my experience, we always try to catch the ideal mindset of those who suffer from a specific pathology, by understanding his/her daily problems. Once the project is over, then, a big content analysis is also required since every single word might represent an important educational content. The healthy content has changed: it is not only intended as the absence of illness, but more in general, its management coincides with the research of wellbeing.

### What do you mean?

In every story, a change of characters through a growth takes place. That is why the BC, as well as representing for the patient a direct identification testimony, also allows for an indirect education to good practices offering wellbeing advices in many fields. An example is the web series we produced for Novartis that was recently awarded by Mediastars, the advertising technical award. "On Susanna's skin" is an insight into the life of an influencer and into her complex daily relationship with chronic spontaneous urticaria, a little known pathology which weakens in many everyday situations. That is why every episode was accompanied by support tutorials.



### Therefore, does it make sense to imagine a further video development about therapeutic support?

Yes, of course! In Italy, online service users are growing, including doctors and patients, who are more inclined to interact in a virtual way. I think that, after what has recently occurred with Covid 19, it is more than ever the moment to use videos as prevention, therapeutic support and also training platform. Companies will increasingly have to integrate the drug supply with disclosure and therapy support services. For instance, at the end of last year for Novo Nordisk, we developed some videos on diabetes with insulin therapy treatment, for which specialist doctors were interviewed about various aspects of the pathology, for the duration of a ride by car. There are also some more videos testifying patients that cohabit every day with diabetes, as well as a webcast with all of the specialists involved. For Daiichi Sankyo, I'm presently working on an awareness project on hypercholesterolemia, quite a difficult challenge for a very special target. In the field of scientific training, I'm developing a project I'm very fond of: making ECM course much more interactive, by creating augmented reality contents, for example.



On the set of the "On Susanna's skin" web series, ranking fist at Mediastars – the technical award - in the ethical-social category corporate identity section;

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### Which further evolutions can we expect in the chemical-pharma and cosmetic industry?

So many, because every company is increasingly becoming also the editor of its contents. Thus, we'll assist in the future to the birth of entertainment formats and integrated communication platforms dedicated to therapeutic support. Roche, for instance, has already dedicated an online portal to diabetes, while our company, with Servier Italy, expressly created a sketchcom about therapeutic practice. It is the first time that a pharma company becomes the producer of an educational comic TV series wholly dedicated to prevention. We called this new genre "Medicom", standing for Medical Comedy. We are presently working for Novo Nordisk on a web series about dia-

**On the set of “Chronic impatients”, the educational sketchcom produced for Servier Italy**

betes that is entirely set in a digital context, also to cope with the Covid-19-related problems on sets.

Then, cosmetics as well is developing products that increasingly include a “digital extension”: I wrote about it on Grazia magazine in the wellbeing section with the article “The face of the future”, little time ago.

**Thus, also the pharma industry will produce entertainment in some ways...**

It may seem strange, but certainly yes! Branded entertainment is the next frontier. And it won't be only an interactive experience at an exhibition stand to impress visitors, but something directly involving people. I know EG SpA supported, with the Lenirit brand a whole football tournament organized with Polisportive Giovanili Salesiane to raise awareness to first aid and fair play values. In 2010 I had a very successful test experience with Euticals, developing Favolé, an awareness project for Lombardy-based schools. Who knows what else awaits us tomorrow.

**From what I read, you are fond of educational entertainment. For instance, if I say Pinocchio?**

With Pinocchio I have a challenging but very satisfying relationship,



that has been lasting for 12 years now. I started collaborating with Collodi Foundation, the body dealing with the protection of the work, in 2008 and since then we've developed many projects also involving design companies, schools and brands. The latest-one last year: I designed an immersive path at Collo-di park, the Pinocchio's park, where you can relive the tale in a digital mode. In the pharma world instead, Pinocchio already engaged himself to raise awareness about good eye hygiene practices with an educational project developed for Bausch&Lomb “Occhio Pinocchio, Viaggio nel paese di BeiOcchi”.

**A shoot from LeniCup fields, the 11-a side under 13 football tournament organised by Polisportive Giovanili Salesiane and supported by Eg SpA with Lenirit brand**



**In your past, there is also the children's TV...**

Yes. I started by creating a format for children, Mukko Pallino, on local broadcasters and then I had the luck to look after musical animated videos of great classics for children, such as “Le tagliatelle di nonna Pina”, “44 gatti”, “Il gatto puzzolone” that had millions visualizations on YouTube, until working at Mediaset as author and host. But this is another story.

**Let's make a practical example. What about requiring such a project? Do companies go directly to you?**

In reality, companies express a “sentiment” to their agencies, i.e. they aim at moving their patients focusing on different subjects that are strictly connected to the pathology to be treated. And that's where I come in. The agency usually contacts me and after all relevant analysis, I write down the first concepts that then become scripts, screenplays and storyboards, always keeping in touch with the pharma company.

**According to you, the branded content in the pharma industry is without risks.**

On the contrary, behind the writing of every work, there is the huge spectrum of ethical communication, as it should be. Moreover I often collaborate with the International University research group Family and Media, subsequently ethics in communication for me, as well as a creed, is a responsibility. In the branded content web series for the pharma industry, you'll never find specific products, but everybody works to increasingly approach the patient's psychological condition, trying to offer him all the tools he needs to appropriately manage his pathology. ●