“Put it in your Story”: Digital Storytelling in Instagram and Snapchat Stories.

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ABSTRACT
This research explores the Snapchat and Instagram feature of “Stories” and aims to understand what users post in their “Stories” and how they make use of the feature to tell their story. The application of narrative theory theoretically informs the concept of digital storytelling, which is ultimately the practice of telling online stories. The methodology consists of a qualitative content analysis of Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”, observation of active ordinary users and in-depth semi-structured interviews to address the user’s perspective.

The main results indicate that there are themed patterns following narrative structures in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. For that reason eight categories were created and divided between the four narrative elements according to Barthes (1977) and these were actions (demonstrating emotions, eating, interacting), happenings (updates), characters (people, self-portraits and animals) and setting (environment). In addition, another result is that Snapchat and Instagram storytellers make use of seven means to tell their stories and create a narrative. These means are images, texts, videos, emoji, doodles, instant information and filters.

Human beings are natural storytellers according to the Narrative Paradigm by Fisher (1984), which explains the popularity of the “Stories” feature, as well as the discovered categories based on narrative elements and the use of semiotic resources to make more sense of the stories told by users.

Keywords: digital storytelling, storytelling, stories, Snapchat, Instagram, narrative theory
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# TABLE OF CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................. 5  
   1.1. “Put it in your story!” - What is happening in social media now? ................. 5  
   1.2. The reasons to study this subject and its relevance........................................... 7  
   1.3. Research questions and purpose ....................................................................... 8  

2. BACKGROUND .................................................................................................................. 11  
   2.1. How do Snapchat and Instagram work? ............................................................. 11  
      2.1.1. Snapchat ........................................................................................................... 11  
      2.1.2. Instagram .......................................................................................................... 13  
   2.2. My Story .................................................................................................................. 15  

3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH .................................................................................................... 17  
   3.1. What is a story and what is Storytelling? .............................................................. 17  
   3.2. Understanding digital storytelling........................................................................ 19  
      3.2.1. The Center of Digital Storytelling ................................................................... 19  
      3.2.2. Educational Digital Storytelling ..................................................................... 20  
      3.2.3. Digital Storytelling in Media Studies ............................................................... 21  
   3.3. Defining digital storytelling .................................................................................... 22  
   3.4. Snapchat and Ephemeral Social Interaction ......................................................... 25  
   3.5. Instagram and the Addition of Stories .................................................................. 27  
   3.6. Contribution to the Field ....................................................................................... 29  

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ......................................................................................... 30  
   4.1. Digital storytelling through the lens of Narrative Theory .................................... 31  
   4.2. Digital Story ........................................................................................................... 34  
   4.3. Semiotics ............................................................................................................... 36  

5. METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................................. 41  
   5.1. Why qualitative research? ..................................................................................... 41  
   5.2. Qualitative Content Analysis ............................................................................... 43  
   5.3. Data ........................................................................................................................ 44  
      5.3.1. Data Collection .................................................................................................. 45  
      5.3.2. Data Analysis .................................................................................................... 46  
   5.4. Interviews ............................................................................................................... 48
5.5. Validity .............................................................................................................. 49
5.6. Ethics and Limitations ................................................................................ 50

6. ANALYSIS ........................................................................................................ 52
6.1. Defining Snapchat and Instagram Stories .................................................. 52
   6.1.1. Demonstrating emotions ........................................................................ 53
   6.1.2. Eating (Food) .......................................................................................... 54
   6.1.3. Interacting .................................................................................................. 54
   6.1.4. Updates ...................................................................................................... 55
   6.1.5. People ........................................................................................................ 57
   6.1.6. Self-portraits .............................................................................................. 57
   6.1.7. Animals ....................................................................................................... 58
   6.1.8. Environment ............................................................................................... 59
6.2. Seven Means through which users tell their story in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” ................................................................. 60
   6.2.1. Images/Photos .......................................................................................... 62
   6.2.2. Text ............................................................................................................. 63
   6.2.3. Video ........................................................................................................... 65
   6.2.4. Emoji ......................................................................................................... 65
   6.2.5. Doodles ...................................................................................................... 68
   6.2.6. Instant information ..................................................................................... 69
   6.2.7. Filters ......................................................................................................... 74
6.3. Digital storytelling on Snapchat and Instagram Stories .................................. 76
6.4. The “Stories” sequence .................................................................................. 77

7. DISCUSSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH ..................................................... 80

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................ 87

APPENDIX I ............................................................................................................. 93
APPENDIX II ........................................................................................................... 94
APPENDIX III .......................................................................................................... 95
APPENDIX IV ............................................................................................................ 96
1. INTRODUCTION

When I was 14 years old, I started to tell my story in online platforms. At that age I started to use social media and have not stopped until today. It is part of my daily life, where I contact my friends, where I learn about the latest news and where I post about my life. It was not until I started to study Theories of Communication in my bachelor that my interest in social media evolved from being pure entertainment to a pure feeling of curiosity. From observing my friend’s relationship with social media and their usage of various platforms, to realizing how I felt about the online world, I started to ask questions like “Why do people use this platform?”, “Why do I like this so much?” and “What is the purpose of all this?”. In other words, since I am completely caught up in different social media platforms, my interest in understanding how it works and what is happening came naturally, just like the topic I chose for this thesis. On a daily basis, I saw myself, my friends, family members and Internet friends repeatedly using one particular feature on different platforms, the new and different “Stories”. I was spending regular time each day posting and watching other people’s “Stories” on Snapchat and Instagram, wondering what I would post and commenting on other posts. In the end, my curiosity focused on what do people post in their Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” and how everyone in the platform was telling their stories through videos, images, gifs and face filters, and this is where the concept of digital storytelling can be applied to help me answer my questions.

1.1. “Put it in your story!” - What is happening in social media now?

Snapchat is a very young social media platform, launched in 2011 (Monteiro & Mazzilli, 2016). However, that does not exclude the fact that this platform influenced all the other social media with its unique features. In a world of platforms like Facebook and Instagram, going back on time and checking what has been posted is the key, the main idea is that your memories will always be there. Snapchat made its first appearance when ephemeral social interaction became the most popular subject surrounding social media. The main characteristic Snapchat and the reason why it became attractive to users; Snapchat’s 24-hour lasting videos and images presented the popular feature of “Stories”, where users can see their own “Story” and “Stories” from people they follow. Consequently, as it happens with
popular trends on the Internet, other platforms started to acquire the feature of “Stories”: Instagram in August 2016 (Instagram Blog, 2017), WhatsApp in February 2017 (Wagner, 2017) and Facebook in May 2017 (Wagner, 2017) for example, which further enhanced the feature’s popularity:

“More people than ever are sharing their own media, social media engagement now represents over 20 percent of total internet use, many millions of hours are being spent by people uploading pictures, tagging links with comments, writing little blurbs, and yes, once in a while uploading a video they made themselves. Many more people, and communities, are waking up to the power of their own voice in the media, and are finding the means to express themselves, for themselves and their communities through the new media” (Lambert, 2013, p. 4).

Snapchat’s number of users jumped from 10 million to 70 million in two years (Piwek & Joinson, 2016) and Instagram has more than 300 million active users now (Järvinen & Ohtonen & Karjaluoto, 2016). These two social media platforms are the ones with more active users uploading content on “Stories” and is the main reason this study focuses on studying this feature in these two platforms only. The “Stories” feature presents another way for users to post what they are doing and thinking in a consecutive timeline; a way to tell their story as the feature’s name proposes. My interests surround what type of content users share in their “Stories” and through which means do they tell their story. In order to get the answers I make use of one key concept and one theory to form my theoretical framework. The first is the concept of digital storytelling, which is the practice of telling stories in online platforms. Together with narrative theories, in particular the narrative paradigm by Walter Fisher (1984). I seek to understand how a narrative is formed and how a digital story is described. Additional theoretical basis is also used, such as semiotics and image intertextuality, in order to understand the signs and the meaning of a sequence of images, for observing users’ posts and means through telling their stories.

One step I need to take in order to significantly respond to the mentioned research objectives, was to collect precise data. In relation to that, over the course of three weeks (06/03-26/03) I observed 25 selected users and took screenshots of all the users’ posts during that period.
In the end, I collected 800 screenshots that included images and moving images, which were then analyzed according to my theoretical framework in order to obtain my results. In addition, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with five selected users from the observation group and asked about their thoughts on the feature, the perfect story, their main posts and also if they were consciously constructing a narrative on a daily basis. These interviews were used as additional information and personal inputs to understand motivations and user behavior.

1.2. The reasons to study this subject and its relevance

Internet user behavior is always a focus in Media Studies. Understanding what people do, post, how they interact and with whom is necessary to understand the online platform’s purpose; together with observing another type of communication between people. The topic of digital storytelling in the feature “Stories”, both on Snapchat and Instagram, is relevant to the field to understand how such platforms offer a voice to the ordinary users that post about their life on a daily basis. As well as it bringing more information to the use of videos and photos to communicate. In addition, Snapchat is a very recent platform, which means the number of studies is scarce, most of them being on the basic usage of Snapchat and the main difference the platform offers compared to other social media.

The “Stories” function is also very recent, since Snapchat is a new platform and the addition of the feature on Instagram only happened in August 2016 (Instagram Blog, 2017). In this sense, there are no articles or extensive research on the topic. However, being so recent creates the perfect opportunity to carry out a detailed study on the way people use the feature, behaviors and use of the Internet for communication and expression; besides the fact that the posting flow by users is at its highest point. The starting phase of a feature is where the use patterns will be easily seen and formed by the users, when they will decide how to use this in correlation to the offline world, as well as how they decide what is “cool” to post and what is not, what is acceptable and what is not. Since Instagram Stories launched 7 months ago, it was possible for me as a researcher, to observe the transformations inside this and other platforms that offer the feature, as well as the migration to other platforms, for example.
The “Stories” feature was originally launched by Snapchat but has been copied by Instagram, Facebook, and more recently, WhatsApp. Not only does the feature’s acquisition by other online platforms make this subject an important field to study, since one single feature appears to be transforming and adding new options to other platforms, but also demonstrates how popular “Stories” are among social media users. The launch of “Stories” and the adoption of the function by multiple social media platforms marks as an important part of social media history. For example, one platform started having an individual chat option for its users and now, every single platform has an individual chat. The same goes for “Stories”; users that no longer want to post pictures and videos that will stay accessible “forever”, instead demand for the immediate and self-deleting option in a platform is apparent. “Stories” are a new trend on social media that need to be studied for many different purposes, such as understanding social media transformation, user behavior, the usage purpose and the relationship between the online and offline world.

The transformation of storytelling to digital storytelling is a very interesting concept for media studies, especially when it comes to social media and social media storytelling. Another reason to study digital storytelling in such an environment is to observe the changes on the concept, how much storytelling is still part of human behavior and how the practice happens in social media. This research is focused on ordinary users of “Stories” and how they use the feature to tell their stories. To observe such group of users is important for different reasons, such as (1) ordinary users are the majority of people using the platforms and the feature, (2) since it is a new feature, ordinary users are the first to test and set how the feature is used; and (3) these users are also the easiest ones to reach and observe.

The feature of “Stories” and digital storytelling are both recent, but are also full of content, behaviors, and trends waiting to be observed. Additionally, both are very popular right now among Internet users and researchers, and it contributes to understanding correlations between the online world and the offline, as well as its role in people’s life.

1.3. Research questions and purpose

When I decided my topic would be around the feature “Stories” in both Instagram and Snapchat, I knew the fact that studies on this subject were not that common posed both
opportunities and challenges for the decision of the research questions. The absence of any research on digital storytelling for this platform’s feature opens the doors to many questions, but it was essential to decide on one that would interest me the most. As I said before, my own usage of the platforms initiated initial interest into researching this subject and what the content meant for the users and viewers. In this sense, I was already directing myself towards analyzing the shared content. With that in mind, I intensively researched the field and connected the concept of digital storytelling to produce these two research questions:

**RQ1:** Which are the themes young educated users approach when using Snapchat and Instagram Stories?

**RQ2:** Which are the narrative elements/features and signs (semiotics) young educated users employ when using Snapchat and Instagram Stories?

**Sub-question:** Are the users aware of the process of digital storytelling and the narrative construction?

**Research Question 1** is mainly about the first question I asked myself, about the content, what exactly users post on a daily basis, what kind of subjects or repetitive elements can be observed through the platform and the usage of different feature and elements. **RQ1** is answered through data collection and analysis that entailed the observation of a number of different users over a three-week period in correlation to their “Stories” usage, this included nine different nationalities with age ranging from 20 to 27 years. While **Research Question 2** focuses on the concept of digital storytelling, the same collected data was used to answer this question on which complementary functions of the “Stories” feature, such as tools, subjects, video, and photos, helps Snapchat and Instagram users tell their story and express themselves. In addition to that, I was also interested in knowing if users are aware of the storytelling process, if they consciously know they are telling a story. Therefore, I have a **sub-question.** The collected data from the observations will be exceptionally useful in answering **RQ2** since I will be able to observe the elements used in the narrative. Additionally, for **RQ2,** part of the information will be collected from the in-depth interviews, where participants will be questioned about the elements they use, as well as being aware of the story telling process. This will help the answer to my research questions to be even richer in content.
Purpose

This research was motivated by the recent popularity in the feature “Stories” in different social media platforms. This study was further motivated by the current lack of studies in the subject, especially studies in digital storytelling. In addition, the connection between digital storytelling and narrative theories through a semiotics perspective, bring a new perspective to story production online, where the narrative elements can be seen in a different set. The aim of this research is to understand the process of digital storytelling in the feature of “Stories” in both Snapchat and Instagram, the most popular platforms to date that offers this feature. The choice for Snapchat is related to the fact that the platform was the pioneer of “Stories”. However, after its release in August 2016 (Instagram Blog, 2017), Instagram Stories became more popular than Snapchat and is the reason for choosing this platform too. Now, Snapchat has 161 million daily users of “Stories” and Instagram has 200 million daily users of the feature (Balakrishnan, 2017). Other platforms that have the feature, such as Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, are not as popular, therefore the amount of collected data would be affected.

The focus is to understand digital storytelling in this new feature, that is named after a narrative concept, through narrative theories. Through the data collection and the interviews, this research hopes to answer the previously presented research questions, that are mainly interested in which themes are being approached by the users and which elements, features and signs are being used to tell the story. Moreover, this research is also interested in knowing if users are aware of the storytelling process and consciously make use of narrative elements to produce. This last interest is connected to the lack of research in “ordinary” users that are not necessarily connected to the audio-visual world, since many studies in the field of media refer to professionals willing to produce stories through virtual content.
2. BACKGROUND

This section is necessary to explain what is a story and what is storytelling before making a literature review about digital storytelling. This chapter will also explain how Snapchat, Instagram and the feature of “My Story” work before presenting a literature review of Snapchat and Instagram as separated platforms. In other words, it is necessary to present a background of concepts that are connected to the reviewed topics in the literature. With that in mind, I explain how Snapchat and Instagram work, since some readers might not had the chance to use the applications yet. Immediately following will be an explanation of the “My Story” or “Stories” features, in order to present the main characteristics of the feature.

2.1. How do Snapchat and Instagram work?

2.1.1. Snapchat

Since Snapchat launched in September 2011 (Smith, 2017), it has broken the active user base record (Piwek & Joinson, 2016) by having more than 2.5 billion snaps sent per day to date (Smith, 2017). Snap’s being the common name for photos and videos shared on Snapchat. By its power and the growing user base, Snapchat excelled to other social media platforms too. Facebook, for example, offered an acquisition proposal that was rejected by Snapchat. Today, Snapchat has more than 158 million daily active users and is one of the most used platforms by young people. Both Snapchat and Instagram are Social Network Sites (SNSs) which “are web-based platforms on which members can create personal profiles, articulate friendship connections, and socially interact” (Phua & Jin & Kim, 2017, p.115). However, Snapchat only works through an app that can be downloaded for free on Android and IOS, but they can not be accessed in any link through a PC or web browser.

To understand the features and specifications of such an important platform, a brief but detailed description of Snapchat is essential. When opening the app, the first screen that the user finds is the camera, ready to start recording and taking pictures. The options in the screen in the upper right side are to brighten up the photo. The flash function and the button to switch between the front and back camera are at the bottom of the screen. When you use your fingers to slide to the left, users have access to the interaction part of the platform and can start
conversations. When you slide to the right, you find the stories, where the user can see their own story and the stories created by the people they follow.

When sliding the screen to the left, the user finds himself in the “chat” part of the app. Here, the user will receive all comments or conversations that were connected to any photo or video they posted in the “Stories” option, as well as a more generic option to start a conversation with anyone they follow. It is in this part of the app that users receive private snaps that have only been shared with them as a single user. When sliding to the right, the users are in the “Stories” page, where they can access their own story, delete any video or photo they uploaded there, download it and see how many views they got too. This is the most important part of the app for this research since it is where the user’s “Stories” are stored, but also where the user can access their followers’ “Stories”. The “Stories” page is where the storytelling happens and where the stories are heard too. Figure 1 presents the three described screens available in the app.

Figure 1: the screens that show when first opening Snapchat
2.1.2. Instagram

The “Stories” feature in Instagram works in a different way. While Snapchat was launched introducing and revolving around “Stories”, the feature was only launched in Instagram in August 2016 (Instagram Blog, 2017) and it changed the visuals of the app completely. When Instagram first launched in 2010 (McNely, 2012), the app was a photo-sharing platform, where users would share their photos and videos in a timeline. You could add captions, tag your friends and your location for example. The app is one of the most popular social media platforms today, with more than 400 million daily active users (Smith, 2017). It got even more popular after the acquisition of Instagram by Facebook in 2012 (Csathy, 2017).

Instagram is an application too, but unlike Snapchat, it can be accessed through a website, where users can see their feed, profiles, and comments but can not post. Today, the app still offers its original basic purpose, but now features the “Stories” functions in the top part of the feed/timeline (Figure 2). This is where users can access videos and photos that last for 24 hours, in exactly same manner as Snapchat. The features offered by Instagram are strongly similar to the ones offered by Snapchat, since users can add emoji, their location, temperature and time to the Story.
The main similarities between Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” are (1) 24 hour lasting videos and photos, (2) option to add filters, (3) option to add time, location, temperature and emoji, (4) option to draw on the photos/videos and (5) possibility to send a message through the Stories. However, both platforms offer a few differences that make them unique to retain their users. For example Snapchat offers (1) face filters - called “lenses” – which is one of the main attractions and powers the platform has over Instagram that does not have that option. Among differences are (2) the option to do more than using Stories on Instagram, such as posting photos in a feed/profile while Snapchat only offers “Stories”, (3) the fact that Snapchat is new in time and users, so family members are not present in the platform as they are in older platforms, like Instagram for example, and (4) the reach of Instagram being larger.
than Snapchat. Although the platforms offer the same feature, they do work in different ways that shape their shared content. These are very important facts to consider for a research of this kind, since the data collection will be on both platforms. However, in this case, both are used for the same basic purpose: tell the user’s story.

2.2. My Story

The feature in focus is new, different and popular. The “Stories” feature is now one of the most used features on different platforms. In this section of the research I will explain in detail what the feature is, how it works, what its purpose is and how people use it.

Firstly, as it was explained before, Snapchat is the pioneer of the “Stories” feature and innovate the main characteristics. On both Snapchat and Instagram, the feature is called “My Story” and is a part of the platform that allows users to post videos and images that will automatically stay available for 24 hours from the posting time and can be visualized by anyone that follows the users’ account. The photos and videos are watched in a chronological sequence; so when the user watches another “Story”, the first image or video will be the oldest one that was posted at first. Another important part of the “Stories” is the additional effects and stickers offered in the feature. Users can make use of emoji, which are “pictographs that are popular in text-based communication” (Miller & Thebault-Spieker et al, 2016, p. 259), as well as gifs, or “Graphical Interchange Format (GIF) images” (Jou & Bhattacharya & Chang, 2014, p. 213). In addition, users can add color effects to pictures and videos (such as black and white, for example), location, temperature and time. These functions are optional, but work as an alternative tailoring means to text captions, that are also offered in the feature.

Even though Snapchat started with “My Story”, Instagram also added the feature to its functionalities but they work the same. Both platforms have this “Stories” feature – whether it is the main feature in the platform or not - that the name itself asks the user to tell a story. That is where the connection with digital storytelling happens, as well as where the storytelling is performed. From afar, the name of the feature may not look that important for its usage, but when applied to the user’s life, everything changes. The fact that the feature is called “My Story” serve a big purpose and role in how the users will interact with the feature. The possessive adjectives give a sense of personalization to the feature, it means that this part
of the feature in the user’s account belongs to them and none else. That is their story, they are the ones to decide how they will use it, what they will post and most important of all: either they are the main character in that story or they are the narrators, the presenter of the story. The usage of such possessive expressions is common in social media and have an important reason. Erstad & Wertsh explain “by using terms like My(space), You(tube) or Face(book) we see combinations of the personal expression and the mediational means used in an integrated way” (2008, p. 32). However, the feature is not called “My Story” in Instagram. The later acquirement of the feature by Instagram, after it was being used for years on Snapchat, got the users calling it the same name for both by habit, which worked wonderfully for Instagram. The common saying between users now is “Put it in your Story”. This immediately refers to the feature in those platforms and to the idea that it belongs to them, that is their point of view, it is what they are doing at the moment and it is how they want to show that to the world - or followers.

Another important aspect of the “My Story” feature relates to the usage of possessive expression being a literary voice. As Joe Lambert (2012) explains it in his book “Digital Storytelling - Capturing lives, creating communities”, another way to understand digital storytelling is to look who is telling the story. Narratives can be told by different subjects - I, He, She, And They, etc. - and the difference between those subjects change the perspective of the story too. For Lambert (2012, p. 43-46), there are “Me Story”, “My Story”, “Our Story”, “Their Story” and also “No Story”, all of them having different specifications. For this research, understanding what Lambert (2012) has to say about “Me” and “My Story” are important to apply according to what is observed in Snapchat and Instagram Stories.
3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In this section of my thesis I explain the most important concepts that inform this study, to easily follow the theoretical framework and analysis. This section is mainly dedicated to the concept of storytelling, where the first part focuses on explaining the practice of telling stories before the Internet era. This is to help contextualize and explain the origins of digital storytelling and how it has evolved. Furthermore, this chapter will present the current state of literature, on what has been researched in the field so far. This chapter presents the main findings in digital storytelling to the Center of Digital Storytelling, the educational perspective of the concept and the media perspective of the concept. Although this research classifies itself in media studies, the concept of educational digital storytelling is crucial to understand the population of young educated users when it comes to digital storytelling. In addition, the lack of research - in both educational and media perspectives - related to young educated users, social media and the feature of “Stories” motivated for a broader use and background of the concept. Following the same format, it was also crucial for this research to present literature on the main platforms, in order to situate the present aspects and especially the main focus on these topics. I conclude by presenting the current state of literature on both Snapchat and Instagram, where Snapchat’s young age is reflected in the same scarce number of studies on the platform. Where as a more complete review of Instagram was possible due to the platform being around for longer and consequently presenting more opportunities to study.

3.1. What is a story and what is Storytelling?

The ability to tell stories follows the course of human history side by side. Since the Stone Age, walls were decorated with the most primitive types of story telling. Since then new forms of this practice started to appear. To tell or to listen to stories is everyone’s oldest memory; since kids, we are encouraged to not only listen to stories but to be creative and tell them too. Actually, to tell a story or an experience is one of the first requests we get when we learn how to talk: “How was school?” “What did you do today?” and the simplest “How are you?”.

In addition, the importance of Storytelling’s role in culture and society cannot be forgotten. For a long time, telling stories were the only way to communicate and later on the only way
to keep track of the past. In many indigenous societies, stories are how people learn about their ancestors, their traditions and every other sphere of their life. If we investigate how we learn all of that, a lot has changed since then but not the importance of telling stories. Telling stories is culture’s best way to keep alive in people’s daily life.

“Stories can engage our minds, challenge our beliefs and ignite old memories to the extent that we want to hear it retold again and again. Words are combined and delivered in such a way that they construct a picture in the mind of the listener and drawing the listener into the story deeper and deeper with each phrase” (Garrety, 2008, p. 8).

Alongside stories are narratives that according to the dictionary literally means “a spoken or written account of connected events, a story” (Oxford Dictionary, 2017). To narrate and give details of events is storytelling and for that reason one of the theoretical basis of this research had to be Narrative Theories. It would allow us to understand stories on every level. Narratives give meaning to what we know about the world, how we see it and immerse us in different perspectives. Many theorists define narrative as tools for cognitive purposes, due to these characteristics of describing and introducing stories that will play a part on understanding and learning processes:

“They (narratives) are tools in cultural settings that pre-exist any group or individual use. These tools, especially in the case of narrative forms, are not a product of independent invention, and they influence us in different ways and become part of the repertoire of means we use in our everyday lives, our ‘telling lives’. When we talk about human action, narratives are used as a basis for ‘seeing’ events, a way of understanding characters in our environment” (Erstad & Wertsh, 2008, p. 29).

Many studies on narratives and storytelling argue that there are several types of stories that can happen and told in different ways (Lambert, 2013). With the rise of the Internet and a more immediate world where transformations happen in one mouse click, storytelling suffered its transformations too. The Internet presents other ways to tell stories through online platforms. To understand storytelling completely is mandatory to understand that as a human
3.2. Understanding digital storytelling

As it was explained, storytelling is a very present aspect of human life. However, a lot has changed since the Stone Age and a lot has changed when it comes to storytelling. The emergence of new media, the Internet, and social media has brought a different dimension to storytelling. Known as digital storytelling, the concept that connects an ancient practice with the latest available technology. However, like many concepts, digital storytelling has different meanings and characteristics depending on the field that it is being applied to. In this following section, I present the most popular and recent studies surrounding the concept of digital storytelling. This includes research that has been undertaken through educational lenses, an entertainment point-of-view and now, through the aspect of narratives.

3.2.1. The Center of Digital Storytelling

There are two main findings when researching digital storytelling, one is the Center of Digital Storytelling and the other is educational articles displaying the reasons to use digital storytelling in classrooms. The first one, the Center of Digital Storytelling (CDS) is cited numerous times in articles for both educational and entertainment purposes. In fact, a book written by the executive director of the CDS, Joe Lambert (2013), was used for this thesis, since the Center has many years of study in the subject of digital storytelling in general. The book called “Digital Storytelling – Capturing Lives, Creating Community” is mainly about the work the CDS has done in the topic, defining digital storytelling and telling how the concept was created. They explain their models for constructing a digital story, how to use new media for the story production, and exemplifies digital stories created by the Center. This book is a very important contribution to the field of digital storytelling and for the basis
of my research. Even though it generally explains the concept for professionals, the usage of social media by this professionals influence “ordinary” users into making similar stories, despite the fact that features such as “Stories” are already a perfect and easy space for users to create their own story.

3.2.2. Educational Digital Storytelling

As mentioned previously, one strand of digital storytelling is education. However, in contempt of being from a different field than the media field my research is situated within, many findings and concepts presented in digital storytelling for education sheds insight into digital storytelling for Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. Even though the prime difference between digital stories for education and for entertainment (media) is their purpose. The former has the function to teach while using entertaining platforms, while the latter has the function to entertain the viewers with the content provided. Nonetheless, numerous studies manage to present similar features in the application of digital storytelling in the respective fields, especially functionalities in the online narrative formation. The second is the focal point for understanding my thesis on digital storytelling by young users; seeing as most of the education studies conducted on digital storytelling are targeting students and how they use platforms, elaborate or tell a story through a platform, this perspective still proves integral.

Especially when considering my research revolving around students and recent graduates too, the field provides information about the behavior of young people according to production, presentation and narrative styles for digital storytelling. In other words, even though my research deals with the perspective of media studies in digital storytelling, the lack of studies in the field related to young educated users in terms of social media motivated the usage of educational digital storytelling for a general understanding of the concept. With that in mind, understanding the multidisciplinary content offered by digital storytelling makes it possible to recognize the multidisciplinary skills that are offered and mastered by the producers (Chung, 2007), since they are the ones responsible for editing, such as “digital literacy, global literacy, technology literacy and visual literacy” (Robin, 2008, p. 224). Although digital storytelling bring these good outcomes for users, the learning process belongs to the both roles that a user can perform, as a producer or as a viewer. In digital
storytelling for education, it is normally referred as the professor and the student (Garrety, 2008).

One example of an important contribution from the perspective of educational studies to this thesis is that the concept of digital storytelling is more about the digital story than the actual online platform (Ohler, 2006). Since most of the platforms will differ from each other when it comes to functionalities, most of the time the formation and production of digital stories, as well as the creation of the narrative belongs to the user. There are many interpretations on how a digital story should look and what elements are part of its composition; obviously, these definitions and elements might differ from the educational to the media strand. Some studies from the Education field would define them as “a call to adventure, problem-solution involving transformation and closure” (Ohler, 2006, p. 45-46). While others would identify genres of digital stories with its own characteristics; those genres “are traditional stories, learning stories, project-based stories, social justice and cultural stories, and stories grounded in reflective practice” (Garrety, 2008, p. 6). As it was stressed before, the founded definitions for digital stories, despite the difference in fields, helps shed understanding on to what precisely a digital story is and how its elements can be defined. Still, with the educational perspective, Bernard Robin has an article published in 2008, called “Digital Storytelling: A Powerful Technology for the 21st Century Classroom”. The article is about finding a theoretical framework for digital storytelling, in order to increase the effectiveness of this concept inside the classroom (Robin, 2008). This supports further the usefulness in the interdisciplinary nature of digital storytelling for education and entertainment.

3.2.3. Digital Storytelling in Media Studies

Another school of thought that helps us comprehend digital storytelling through media studies lens, focuses on the media elements existents in digital storytelling, such as understanding the role of photography in the practice of telling online stories (Van House, 2009; Vivienne & Burgess, 2013). With the perspective from another field, the definition of tools used for digital storytelling varies from the one with educational perspectives. In this case, the practice of telling online stories “makes use of low-cost digital cameras, non-linear editing software and notebook computers to create short, multimedia stories” (Meadows, 2003, p. 189).
However, two digital storytelling authors stood out from others with their definitions that could be applied to Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. Nick Couldry (2008) and Knut Lundby (2008) both respectively focus on digital storytelling directed towards a media perspective instead of an educational one. Nick Couldry (2008) studies how processes of Mediation and Mediatization can affect the definition of digital storytelling or, perhaps, start a new type of online storytelling. Using new media theory and media logics, Nick Couldry (2008) argues that using Mediation and Mediatization complement each other. However, the definition of “Mediation” works better for the concept of digital storytelling, since it is a “dialectic process of circulation, production and interpretation of media content that effects— and is effected by—social and cultural institutions” (Canella, 2017, p. 2). In addition, understanding digital storytelling as mediation also imply that “the social and cultural potential of individual stories circulating outside of the mainstream media can be realized” (Canella, 2017, p. 3).

The second author, Knut Lundby (2008) was used for this research as a starting point in trying to understand digital storytelling. Since the author carries his project “The Mediatized Stories” to help the reader understand the concept of digital storytelling, by talking about participation, production, and representations of self. Another important contribution from Lundby (2008) was his book called “Digital storytelling, mediatized stories: Self-representations in new media”, with contributing studies and articles from different authors in the field of digital storytelling, explaining the phenomena through a media perspective, but approaching subjects like education, cultural mediation, identity and agency for example.

### 3.3. Defining digital storytelling

The concept of digital storytelling is developing quickly and “emerged as part of broader cultural shifts, including a profound change in models of media communication” (Hartly, 2010, p.23). The “Previous Research” section demonstrated the immense amount of research surrounding digital storytelling but in specific areas, such as education. In that sense, defining digital storytelling in the best for this research took a lot of reading and a combination of different theories - as it will be shown further on. Now digital storytelling makes a connection with one of the oldest practices in society’s history - storytelling - with the latest and most used technology - the Internet.
As it was explained in the “Previous Research” section, when it comes to the concept of digital storytelling, there are many studies with educational perspectives (Chung, 2007; Robin, 2008; Garrety, 2008, Ohler, 2006). This common perspective is expected since storytelling was originally used for educational purposes through human history. As mentioned before, and when applied to school, teaching students through the Internet - their favorite entertainment and educational tool - the interest in studies increased. However, the definition of digital storytelling through this perspective limits to “a technology application that is well-positioned to take advantage of user-contributed content and to help teachers overcome some of the obstacles to productively using technology in their classrooms” (Robin, 2008, p. 222). This definition does not match my research, since there is no educational perspective or interest in Instagram and Snapchat Stories. This was definitely one of the limitations of this research, since most of the published content about the main concept was about a completely different point of view. However, it is important to stress that some of these studies were severely important to understand how young people, generally students, produce and relate to telling stories on the Internet. In this sense, it is interesting for this research to make use of these articles findings.

For this research, the definition of digital storytelling that is broad enough to fit Instagram and Snapchat stories is the one given by Knut Lundby and Nick Couldry; both of the researchers use the definition as “the whole range of personal stories now being told in potentially public form using digital media resources” (Couldry, 2008, p. 374). In other words, what digital storytelling represents for this research, considers every story that is being told in the World Wide Web through digital images, videos, text, gifs and any other Internet media:

“There is always a pleasure in making stories of one's own life because the material is readily accessible, authentic and endearing; and the experience of narrating with multimodal means is new, exciting and inspirational. This is the power of storytelling coupled with the appeal of digital technology” (Nguyen, 2011, p. 25).

It is necessary to differentiate different types of storytelling and what effects its composition or content. Lambert (2013) presents in a prism “The World of Digital Storytelling” to explain
participatory media making, stating that the starting point is millions of people surfing in mass media, like television channels or websites, until the final top where people work by themselves in telling a story. Inside this prism, there are other stages like games and fan-films, showing explicitly the varieties among digital stories.

Lambert (2013) also explains the differences between the storytelling in each of this digital medium and how much participation the specific media asks from the “author”. For example, there is narrative and digital storytelling in TV-series and while watching it, the viewer is feeding on perspective, lesson, and elements that will improve their creativity to tell their own stories for example. It is Storytelling, but the production phase does not happen while in contact with the media. That is, actually, one of the main differences between social media and any other type of media: the actual contact with the tool, both for reading, listening, viewing a story and for producing it. With the Internet, everyone has the chance to tell their story by using photographs, videos, and gifs.

This is where transmedia storytelling takes form, exactly when people start to use different platforms and tools for the purpose of telling their stories. However, there are different views in transmedia connected with storytelling. Jenkins (2010) for example, explains transmedia storytelling from the aspect of using many different platforms to spread the same content, exactly how brands would do for example, where the same message is spread out in different channels with some adaptations but the content is the same.

“Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story” (Jenkins, 2010, p. 944).

On the other hand, Lambert (2013) explains transmedia as using different tools and channels to get to a final product. He gives an example by showing how everything is connected and linked in social media. One video can be recorded in one camera linked to an app that gives an option to tag to another platform and share in different but still connected spaces. Looking at transmedia through Lambert’s view is more coherent to understand Snapchat and Instagram Stories since the stories are only shared in one platform specifically - without the
option to link to another platform – but still can be made with different tools and apps that are connected to Snapchat and Instagram. It is important to stress that Jenkins’ (2010) explanation actually happens more often in social media when someone can share the same photo or video to different platforms to reach different people. However, for the purposes of this research, about Snapchat and Instagram Stories, Lambert’s (2013) view fits better.

Besides Lundby (2009) and Couldry (2008), many other studies were made about digital storytelling analyzing the communicative and social aspect. However, there is one study particularly important for understanding digital storytelling through theories that could fit the analysis of Instagram and Snapchat stories. Even though it comes from the field of education, Nguyen (2011) presents a very important perspective for storytelling in social media and analyzes digital storytelling through three different theoretical perspectives. Sociocultural theory, constructivist theory and narrative theory give enough information to understand the social and communicative reasons on why telling stories through the Internet is so important for young people. Through the work of Nguyen (2011), it was possible to find a theoretical framework that works better at understanding what people are posting in their Stories feature on Instagram and Snapchat and what kind of stories they are posting.

3.4. Snapchat and Ephemeral Social Interaction

From analyzing previous research on Snapchat, it was possible to see that most of the studies revolve around ephemeral social media interaction, and that this is the main impact Snapchat had and the reason why became so popular. Disappearing data is another topic that has been massively researched when it comes to Snapchat. Snapchat was the first platform to offer a 24 hour time period for photos and videos that are deleted forever once that time period is up or the user decides to save the content. Many authors argue that disappearing data made the interactions less deep and more superficial. However, at the same time, they argue that – for the users – the platform appears less edited and filtered, since the main idea is to post something that just happened, while in other platforms old photos and videos can be posted.

Understanding user behavior is generally the first intention for studies on new platforms and when it comes to what users generally post on Snapchat. Studies focused on what kind of content is being shared and the themes created through images and videos. The aspects of
playfulness, sharing humorous content, selfie-oriented, focusing on showing the self, and “less filtered” of the platform were main findings (Piwek & Joinson, 2016). Another interesting aspect about Snapchat is that communication is more ephemeral and happens easily, in the sense that sending videos and photos to people that you know is easier than before, creating a more personal idea for Snapchat in comparison to other online platforms (Vaterlaus, Barnett, Roche and Young, 2016). These findings contribute to understanding the impact of such unique social media, since Snapchat presented a more personal way to interact online, which was copied later by other platforms. Besides user behavior, another primary concern in studies is understanding the platform itself, with what the users will interact with and deal with. In the case of Snapchat, bringing a completely new feature, where photos disappear automatically after 24 hours would obviously get the attention of researchers who wish to understand the impact that this new feature may have on society. One of the findings of this impact is that Snapchat gives a new range for young people’s voices, which is allowed through the self-deleting photos and videos that can be shared. Furthermore, it provides circumstances for young people to create identities to discourse about different subjects (Charteris & Gregory & Masters, 2014).

The fact that Snapchat is very recent also accentuates comparisons with older platforms, more powerful and with more users in different age groups, such as Facebook. Facebook is one of the biggest social media platforms of our time, being known to represent the idea of “perfect life” among its users. Studies comparing these platforms points out that Snapchat provokes more jealousy than Facebook, where users tend to compare their lives on a larger scale (Utz & Muscanell & Khalid, 2015). These findings strengthen the idea of a more natural perspective in the feature of “Stories”. As it was stressed before, that in this particular feature the idea of a “less filtered” content is perceived by the users, which can, as it was showed in the research, enhance jealousy considering that users are seeing what people are doing right now. Still on the theme of comparing Snapchat and Instagram with Facebook, studies concluded that the fast communications on Snapchat, of sharing “smaller” and simpler moments in life makes the ephemeral communication more productive and with a different connotation from other platforms such as Facebook (Bayer & Ellison & Schoenebeck & Falk, 2016).
When it comes to Snapchat research, there is noticeable a lack of studies about the main feature of the platform, which actually makes the ephemeral interaction possible: the so-called “My Stories”. With this feature, users can post photos and videos that will stay up only for 24 hours and it is visible for every one of their followers. However, when time is up the photos and videos automatically disappear and cannot be recovered by the user anymore. Most of the studies analyze the outcomes of the feature such as the ephemeral communication, jealousy levels compared to other social media platforms and what people are posting. However, researchers lack focus in what the “Stories” feature in particular represents to the users and how they are using it for communicative purposes.

3.5. Instagram and the Addition of Stories

Instagram was launched in 2010 and is “a mobile photo (and video) capturing and sharing service” (Hu & Manikonda & Kambhampati, 2014, p.595). Since its launch seven years ago, it has become one of the most used social media, with the continuously increasing number of users. Its popularity and timing helped it become a much-researched platform too, with numerous studies about the platform, comparison between other platforms, content analysis, user analysis and more. For this review, I selected articles that are related to image analysis, narrative or digital story at any level and, since there is a very large amount of studies, I also selected the most recent ones to analyze.

From the respective analyzed studies, it was possible to gather findings about Instagram as a platform that can also be applied to the feature of “Stories”, such as understanding user behavior on the motives to use Instagram and the common posts shared in the platform, as well as the existing relationships and how the narrative happens. Instagram is a photo-sharing platform where photos get “likes” from the users, allowing users to share pictures of what they were doing, where they were and whom they were with. For the reason of being able to see someone else’s life on Instagram, one of the main motives to use such platform is precisely to keep up or gain knowledge about what others are doing (Sheldon & Bryant, 2015). However, there are other reasons with more complexity than that, since users also use the platform for not only surveillance but also diversion, personal relationship, and voyeuristic needs. The last one is exceptionally interesting, since it is based on Calvert’s concept of mediated voyeurism that is basically the behavior of online content viewing due
to the need to learn about someone else’s life, one very interesting concept when understanding why people share and view all of this amount of content in social media (Lee & Sin, 2016).

Understanding user behavior on Instagram means comprehending how they interact with the platform and how they interact with each other. On Instagram, users can post a photo or video in their own field, and can also like what people that they are following are posting, their interaction happens with their photos and other people’s photos. When it comes to posting, it was observed that users have scheduling preferences, that they save their posts for the weekends or to the end of the day. Another behavior “rich get richer” phenomenon, where users tend to like a photo that has a lot of likes (Araújo & Corrêa & Silva et al, 2014). Other posting behaviors, which will also be commented afterward in the analysis as one of the results, is selfies or self-presented photos, a common post in many other online platforms too (Moon & Lee et al, 2016). However, the fact that Instagram is mainly used for documentation of social activities, as it was explained before, creates a positive relationship since induces the users to do more different things to post on Instagram (Sheldon & Bryant, 2015). Visual elements also affect posting behavior, since users have more concern about what they are posting and how they are expressing their message in the post; these visual elements also modify the individual’s mediated life and that there are new forms and conceptions of mobile mediated visual elements (Serafinelli, 2017). Another point that can affect posting behavior is personality traits. Studies show that the filter users select for their pictures has a connection with their personality (Ferwerda & Schedl & Tkalcic, 2016). Still correlated to posting behaviors, when it comes to relationships or the interaction among users, the producer and the viewer of the post, studies point that the photos have interpersonal meaning for them. In other words, the shared photos represent particular kinds of social relations between the user who shares and the user that see the content and how visual choices can create a relationship between the two of them (Zappavigna, 2016).

Studies made to understand narrative on Instagram, made use of consecutive photos, as they are presented on the platform and had interesting findings. Such as the fact that people are likely to make connections and are sensible to narratives; besides images in temporal order with similar features make a bigger sense of narrative too, as well as an emotional approach (Aylett et al, 2017).
As it was explained previously, there are not a lot of studies on Instagram Stories. The main reason for that is simply the fact that the feature on Instagram was only released in August 2016 (Instagram Blog, 2017), so it is a very recent feature. Even though the content that was analyzed for these findings, in the previously presented research, was different from the one analyzed in this research, focusing on the user’s need to make sense and meaning out of the content they share online; is a very important finding for both Narrative studies in Social Media and the understanding of narrative for the feature of “Stories.

3.6. Contribution to the Field

After analyzing and presenting what has been previously researched in the field, it was possible to see the gaps in the studies that could be filled with this thesis. One of the main gaps, in my perspective, is the lack of studies in digital storytelling made by common users of online platforms. Most of the studies focused either in students that had digital storytelling as a class task or subject, for digital storytelling in education, or in professional audio-visual producers willing to produce in online platforms, for media studies. However, there is no study in relation to common users (with personal accounts and no professional skills for audio-visual content) and how their digital storytelling occur. The second main gap is related to the connection between digital storytelling and narrative theories. Nguyen (2011) published the only study on the matter and it does not focus on digital storytelling in social media. The lack of studies in the feature of “Stories” is also real, but it is explained due to its recent launch. The research purpose needs to be in connection with the aim, which in this research is to understand the process of digital storytelling in the feature of “Stories” in Snapchat and Instagram. The purpose also has to relate to the research questions, which are to observe the themes approached in the feature and which elements, features and signs are being used by the users, as well as knowing if they are aware of the process of digital storytelling. Finally, the purpose of this research is to study digital storytelling through the lens of narrative theories in a new popular feature focusing in common educated users without any professional skills in audio-visual content production.
4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I will discuss and present the main theories supporting my research. It is important to highlight that there are no studies on Instagram and Snapchat Stories, mainly because the feature of “Stories” itself is considered very recent. In order to limit my research, have better results and contribute to the field, I focused on Instagram and Snapchat “Stories” only, where the largest amount of “Stories” is produced on a daily basis. This research has a mix of theories from media studies, narrative studies, and semiotics. However, all of these theories are connected in order to understand RQ1, RQ2 and RQ2 sub-question. When referring to storytelling previously, a connected definition was narrative as the sequencing of connected events forming a story (Chatman, 1980), and digital storytelling defined as the practice of telling stories in online platforms. However, these concepts require a theoretical base that can give support for a further connection between the data all the previous research made for my thesis.

For that reason, I start by using Narrative Theories to define story and storytelling, until I finally reach digital storytelling as a concept and field. I bring authors from different perspectives but maintaining Lundby (2009) and Couldry’s (2008) concept of digital storytelling; as well as using Nguyen dissertation approaching Narrative Theories and the Narrative Paradigm (Fisher, 1984) to explain digital storytelling. I follow Nguyen dissertation to also explain why digital storytelling is so important and natural for people. To help the data analysis, I also use semiotics and image intertextuality to explain RQ2 and its sub-question specifically in order to analyze the elements, signs, and connections used by the users with the posted content.

The combination of the digital storytelling concept, narrative theories and semiotics happens in order to understand the process of digital storytelling in the feature of “Stories”. Through the media definition of digital storytelling, the characteristics of the process and of a digital story were uncovered. Subsequently, researching narrative theories made possible the understanding of a narrative and its construction elements. For understanding and creation of meaning behind the narrative construction in a digital setting through signs that are both understandable by the producer and the viewer, semiotics were used. In other words, the theories complement each other in understanding digital storytelling as a process in the feature in a definition, construction and sense-making level.
4.1. Digital storytelling through the lens of Narrative Theory

This research is interested in understanding how young people tell their stories through the feature of “My Stories” on Instagram and Snapchat. Therefore, understanding the definition and aspects of narrative is essential in order to have an answer. The “Stories” feature in both platforms have the intention of producing a chronological order to tell the user’s story and perspective, which is a narrative in one sense. However, not surprisingly, the definition of narrative can vary, due to various fields studying the subject, causing multiple definitions that lends itself to each of the different subject angle.

The range of definitions on what a narrative is and the branches in narrative theory are quite broad. The term narrative itself was already studied as a method, a theory, a social practice and even as politics and strategy (Tomaščíková, 2009). The multidisciplinary world of a narrative reflects the many complex ways human beings find to communicate. In fact, narrative is defined as a form of communication from a structuralist perspective, which is one of the main strands of Narrative Theories. This standpoint, define the concept as a discourse but also a complex artifact (Tomaščíková, 2009). Understanding narrative though structuralism revolves around comprehending the act of telling stories is complex and, as it was stated before, digital storytelling, reflexing its online reality, also revolves around such complexity and variety of forms. For that reason, selecting such perspective of Narrative Theory is crucial in order to make a connection with digital storytelling later on. An example of one of these definitions is Chatman’s (1980) theory, which analyzes narrative as this compilation of different elements, composed of the story as the “what” in a narrative, the content itself, and the discourse as the “how”. Moreover, the theorist goes beyond the structure of the Narrative itself and takes the structure of transmission into an account, as well as the manifestations, actions and more:

“A narrative is a whole because it is constituted of elements - events and existents - that differ from what they constitute. Events and existents are single and discrete, but the narrative is a sequential composite. Further, events in the narrative (as opposed to the chance compilation) tend to be related or mutually entailing” (Chatman, 1980, p. 21).
By going beyond the structure of narrative, Chatman (1980) brings to the discussion a more recent strand of post-structuralism and modernism, where the narrative is defined as a “hierarchy of instances” (Tomaščíková, 2009, p. 286). The focus of research is the structuration of a narrative, not structure. A story is formed by events (actions and happenings), existents (characters and setting) and people (Chatman, 1980) in the model used later on in the analysis and supports the categorization of the Snapchat and Instagram Stories. This is to make sure my research follows a post-structuralist understanding in relation to Narrative Theory, it will help to explain the narrative perspective of how the “Stories” feature works. Some authors like Chatman (1980), Mieke Bal (2009) and Barthes (1977) can be classified as post-structuralists or postmodernist. In other words, post-structuralist and postmodernist theories concentrate on the construction of meaning in the narrative by both sides, the writer and the reader:

“While structuralist examinations of narrative focus on the text as an object of study, post structuralist, post-modern narrative theorists de-construct the narrative (...) and emphasize the role of a subject (reader, listener, viewer) in the process of semiosis/ interpretation of meaning as well as in their understanding of narrative as communication” (Tomaščíková, 2009, p. 287).

Although there are many perspectives from the narrative that share common grounds with the research topic, the fact that a narrative can be so hard to define just enriches the vast options existent in digital storytelling, or as Nguyen said, “this amorphous delineation of narrative seems to better fit digital storytelling. Indeed, only such an unrestricted conceptualization can be applicable to the innumerable types of life experience that can be crafted into digital stories” (2011, p. 23). Nevertheless, Nguyen (2011) makes a suitable connection between digital storytelling and narrative theory that can help us further understand the practice of telling stories in the Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. He explains, through the Narrative Paradigm elaborated by Walter Fisher (1984), another post-structuralist narrative researcher, the reasons behind digital storytelling’s popularity.

Nguyen (2011) takes the main ideas of Fisher’s (1984) concept of the Narrative Paradigm and explains philosophically the use of digital storytelling in social communication. In Fisher’s essay on the Narrative Paradigm, he uses “narration” as a “theory of symbolic
actions - words and/or deeds - that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, and interpret them” (1984, p. 2). A concept that helps the observation of Instagram and Snapchat Stories as a narrative, since actions in forms of videos or photos are displayed in a sequence and have a cultural or aesthetical meaning for those who post and for the viewers. For Nguyen (2011), the Narrative Paradigm of Fisher (1984) explains how storytelling is part of human nature and the function of narratives in digital storytelling. Indeed, Fisher’s (1984) Narrative Paradigm revolves around seeing the world made up of stories and that human communication is surrounded by a narrative. In fact, Fisher (1984) explains the presuppositions of the Narrative Paradigm where the first one is that “humans are essentially storytellers” and:

“Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings - their inherent awareness of narrative probability, what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing narrative fidelity, whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives” and he finishes off the presuppositions with “the world is a set of stories which must be chosen among to live the good life in a process of continual recreation” (Fisher, 1984, p. 8).

Nguyen reinforces this by saying, “each human being has numerous stories to tell because a story based on life experience is just a crossing point of different lines of narrative: culture, ethnicity, history, society, economy.... Human life is a series of narratives because the experience of life inherently exists in memory in segments like narrative episodes” (2011, p. 25). Since social media is reflective of human behavior because of human usage, one of the main characteristics of social media usage now is to communicate what you are doing, who you are, where you are, etc. With the launch of Snapchat and then Instagram’s feature called “Stories” the main idea is obviously for people to “tell their stories” or their daily life through videos and images in the platforms. Therefore, the fact human beings are essentially storytellers (Fisher, 1984), this is the reasoning behind the success and demand in telling stories on social media, especially the ones with a feature called “Stories”.
4.2. Digital Story

With technological advance, the emergence of different definitions of a story, as well as it happened with storytelling, is necessary in order to fit in what is happening to society nowadays. For that reason, the definition of a narrative in non-digital stories is not enough; that is when the definition of a digital narrative and digital stories starts to appear and can be included inside digital storytelling. Digital stories are defined and differentiated from non-digital stories mainly because of the online space they are situated in. It is important to stress here, that defining Digital Stories is more complicated than defining digital storytelling. This is due to online stories having the potential of being produced in many ways as well as offering different options of narration to the digital storytellers. Meaning that texts, videos, images, gifs, emoji and other elements can be used to enrich the narrative depending on the platform.

One of the definitions that can be used for this research states stories produced online have two main features “(i) a variety of modes (image, music, sound, speech, and writing) are possible to use and combine, and (ii) digital storytelling features narrative and dramatization” (Nilsson, 2010, p. 150). Even though that definition is based on digital storytelling for educational purposes, the feature (ii) can also be understood and applied to digital storytelling for media purposes, since when a user is in front of the camera, it is possible to understand the dramatization aspect of the digital narrative. This definition can be applied to Instagram and Snapchat “Stories” since there are a number of modes being used, such as images, videos, emoji and doodle to state a few examples. In addition, and as explained previously, the narrative and dramatization are present when the camera is facing the storyteller who is responsible for narrating the story.

Another idea of a digital story is presented by Carolyn Handler Miller in her book “Digital Storytelling – a Creator’s Guide to Interactive Entertainment” from 2004. According to Miller (2004), digital Storytellers should design their stories and be aware of which elements they can use from classic narrative means. It is important to stress that these definitions will be adapted to “ordinary” users, which are the participants in my research. Where as Miller (2004) clearly refers to professional users wanting to explore the Internet in order to tell stories for brands, movies, video games, etc.
In one chapter dedicated to “The Internet”, Miller (2004) explains attributes of the online world that catch people’s attention, talking about “stickiness”:

“It connotes the ability to draw people to the site and entice them to linger for long periods of time. If you want to create an entertainment site that is sticky, and hence appealing to users, you will want to include as many of these attributes as you can, providing, of course, that they make sense in terms of your overall objective” (Miller, 2004, p. 245-246).

The aspect of “stickiness” is not new when it comes to social media and Internet entertainment. Being unique, making people come back, or in better Internet words, to follow your page/website/profile is what the platforms are about. These attributes are (1) community building, (2) media rich, (3) personal, (4) dynamic, (5) participatory, (6) deep and (7) edgy (Miller, 2004). The most interesting part is the attributes Miller (2004) describes above, are the same for the “Stories” produced on Snapchat and Instagram as they are for the Internet. This will be furthered discussed in the analysis.

Another very important explanation from the author comes when she talks about “Short Entertainment” (Miller, 2004), which is the exact type of entertainment found in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”, since they can vary between 10 to 15 seconds maximum. The fact that the Stories are so short and build up later on the platform, puts the users in a position to think about the same elements described and listed by the author above. Among them are themes of humor or emotion, which too will be presented later in the analysis with more detail in order to make sense of how the users tell their stories through the “Stories” feature.

When it comes to the definition of a story, besides the ones offered previously, it is necessary to make a separation between stories and “Stories”. This research deals with digital stories as the product of digital storytelling. However, in the level of the platforms Snapchat and Instagram, “Story” or “Stories” (with capital letters and between quote marks) will be counted as the final product in the feature: a set of images and videos posted in the last 24 hours. When using the platform, the users have the option of downloading their “Story” as one video containing their content posted in the last 24 hours. Stories or a story (with out capital letters or quote marks), on other hand, will be used in relation to the narrative perspective, as the narration for a series of events.
4.3. Semiotics

The use of semiotic theories for understanding Internet behavior is very common. The study of signs and what they mean to the people using and interacting with these signs is acutely important in understanding society and communication; for the simple fact, it helps to break down words, images, videos, elements, colors, sounds, gestures and more into meaning. For this research, the use of these theories is important for understanding properly how narration and storytelling are created through the used signs in the “Stories” and how it helps establish communication between the producer of the “Stories” and the viewer. Semiotic theories will help to connect the research model with the data collected, analyzing and deconstructing the signs present in the “Stories”. Generally defined as the study of signs, as explained by Umberto Eco, one of the modern theorists of Semiotics. His book “A Theory of Semiotics” makes a very good introduction to the topic of Semiotics and the two main theorists of the field:

“Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. A sign is everything, which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not necessarily have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands in for it” (1976, p. 7).

Charles Sanders Peirce (1931) went deeper in the definition of signs and most importantly, talked about semiosis, “the name given to the action of signs” (Cobley, 2009, p. 318), the process of making meaning through a sign. Umberto Eco says “according to Peirce a sign is ‘something which stands to somebody for something in some respects or capacity’” (1976, p. 15). However, Tony Jappy (2013) conducted a more detailed study of Peirce’s (1931) work on signs, and found Peirce (1931) has used more than 70 definitions for what a sign is or can be throughout the course of his work in Semiotics. This means that Eco’s (1976) definition is one of the most popular ones, also favored by Jappy (2013). However, it also means and shows that for Peirce (1931) the most important part was to understand the process of meaning through signs and that a sign, was never alone.

Peirce’s (1931) most famous contribution to Semiotics is known as a triad. Three elements that only exist and make sense while interacting with each other, which are the (1) sign, the
(2) object and the (3) interpretant (Jappy, 2013). These three elements are responsible for what is called the Semiosis, or the sign-action, where the sign is anything that is determined by the object that has an effect, the interpreter, on someone. As Jappy explains more simply by saying that “…this initially intimidating formulation Peirce simply means that the sign mediates between what it represents, its object, and the interpreter, which is the effect the sign produces upon the person interpreting it” (2013, p. 4). After explaining this, Jappy (2013) explains that is important to keep in mind that different people, depending on their background, situation, reality, location and many other elements, can interpret signs in many different ways. Peirce (1931) also stressed that there is no predetermined effect of a sign upon an interpreter.

Since Saussure was focused on linguistics and verbal signs, Peirce’s (1931) work was more adaptable and focused in images, the so-called visual semiotics, where the definition of pictorial signs emerge. Pictorial already gives away that it deals with images, illustration or any visual form. However, the sign itself come with more than that, representing something more, since “pictorial signs, far more clearly than language signs, constitute the representations of two ‘spaces’: ours and that of the objects and the protagonists depicted in the represented world of the photograph and the comic-strip” (Jappy, 2013, p. 28).

Understanding pictorial signs is crucial for this research, which deals with visual data, being examples of such signs and carrying meaning through its format and additional visual elements that might be present in the photos and videos shared in the “Stories”. However, other definitions are important to state now for understanding the analysis connected with the semiotic theories. For example, legisigns “are general, systematic and clearly more complex in that their interpretation is governed by a general rule or law, and as such transcend the singularity of the photograph and the sketch” (Jappy, 2013, p. 30-31). Legisigns will be particularly important for the analysis, when dealing with visual elements added by the research participants in their “Stories”, especially with “emoji”. Another important definition is known as qualisigns, which are “qualities in limitless diversity which function as signs” (Jappy, 2013, p. 31); also very important for this research, since qualisigns can be colors – such as filters that can be added to the “Stories” – and also music that is commonly used in “Stories” too.
At last, the understanding of non-verbal communication is related to semiotics and consequently to the part of my research that deals with visual communication – mixed up with verbal communication, but still has its non-verbal aspect as the main and more used one in “Stories. Jappy (2013, p.35) defines non-verbal signs, still through Peirce’s lenses but citing Michael Argyle’s (1972, 1988) work in a several of almost universal non-verbal signs, as “behavioral legisign systems”. These legisigns, generally present in pictorial media – such as photos and videos on the Internet – are basically the sign formation of the “Stories” found in Snapchat and Instagram, such as proximity, facial expression, gestures, posture, appearance and more. With the purpose of a better connection between the theory and the collected data, these legisigns are highlighted and presented with more detail later on, in the section dedicated to the Analysis.

When talking about pictorial signs and semiotics applied to images, the work of Roland Barthes (1977) is the main reference. According to him, signs are formed by the signifier, which is the actual thing that we read, and the signified, which is the meaning that the signifier expresses. Together with the formation of the sign, Barthes present the definitions of denotation, the real message, and connotation, the message perceived by people based in their culture and reality. For him, “all these 'imitative' arts comprise two messages: a denoted message, which is the analogon itself, and a connoted message, which is the manner in which the society to a certain extent communicates what it thinks of it” (Barthes, 1977, p. 17).

Following the understanding of signified, signifier, denotation and connotation, reality is the ultimate real message with codes, meaning that objects in real life represent its own code, connoted or denoted depending on the display. However, images, as an imitation of reality, a representation of it without the real object, is a message without a code and at the same time, a continuous message for it represents the imitation of an object with a code (Barthes, 1977). The absence of a code of the image is the paradox of the image:

“The photographic paradox can then be seen as the co-existence of two messages, the one without a code (the photographic analogue), the other with a code (the 'art', or the treatment, or the 'writing', or the rhetoric, of the photograph); structurally, the paradox is clearly not the collusion of a denoted message and a connoted message (which is the - probably inevitable - status of all the forms of
mass communication), it is that here the connoted (or coded) message develops on the basis of a message without a code” (Barthes, 1977, p. 19).

Understanding semiotics through Barthes (1977) perspective understands the creation of meaning behind an image or a moving image in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. This perspective explains that the representation or imitation of reality through the content of “Stories” present aspects and codes that make sense to the producer and audience that can relate to this content. In addition, it brings comprehension to how such platforms are used for communication in young people’s lives where the image or moving image represents more than just the imitation of reality, but an update, the start of a conversation or even entertainment.

Still inside semiotics, and especially when it comes to understanding Snapchat and Instagram Stories, is intertextuality of images and how the elements in such images talk to each other and represent something as a result:

“Intertextuality (...) refers to the ways that texts, whether written or visual, are interpreted one in the light of another to produce new meanings. Whenever a pictorial image is read in terms of—or through, against, alongside—another image or a surrounding set of images and words, intertextuality is at work; meanings assigned to the image differ from those that would be drawn if it were interpreted in isolation” (Werner, 2004, p. 1).

Many elements of image intertextuality can explain how the platform works and why is so appealing to users. Although the intertextuality can work with one single image, since many elements can form and be interpreted as something overly meaningful (Werner, 2004), the studied platforms generally work with a sequence of images. The whole format of Snapchat and Instagram, and especially to the feature of “Stories”, is that images and videos are placed together portraying some kind of story or chronological discourse about someone’s day, for example. In addition, having the photos and videos connected or explaining one another is the most common format use in the platform. This dialogue between the placed images is exactly what happens on Snapchat, Instagram and inside the Stories (and probably where the name comes from). Image intertextuality is fundamental to understand that Stories follow a
direction and mean something not only for the producer of the Stories but also for the users that will watch the content.
5. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will present the methods used in this research to guide me through the data collection and data analysis. My thesis combines qualitative methods in a qualitative content analysis research with interviews for more details from the users. To understand the methodological choices, it is necessary to keep in mind RQ1 and RQ2, reminding myself the purpose of this is to investigate what users post and how they tell their stories, without interest in quantity at all. The fact that I am analyzing online platforms, social media without t, also explains the choice for a qualitative content analysis as a methodology. The purpose of the interviews is to give additional information from the observed users, which will make the results not only richer in detail but also more personal. Finally, I have a two-part methodology. The first part consists of qualitative content analysis where I analyze online platforms and the second part entailes five in-depth semi-structured interviews.

5.1. Why qualitative research?

When thinking about my research topic, I already knew I was leaning towards qualitative methods. The answer to that was the questions I was making to myself. When it comes to Snapchat and Instagram Stories, what exactly do people post about and how do they tell their stories? To actually understand the behavior of “Stories” users, it is necessary to understand signs, symbols, meanings and social aspects adopted by the users; not only understanding what they mean but also to see how they are used and with which purpose. Since the beginning, I was not interested in numbers, such as how many users post in Stories or how many times someone shares something in stories, and so for that reason qualitative research methods were applicable to my research.

“Quality refers to the what, how, when, and where of a thing - its essence and ambience. Qualitative research thus refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. In contrast, quantitative research refers to counts and measures of things” (Berg, 2001, p. 3).

These questions are, obviously, as important as the one I am asking myself, but they are not my source of interest. My goal in this research is to understand people as digital storytellers
situated in Instagram and Snapchat Stories. Moreover, the main focus of qualitative research is precise to understand people, their behavior and/or social contexts:

“Qualitative research properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. Qualitative researchers, then, are most interested in how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth” (Berg, 2001, p. 6-7).

Therefore, apparent from the beginning that qualitative methods would be remarkably important for my research. Qualitative methods also gives the researcher more proximity with the study object, allowing the researcher to understand extensively where the object is coming from when acting in a certain way. In this case it will definitely help me answer RQ1 and RQ2 with as many details as I can get which would not be possible with quantitative research. The fact that interviews were conducted also puts this research in need of qualitative methods, since the data collected from interviews will, most of the time, come from a sociological aspect and be filled with qualitative details that can only be used as additional information for a research that already follows other qualitative methods. In addition, the location of the research also directed straight towards qualitative methods, since my focus is online behavior and digital storytelling, Internet studies are immersed with qualitative data.

“These reports support the idea that what is happening in our society is not simply a quantitative change in the way that the Internet is used, but a qualitative shift. As more people use the Internet, they use it as a highly sophisticated communications device that enables and empowers the formation of communities” (Kozinets, 2010, p. 15).

As Kozinets (2010) confirms, studying the Internet and online communities involves more qualitative aspects than it was thought before. Although it is a technology, the online world is populated by humans, that bring their social contexts, their past and their personalities - basically their whole offline life - to these platforms. Understanding their behavior, how they deal with the platforms is important to understand human behavior in a whole.
5.2. Qualitative Content Analysis

My research design, especially the data collection was made entirely on the basis and rules of qualitative content analysis. Since dealing with documentary sources, defined as various forms of data, since text to photography, but most of the time the mix of both; which is precisely what can be found in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”, a mix of a caption, images, videos, emoji and more. Moreover, for that specific type of data, the category of qualitative content analysis is the most systematic and empirical method to analyze. Particularly, the primary method of content analysis does not apply to my research that has no quantitative purposes. The definition of content analysis, defined by Berelson Bernard consists of "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (1952, p. 18). Observing the previous definition, a contradiction with qualitative methods is obvious, since content analysis is indeed based on quantitative aspects, which at first would be not appropriate for such research, however:

“Qualitative research is not so much interested in the measurement of social variables as it is concerned to investigate the qualities that social phenomena have for the members of a society: the meanings or significance they attribute to beliefs, practices, appearances, types of person, and so forth. Content analysis, as a primarily quantitative method, is not well equipped to give access to those understandings, although as we have shown, it is a helpful way of discovering social patterns that operate” (Ball & Smith, 1992, p. 30).

Qualitative content analysis is “more accurately considered a residual category encompassing procedures of coding or interpreting communication content that are at variance with Berelson's strict conception” (Ball & Smith, 1992, p. 29). This means that qualitative content analysis still uses the basis of content analysis, which is dividing the collected data into categories, but instead of focusing on frequency, which is made in content analysis, qualitative content analysis focus in categorization of latent codes that will be important for the analysis of its existence and not by its recurrence:

“[Qualitative content analysis is] the selection and rational organization of such categories as condense the substantive meanings of the given text, with a view to testing pertinent
assumptions and hypotheses. These categories *may or may not* invite frequency counts” (Kracauer, 1952, p. 638).

This categorization can be made in numerous different ways and generally, there is no formula for the process and if there was, the studies would always find the same result (Ball & Smith, 1992). For that reason, qualitative content analysis fit perfectly in this research, since in order to answer RQ1: “What do the participants post in Snapchat and Instagram?”, I had to collect the data and separate into categories in order to in fact present patterns of posts, such as showing friends, landscapes or showing their pets not matting their frequency. The same method was important to answer RQ2: “How do the participants tell their stories?”, since I also had to categorize to find which elements were being used to make sense of the narrative, such as the use of “location” or “emoji” in their “Stories”. Disregarding frequency in my research was important to define the subjects and narrative elements used by the participants without exclude some of them for not having “enough” images about it; my interest is to understand the categories of subjects approached by the participants in the “Stories”, not how many times they approached the subject:

> “The presence or absence of a theme might be measured, but not the frequency with which it occurs in the data. Second, the arguments for a qualitative content analysis are best read not as recommendations for a *single* alternative technique, but as pointing in the direction of a *range* of methods for analyzing communication content” (Ball & Smith, 1992, p. 29-30).

The next section will give more information about the data I collected over the course of three weeks in March 2007 and deepen the justification in choosing such method. A number of images that were collected, together with my Research Questions focusing in what kind of content the users I followed posted and which elements they use to make sense of narrative in the “Stories”, required categorization without the need to focus on frequency.

**5.3. Data**

The data collection was restricted to Snapchat and Instagram due to the main interest of this thesis. As it was explained before, these are the most popular platforms, the ones with more
daily active users in the feature of “Stories” (object of this research) and where the most reachable participant users were located.

5.3.1. Data Collection

In order to understand what people post in their “Stories” on both Snapchat and Instagram and how they tell their story or narrate their daily life, the collected data had to be in the format of “Stories”. In the case of both platforms, users have the option to record short videos and to post pictures. Instagram also has the option to insert gifs. For this reason, screenshots were the best way to follow what the observed group was posting and to make notes about the elements that were found in the content. All of the observed participants and interviewees gave consent for their observation and interviews. Some of them agreed with the observation but did not want their images to feature in the research paper, which was respected.

The population in this research is formed by young educated users – students or recent graduates – that have a personal account in both Instagram and Snapchat. In addition, these users are not classified as professionals in entertainment or audio-visual content and are sharing their daily life in the feature of “Stories”. Therefore, the sample is formed by 25 (twenty five) different users posting daily about their lives, which I followed and screenshotted every part of their shared content. This population choice is motivated by the fact that most of the research in the field of digital storytelling, until now, was based in students that have digital storytelling as a class subject or in professionals that want to produce audio-visual content for the internet. This means that the field lacks the understanding of digital storytelling through common users’ perspective.

Although this sample is not representative, it will give insights into the analysis discoveries and will give enough data about the sample itself. The participants were selected based on people that I already follow on my personal Snapchat and Instagram accounts and selected by the frequency that they posted. As explained above, I am an avid user of these platforms personally and that helped me select users that I previously noticed as posting frequently too.

For the course of three weeks (06/03-26/03), I followed this group of users, watched and screenshotted their “Stories”. In order to keep an age group limited to young educated users, as the population proposes, the participant users in this research are between 20 to 27 years old. They are from nine different countries. Since my objective was to see young adults using
the “Stories” feature, there was no need to focus on gender, nationality or any other aspect. With the amount of data collected, the next step was to analyze the content and understand the elements and signs presented in the images and videos shared.

5.3.2. Data Analysis

After the data collection, the result was 800 screenshots (Figure 3) with videos and images ready to be analyzed. Regardless of the large amount of data, I still decided to analyze all the 800 screenshots by virtue of not having a large number of observed participants in first place. The next step was to categorize the data in order to answer RQ1 and RQ2; understanding the type of “Stories” that were shared. The users, in both platforms, have the option to use text, emoji, location, time and temperature; these elements not only complement what the users are talking about but also add meaning to the content. Categorizing the use of these elements is important in understanding the signs and when the users believe is important to show other viewers these details of the moment they are sharing; it also helps to understand the type of stories that are present in the platform.

![Figure 3: The collected data in the course of three weeks (06/03-26/03).](image)

After categorizing, another type of group must be formed especially to answer RQ1: define the exact type of stories the individuals shared. In this case, it was necessary to understand what the users were talking about. Were they sharing a specific moment of the day and
describing it? Were they telling a story that happened before? Were they just showing what they were doing at the moment? All of those questions could only be answered by categorizing the stories in groups. After creating the categories to answer both RQ1 and RQ2, I conducted the interviews with five users. The interviewees were selected based on the higher frequency of posts compared to the other observed participants, as well as the presentation of a specific behavior that in my perspective would give interesting inputs in the research analysis. The specific behavior was defined as a different approach in stories, like sharing recipes, or activeness in both Snapchat and Instagram and even the participant with the largest number of screenshots (Table 1). The interviews were analyzed based only on user perspective, since I did not have a lot of interviewees, I decided to use almost all of their statement based on the questions categories, which I kept strict to my research and my questions, focusing on categorizing them later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Specific Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Medicine Student</td>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>Sharing recipes in “Stories”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Librarianship Student</td>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>Always posting photos with the “photography/travel” theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dani</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Veterinary Student</td>
<td>Instagram and Snapchat</td>
<td>The observed user with more posts shared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonilla</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Marketing Student</td>
<td>Instagram and Snapchat</td>
<td>The most active user of both Instagram and Snapchat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4. Interviews

For additional data collection, the use of interviews will be used in this research as a complement to Qualitative Methods. Therefore, for this research it was necessary to interview some users with the purpose of understanding their perception of the platform and digital storytelling. My purpose with the interviews was to get information directly from the users after I analyzed their posted content, asking why they posted that, how many times they think they post in a week, if they communicate with others through the stories or follow other people that post with frequency in the feature, etc. This way I could collect enough data to complement my findings through qualitative content analysis, since “the purpose of the interview is then less to find the silver bullet, but to collect insights and pieces of information that you can match to other pieces of information, which together make up a convincing story” (Hancké, 2009, p. 104).

The type of interviews that were carried out were semi-structured in-depth interviews. The choice for semi-structured or semi-standardized interviews (Berg, 2001) comes from the desire I had in letting the interviewees move more freely with their answers. Nonetheless, I had a guideline to follow and focus on the information I needed. I also added different questions to get more important and relevant information from the interviewed users I selected. The choice for in-depth interviews can be explained by the need of a user perspective in their choices for elements, feature and signs to tell their stories, as well as to see if they are aware of their storytelling process. Therefore, I wanted the interviewees to give as much information as they could, which is also connected to the choice of doing individual interviews through skype with the selected users. In addition, having in-depth interviews combined with online research bring many benefits such as to:

“(1) bring in a detailed subjective understanding of the lived experience of online community participants (what is called a ‘phenomenological’ understanding), (2) deepen the understanding of the relationship between a person’s own unique
socio—cultural situation and their online culture or community activities or behaviours (3) gain a detailed, grounded, subjective sense of an online community member’s perspective and sense of meaning and (4) hear people’s recollections and interpretations of events” (Kozinets, 2010, p. 47).

In this list for benefits, number one is precisely my main purpose in this thesis, to have a phenomenological understanding in detail of what kind of content users are sharing on Instagram and Snapchat Stories and how they tell their stories in the platform. Number three and four are very important too, since while analyzing the collected data I search for meanings and use them as information for the interviews; this way I can get the users’ thoughts on their meanings and choices for content.

5.5. Validity

As it was explained briefly before, this research’s sample is not representative. This way, it is safe to confirm that this research does not generalize the usage of “Stories” for its findings, due to the fact that the research is much more narrow in comparing to the scope of the “Stories” feature usage. Moreover, this research does not generalize the usage of “Stories” by young educated users that have personal accounts in Snapchat and Instagram either, since the size of the sample (25) is too small for any generalization. What this research does, is give a glimpse of what the young educated participant users are posting in the feature of “Stories” and the elements and signs they use to construct a story that can be understandable for them and the viewer. When it comes to the number of participants, in defense to that, it is important to understand the amount of content posted by one single user that posts in a daily basis. With only 25 people participating in the sample, a data of 800 artefacts was collected in only three weeks. The amount of time for the course of this research was not enough to prolong the time or to make the sample bigger.

Reliability

Since this is one of the first studies in the feature of “Stories”, it is necessary to explain the data collection and analysis process in case another research wants to replicate the study.
After the period of three weeks screen shooting the users activity in the feature of “Stories” in both Instagram and Snapchat, the data was finalized with 800 artefacts, as it was said previously. To find the themes in the content, the artefacts were separated according to the visual elements showing in the story and the theme it represented (i.e. a cake as the theme food, a dog as the theme animal). After that, the artefacts were put together again to be analyzed according to the elements used by the users to tell their story; most of the elements were previously separated as the additional elements offered by the feature (i.e. text, doodles, instant information). With this organization, the patterns were uncovered and could even be displayed in quantitative form, in case a research wants to show accurate numbers. Surprisingly, none of the artefacts were positioned as “no theme”; all the 800 artefacts were somehow related to one of the uncovered themes. However, I believe that in a bigger sample, other themes might appear, especially if the age group of the population and the type of account is different.

5.6. Ethics and Limitations

By following Berg’s idea of “researchers must define for themselves what is ethical in research” (2001, p. 54), I made sure that I had permission from every user to not only see their posts but to screenshot and analyze the collected material. My ethical boundaries were to observe everything in the most transparent way for the analyzed users. For transparency, I started by explaining to them what I was doing, the reason why and also why I needed their help. After getting their permission to use their content, I started to collect the data. In addition, I also asked a special permission to the images used in this paper as a form of visualization of the results, this means that the participants users in my research gave me permission to use their content.

When it comes to limitations, in this research most of them revolved around the platforms itself. Since the platforms deal with disappearing data, it was necessary to go in the platform every day and never let the period of 24 hours pass, since everything would be deleted. Another limitation that had to be considered was to have enough users to be analyzed since it was necessary to have produced content being posted every day. In other words, it was important to consider a good number of observed users in case some of them decided not to post anything during a whole week. Finding users that would post at least once every day for
the period of three weeks was another limitation, for that reason, the idea of having more observed users was also applied.
6. ANALYSIS

This section presents the interlock between the previously discussed theoretical framework and the empirical data collected. I start answering RQ1 by presenting what the participants posted during the observation time and categorizing this content. Following that, I answer RQ2 by explaining that digital storytelling happens in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” through the main aspects of a digital story (previously defined by studies of the field). My main findings on the means how participants tell their story through the feature involve the time sequence presented by the feature and the usage of additional visual elements.

6.1. Defining Snapchat and Instagram Stories

As explained before, the elements of a story can vary according to different fields. However, the most standard definition of these elements is according to structure, where the story is formed by the chain of events formed by actions and happenings, together with existents, defined as the characters and setting of the narrative (Chatman, 1980). After observing the participant users of Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” for three consecutive weeks and recognizing patterns in their posted images and videos, it was possible to observe that the main categories I was selecting were, somehow, related to the elements of a story proposed above. For that reason, I will present now, according to the elements of a story, the main “Story” patterns I could observe from my collected data.

The first group of categories is related to events, defined as “the causes of the changes of state that happen in the time span framed by the narrative” (Ryan & Thon, 2014, p. 36). One of these events are actions, which are “a change of state brought about by an agent” (Chatman, 1980, p. 44) or just the process of doing something. In this group, the categories I observed are the action of demonstrating emotions, the action of eating where users shared images and videos of their food and the action of interacting, where users would in a more direct way ask a question or opinion to the audience.
6.1.1. Demonstrating emotions

Emotions and personal subjects are a fixed feature in digital storytelling already, for that reason the participants used the expression of emotions frequently in their Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”.

“Perhaps the most popular type of digital story is one in which the author tells of personal experiences. These stories can revolve around significant events in life and can be emotionally charged and personally meaningful to both the author and the viewer” (Robin, 2008, p. 224).

The action of demonstrating emotion happened in various forms. It was possible to see participants vocally addressing a subject, expressing a feeling, as well as see them writing. The classic Internet laugh “haha” was often used to induce humor through a post. Using an emoji to express themselves was also very common since these images can replace a word, object or even feeling (Danesi, 2016). The most frequent emotions would be to love or really like something, the users would express that by drawing hearts, using heart emoji and even writing texts saying the word “love”.

Figure 4: Examples of emotion expression in different ways (using text, emoji, stickers, hearts and face expressions)
6.1.2. Eating (Food)

Another Internet favorite is showing food on Instagram, which has been a trend on Instagram from the beginning. Therefore, it was very common to see the participants sharing meals, drinks and even recipes with their audience in their Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. Since the “Stories” are about what the users are doing at that moment the post is shared and for this take place on a daily basis, food is a big part of people’s routine and thus one of the reasons to share them with friends in the feature.

![Image of various food items]

*Figure 5: food is also very common in Snapchat and Instagram "Stories".*

6.1.3. Interacting

Most of the subjects above were expected to observe since they are constant behavior on many other digital platforms and social media. Interactions was a very interesting category/event coming from Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” because generally, the thought line is that it’s only users producing a story for other users to view. However, there is a communication line between the two of them, since the feature allows messages to be sent from one user to another and to comment on what they just watched. For that reason, it
was possible to see producers posting in their stories simple photos saying “Good morning” or “Good night” for example. As well as recommendations for movies, brands, books, and music. It was possible to see the producers asking a general question about products or asking opinions for example.

Figure 6: Interactions are classified as the posts directing a question, opinion or answer.

Another type of events is defined as happenings that “entails a predication of which the character or other focused existence is narrative object” (Chatman, 1980, p. 45). I decided to categorize in this group the type of “Stories” that follow the literal definition of happening, which is when users were updating their audience, literally declaring what they were doing or what they just did. At first, this categorization might seem confusing, since in a larger perspective all of the “Stories” posts are updates, but for this category is necessary to keep in mind how direct the users are with this updates since these posts are generally made of one picture proclaiming the news.

6.1.4. Updates

Even though posting in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” is already a way to update people on what is happening right now, many images from the collected data showed content being
shared with the purpose to update or simply show with one image or video what was being done right then. These posts can be, for example, coming from the gym, getting a new haircut or even showing outfits or books. Even though they are connected to the environment most of the time, this category fits images and videos that have apparently no reason besides making it obvious for the viewer what this just happened.

The next group is settled in existents, which are “the characters of the story and the objects that have special significance for the plot” (Ryan & Thon, 2014, p. 34). Inside existents, we find characters that for Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” will be defined as the ones in focus. In this case it can be both the narrator showing a friend or person, as well as a dog doing a trick or animals being portrayed in pictures. The main idea is to see the elements in focus, which in this case are people, random people in the streets, friends and family. Selfies are the most common way on the Internet where the users take a picture of themselves and animals, such as pets or insects.
6.1.5. People

The participant users shared many “Stories” where they were showing whom they are with at the moment, similar to the introduction of new characters in a narrative. Showing other people besides the producer of the stories was very common, such as family members like little brothers, friends at a party and random people in the streets. Most of the posts would be an affection demonstration like hugging; some of them would be singing together in a party or just showing what the other person was doing. When showing a very close friend, the users would also tag their friend’s Instagram account, which means those watching can click and go directly to the tagged user’s profile.

Figure 8: participant users showing people around them as well as tagging close friends occasionally.

6.1.6. Self-portraits

Even though showing other people is common, part of the content was also self-portraits, also known as selfies. Selfies are “a popular form of expressing the self as an image and a narrative performance in the creation of branded digital identity” (Eagar & Dann, 2016, p.1836). In the context of Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”, these images have the simple
purpose of showing how the producers of the stories are looking right now. In this case, I only considered selfies, images where the owners of the accounts took a picture of themselves alone. Photos of a group were placed in the category of people and videos made with the frontal camera were not classified as selfies.

Figure 9: Examples of selfies, sometimes they represent just a face picture but sometimes can mean something else, such as emotion.

6.1.7. Animals

In general, animals are very popular on the Internet, for that reason they are also present in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. Many of the participants shared their pets on a daily basis in many different forms of content, such as videos showing them playing, running or doing something fun and still images of them sleeping, for example. Showing other animals was very common too, not only other people’s pets but wild animals and insects for example.
Still part of existents, the next category was placed as setting, defined as “a space within which the existents are located” (Ryan & Thon, 2014, p. 35), which is the environment. As a main part of the story, showing where the events are happening and where the characters are placed is crucial for the understanding of the narrative and the participant users made a lot of use of this category.

### 6.1.8. Environment

The environment is another frequent subject approached in the content shared by the participants. Showing where you are and what you are looking at right now helps the viewers situate themselves into the producer’s reality. Many posts were about nature, sunsets, sunrises, landscapes, buildings, offices, etc., simply showing the scenario where the producer is right now. Besides that reason, nature and landscape are already a very popular subject in photography and videos. Inside this category is also the subject of weather. Many users would use their environment to express their feelings with their current weather, for example.
In general, these are the types of stories frequently produced among the participants in this research that. Through this content, they would share their daily life with their followers and use their creativity to express themselves in the feature of “Stories”. Knowing what the participants post on a daily basis and the types of shared stories, makes it easier to understand how digital storytelling happens in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. In other words, it facilitates the understanding of how the participants tell their story through the feature.

6.2. Means through which users tell their story in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”

Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” users not only have access to create photos and videos but also to add different additional elements into their content. Besides producing the image, which is already a tool to tell their story, the users can add extra elements. Both on Snapchat and on Instagram the users have this option and are very popular, often used in a certain frequency. Out of the 800 collected screenshots during three weeks, 608 of them presented at least one of these elements, resulting in 76% of the data.
As it will be shown in this section, the common means of video and image plus these additional elements, like written captions, emoji, doodles, instant information (location, time and temperature) and filters (face filters only on Snapchat), are used as narrative complements; they add more sense to the message the users want to give. To base that statement, I will connect the collected data, both the screenshots and the users’ perspective from the interviews, with digital storytelling and semiotic theories. All of the elements were also analyzed and through content analysis, were checked for frequency and combinations. Starting from the point that narrative is a semiotic phenomenon with a meaning of its own, the discourse is the union of elements used to express the narrative, such as text, words, pictures, gestures, etc. (Tomaščíková, 2009). In the following text, I will present a set of these elements of discourse that I could observe from the participant users’ posts and consider them semiotic elements.

“Thus, family photographs and snapshots, maps and hand-drawn sketches, typography and layout, and even color, graphic frames and margins are semiotic resources as much as written language and speech are, since all of these modes can be drawn into processes of meaning making and communication” (Ryan & Thon, 2014, p. 152).

The semiotic resources I could observe from the selected participants were both traditional and some of them were exceptional from the analyzed feature of “Stories”. The first three tools are the creation of images, videos and the usage of text, which are classic narrative expressions in online platforms. However, the behavior coming from the participants were slightly differentiated, as expected since different platforms offer different uses of images and videos. In addition, tools offered by the feature such as emoji, doodles, instant information, and filters, were also used by the users to make meaning of their narrative and described later on in this section.
6.2.1. Images/Photos

Using images in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” is very common, as it was observed that most of the participants used images to express some kind of message at some point during the observation time. The images could be about details, friends, places, things, anything that would somehow make sense for the ones watching the “Stories”. Previously, in the theoretical framework section, it was explained that in terms of semiotics, the image has a very particular aspect:

“Certainly, the image is not the reality but at least it is its perfect analogon and it is exactly this analogical perfection which, to common sense, defines the photograph. Thus can be seen the special status of the photographic image: it is a message without a code; from which proposition an important corollary must immediately be drawn: the photographic message is a continuous message” (Barthes, 1977, p. 17).

Using images is the ultimate way to portray reality and since the feature of “Stories” with its set of 24 hour-lasting content is all about instantaneity and showing what you are doing at the precise moment, using images is a natural way.

An interesting behavior is that users can get photos from the Internet or screenshot their own phone to share what they are looking at right now. This way they share private conversations, web pages, and music; which can also be connected to recommendations or showing what they are doing but in a more personal connotation, sharing from their own phone, making it more personal than the other categories.
6.2.2. Text

The use of text is one of the most popular among the visual elements the users can add to their photos and videos. Not surprisingly, since the text was the first sign studied in semiotics through the lens of linguistics, analyzing media texts and trying to understand the meaning of words (Tomaščíková, 2009) and still today vastly used in communication in the construction of meaning. By clicking on the screen after producing content, the users can type and add a caption that describes the content and assists the users’ expression. In the collected data was possible to see a pattern of the usage of images with caption; and one of the features of online narrative is “to mix text with other materials (sound, video, still image) and more generally to make a visual presentation out of narrative, over and above its textual content” (Couldry, 2008, p. 382).
In other words, even with a photo or video produced, the users feel the need to mix text to add more sense to the narrative. Most of the texts were very short, indeed used to explain or highlight something mentioned in the photo or video, as it is possible to see in the examples.

Will: *I rarely use a long caption in my “Stories”, it’s generally single words, like the one saying “Refúgio” (Figure 14). But generally, I use caption when I want to give a message to someone.*
6.2.3. Video

Videos are moving images, with the same purposes presented previously by images, videos also portray an imitation of reality and do not have a code, besides all of the codes inside the representation of objects showing in the screen (Barthes, 1977). For this reason, another common type of story was to orally tell a story, fact or happening through a video. These videos are generally only the producer filming their own face and telling a story, but it is also possible to see them going through the environment and telling a story correlated to the location that they are. For this type of stories, the users generally make more than one video and the awareness of a narrative is crucial.

6.2.4. Emoji

Emoji are an Internet phenomenon by itself. Its popularity in the online space resulted in many studies made in the use of emoji for linguistics, media, semiotic studies and more. Not surprisingly, emoji are also an option of additional visual elements for Instagram and Snapchat “Stories” and they were a very popular tool to make sense of narrative. Their popularity is not by chance either, emoji became a new Internet language and since the Internet – almost – do not have frontiers, it became a universal writing code (Danesi, 2016). Emoji are signs used to make sense in communication and“have both pictographic (directly representational of objects) and logographic (word-replacement) functions” (Danesi, 2016,
For a complete definition of what emoji are and represent in online platforms, such as Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”:

“They are stylized, almost comic-book-like, pictures that can (and do) replace words and phrases. Their main function seems to be that of providing nuances in meaning in the tone of the message. So, they are not completely substitutive of traditional written forms; rather, they reinforce, expand, and annotate the meaning of a written communication, usually by enhancing the friendliness of the tone, or else by adding humorous tinges to it” (Danesi, 2016, p. 15).

I was also curious to know why the observed participants in my research were using emoji. Therefore, when having the interviews one of my questions was about using it, more precisely when the participants thought it was necessary to add an emoji to the picture or video. One of the answers I got was:

**Ivanna:** *When the picture is not really that impressed by itself, if it's me lying in bed, having a cup of coffee or something that everybody does it every day, then you add something to make it more interesting or makes it say something more than just a random coffee picture. You add something like stickers so it makes it more fun and interesting.*

They are used in many different types of forms too, either very small in the corner of a photo or being repeated many times (to reinforce the idea or emotion in the narrative) or even in a mixture of emoji, almost constructing a phrase.
During the interviews, while still discussing the use of emoji, it was possible to see that for the interviewees this “universal coding” is so natural already, that the users are aware of these functions presented the characters. Another interesting point presented in one of the interviews is using emoji that are somehow related to the content being shared, so using flowers when showing nature or using a sunset emoji when showing a sunset in the “Stories”. As it is possible to see from the statements given from two of the interviewees, they intentionally use emoji to make more sense of what they are saying, if not to directly communicate their message:

**Dani:** I use emoji every day in every post. Just because it’s easier, they can replace a word or a phrase.

**Leonilla:** Stickers and emoji add an emotion, so I might be sarcastic but not everyone might understand so it adds emotion so people can know it’s not serious for example.

**Will:** I normally use the “annoying face” when I’m complaining about something and hearts for something that I love. I don’t use it very much, besides when there is
an emoji that has a connection with the photo I’m posting, then I used, like a palm tree when I’m at the beach. So if I remember that there is an emoji that can be connected with the photo, I use it.

As it was showed in the section of “Type of Stories” most of the digital stories address an emotion, either by images, text, facial expressions or the usage of emoji. In addition, several authors (Robin, 2008, Couldry, 2008, Lambert, 2013) cited the emotional aspect as a frequent one in digital storytelling. As said by Danesi, “we now perceive them (emoji) to be laden with emotional and discourse functions of all kinds, including the conveyance of intent, mood, and state of mind. They are, therefore, revelatory signs of how we think and intend to act” (2016, p. 18). Therefore, using these characters, emoji, and stickers, to make an emotion more obvious, to give more detail or even to “make it pretty” is essential to the production process of digital stories, but especially and more specifically to Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”.

6.2.5. Doodles

As it was explained previously, there are numerous types of visual representation making meaning of communication and among them are drawings (Ryan and Thon, 2014). They are generally called doodles on the Internet. Introduced firstly by the feature of “Stories”, doodles give freedom for users to write in cursive penmanship, to draw small icons and help make sense of their story.

Present on both platforms, the users have an option to write with their fingers on the screen, on top of their photos and videos (Figure 16). The most frequent doodles are hearts, stars, arrows or balloons indicating/highlighting something and single words that “represent” the theme or purpose of the content.
These doodles represent in general a more personal touch to the image or video, as the users draw themselves instead of using an emoji, for example, giving a meaning of effort.

Ivanna: They give the post more artisanal way of look. Because you’re leaving your handwriting in the post, so it has more of a personal touch. And the person that is watching your post can connect with you more.

6.2.6. Instant information

From the feature of “Stories”, besides the doodles that were also a trend set by the feature, Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” also introduced instant information, where the user can add location, time and temperature to the content and they were also a pattern of visual element used by the participants in the observation. These signs are as obvious as they can be, as text signs explaining the place, the time and the weather where the user is, as well as once again, reinforcing the meaning of instantaneity offered by the feature.
Showing where you are on social media is not new, it was introduced first by big platforms like Facebook, so it would not be excluded from popular platforms like Instagram and Snapchat. However, the visual element of **location** happens on a different way in these platforms. On Snapchat, the pioneer in “Stories”, the location is called “geotag” which are filters with icons of the place the user is, produced by someone that sends the art to the Snapchat team and they decide if the tag is approved for usage. These geotags can have the city’s main touristic places or just the name of the city, for example. Important to highlight that these geotags do not exist for every single place since someone has to submit the design to be approved. In Figure 17, from the collected data, it is possible to see one of these geotags.

![Image of geotags on Snapchat](image)

*Figure 17: examples of location and on the last picture it is possible to see a geotag on Snapchat.*

On Instagram, it happens in a different way. The user has the option of choosing from a list of places nearby the area that the picture or video was taken. Then they can add a sticker too, being able to make it bigger, smaller and to move around in the content. Generally, the location is displayed by itself when used by the participants and the most common combination is with a caption that would generally describe the place or add information about where the users are. For the interviewees, when asked about using location,
it was obvious to see that it is mainly to show where they are; some might make a difference from only showing when they are in an interesting place, different from their daily basis, or a place they visit frequently.

**Leonilla:** Well, if I want to show people where I am, well I don’t use the Umea filter anymore because most people already know that I’m here. But if I travel somewhere that it’s nice to show if it’s a different location.

**Dani:** I generally use when I’m not at home. But I guess I put my location very frequently, even if I’m in the University or a place that I don’t go very often.

**Will:** If I want people to know where I am, I use location. If it is a place, like a beach, but there are people that don’t know where that beach is, I put the location. But I also put the location so my close friends that watch my Stories can know where I am like I’m close to you type of thing

For the location, it was interesting to see two types of posts. The first is putting the location without any explanation or oral narrative, so to literally show where the user is. The second type of post is when the location is part of the narrative, it gives a sense of what the user is trying to communicate. For example, as we can see in figure 18, going to the gym, making a video working out, then adding the gym location and writing “I’m really focused today” or going to university, tagging the location and adding a caption that says “I love my University” with emoji symbolizing love and the specific programme that person in enrolled in University.
Displaying the **time** of the picture is also an option for instant information offered by the platforms and another resource to make more sense of the narrative, to express the message being portrayed in the content. Two types of usage were observed; the first one, and more common, is using time just as an element in an image without any apparent reason, like a simple design or simply to show the time they are posting that photo or video. The second type of post and the second behavior is related to the addressing the “time” subject in the narrative, like complaining about how early or late it is, or for how long they are working on something and even about what time they are doing something.
Sofia: I only use the time when I have to do something early, like a protest for not being sleeping.

Another instant information option offered by the feature of “Stories” is temperature. Either the whole narrative surrounds the subject of temperature, how hot or cold it is or it is just a visual element to make the content “prettier”. However, this is the least used visual element, therefore it is concluded that for the specific temperature visual element its meaning is more attached to the narrative itself. In other words, users feel like this element can only be used when the temperature or weather is being addressed in the narrative.

Will: I think temperature I use it when traveling somewhere with really crazy temperatures that I’m not used to, like really cold or really warm.
6.2.7. Filters

Using filters and colors in social media photos and videos is a common practice, especially introduced by Instagram. Filters are colored setups offered by the platform, in this case, offered in both Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. Filters give character to the feature and also the platform, where users can already identify from which social media that photo was shared by the filter used in the content. Filters, in semiotics, can be classified as qualisigns, which are “qualities in limitless diversity which function as signs” (Jappy, 2013, p.31). By applying a black and white filter, the users addressed more serious subjects for example, and bright colorful ones for happier moments; in other words, these filters have a meaning, just like any other of the tools analyzed previously.
Figure 21: the first three photos have the same filter applied, the most popular one and "unique" to Instagram "Stories". The last two screenshots show the use of the black and white filter.

For Snapchat, there is an extra option not offered by Instagram and also one of the reasons why the platform got so popular among users. The face filters can be accessed when the users open the camera and hold their fingers in the screen; supported by a technology that recognizes faces the app apply those filters to the users. Generally used by itself, without the addition of other tools besides a photo, video or text, the face filters are very popular among the users and comes with the simple meaning of humor.

Figure 22: the popular Snapchat face filters.

Most of the observed users did not post very often on Snapchat during the observed time; the access to the platform was getting less frequent and more frequent on Instagram, for what could be observed. However, the ones that posted using the face filters on Snapchat during the observed time, used it mostly as a funny add to photo or video, either for funny subjects or even to more “talking” Snaps, that can be considered boring, to add something interesting to the narrative.
Sofia: Even though I don’t use Snapchat anymore, I open the app when I have nothing to do just to play with the funny face filters they have.

Leonilla: Sometimes the face filters on Snapchat add the things I say or write like using a sad face when I’m sad and an angry filter when I’m angry or even a funny filter when something is fun. Some of them make you look more pretty so if I feel ugly I might use one of them too.

6.3. Digital storytelling on Snapchat and Instagram Stories

For this section, I will present how the participants tell their stories in this feature. More precisely, how digital storytelling happens in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. In order to do that, I will use descriptions about digital stories from studies in the field of digital storytelling and as I said, connect it to the user behavior observed in the previous section.

During the observation time, I could see a few features defined before by studies that were present in the Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. Online narratives are defined in different ways with different features by different authors; however, the ones connected more with the observed “Stories” are the ones that take characteristics of the Internet, the medium where the “Stories” are being shared, as characteristics for the narratives. The Internet has a big impact on how the communication will be established in platforms and soon rules start to appear, like “how to”, explaining what is interesting to do and what is not. This means that for Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” there are common behaviors, the “cool” things to do online and what characterizes a good story in the platform.

One of the most important aspects used in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” is to show emotions. It was common to see users sharing personal emotional moments, being close to friends, family, and pets for example, and repeatedly using the “heart” emoji to express love for something, as it will be explained later in this analysis. This personal touch is a common part of the “Stories”, to give the viewers a real experience of the producer’s story. Being personal is already part of the Internet, since “the Web allows users to express themselves, to develop relationships with each other, to be creative, and to customize content in various ways” (Miller, 2004, p. 246), being present, therefore, in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. This personal aspect is also connected to the community building aspect of the Internet that brings people together since “it allows individuals to communicate with each other and share
their thoughts, concerns, and opinions” (Miller, 2004, p.246); which also creates a narrative something that was brought up in one of the conducted interviews:

**Sofia:** But also, what creates a narrative is not only me, posting my pictures, but also people interacting with me, sending a message related to what I posted.

The need to participate is also part of the “Stories” and visible in the example above, since “users want to interact with content; they look for ways of becoming involved with it” (Miller, 2004, p. 246). Another aspect, still connected with emotions, is humor. Another common behavior in online platform, generally responsible for viral videos for example, is humor. Since “the Internet has something of the persona of a cheeky adolescent. Users enjoy irreverent humor, opinions that challenge conventional thinking, and content that they are unlikely to find in mainstream media like television and newspapers” (Miller, 2004, p. 246), humoristic content and unexpected subjects are very popular in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. As well as the “mix text with other materials to make a visual presentation out of narrative, over and above its textual content” (Couldry, 2008, p. 382; Miller, 2004); users generally combine videos and images and sometimes gifs (only on Instagram).

The use of these elements not only form a narrative when displayed all together in one single feature, but they make it real for the users at the same time. Telling an online story requires certain elements to make sense for the producers and the viewers of stories, all of these elements together help Snapchat and Instagram “Storytellers” to present their stories in the right way for the platform and in a way that makes sense for their viewers.

### 6.4. The “Stories” sequence

Another important finding to understand how digital storytelling happens in Instagram and Snapchat “Stories” has to do with how the app works and displays the “Stories”. However, I should say that in the interviews, I thought that in order to know how the participants tell their story in the “Stories” feature, I needed to ask if the users thought about narrative elements to tell a story when they were using the platforms. The answers I got are the following:

**Ivanna:** I like when the stories follow-up. Even I myself try to do that, but it’s hard because you have to think about the whole context. For example today I had this big
presentation, so I tried to start yesterday so I posted one picture getting ready, 24 hours left and then ‘oh my god I’m studying’ and then the next day I posted “it’s show time” with the whole group. So I think it’s really cool and people can follow up, so you get hooked and you want to see what will happen after

**Will:** I don’t think in a story, so I don’t really follow the name of the feature. I don’t think I’m telling a story, but sometimes I delete some things thinking that there is not connection with my “right now”. I delete thinking that some people will access and see something that I’m no longer doing. I don’t have the patience to watch long “Stories” for example, so in mine, I try to exclude so when people access they can see the most recent post, something I’m actually doing right now.

**Leonilla:** No, I don’t think about it. I might record some things a couple of times. If it’s a longer Snapchat, like 5 to 10, so it has to be interesting but if it’s only one then for me is very random.

**Dani:** I don’t think I think about a story when I’m posting. I just add it there. However, sometimes it’s like a story, you want to tell something that happened and the time is short and so you have to do a lot of videos. Sometimes one video is not good enough or not making sense, so I delete and do another one

**Sofia:** Sometimes it looks like I do. Sometimes I try to connect my posts into a narrative. For me is more about to offer something for the other that are watching.

It was interesting to see that consciously or not, the users were somehow considering a narrative, they were conscious about telling a story. Even if some of them answered no at first, they admitted the awareness of a “follow up”, a sense that has to exist between their “Story” and how the viewers are going to perceive it. This shows that the feature of “Stories” both in Snapchat and Instagram, by using a very common type of sequence – the one people have in their daily basis in this case – and this helps for the construction of a narrative, making the users tell a story. Previously, the concept of image intertextuality was highlighted and now, one of the main findings is that the sequencing of images has a special meaning, since “sequenced images often imply temporal relationships. The simplest sequence involves two images placed together to invoke a storyline around linear change, progress, fulfillment, or causation” (Werner, 2004, p. 5).
The feature of “Stories”, in both Snapchat and Instagram, works in chronological sequence. In other words, when any user clicks to view the content in any “Stories” it will show from the earliest post to the latest. One of the observations I could make was that the feature’s temporality already helps the users to not only create a narrative but also to interpret the Snaps as narratives. This is because the sequence “is a theoretical construction, which we can make on the basis of the laws of everyday logic which govern common reality” (Bal, 2009, p. 79). By watching the “Stories” in a sequence where the first snaps of the day show before until it reaches the most recent one, creates a common daily narrative – from the beginning of the day until the end. However, generally, time in a narrative is very complicated to define, working in a different way for the one that tells and the one that hears. In a narrative, time is happening in one way in the story and the reader is the one actually attached to present time:

“From the point of view of narrative, what we call time does not exist, or at least it only exists functionally, as an element of a semiotic system: time does not belong to discourse proper, but to the referent” (Barthes, 1977, p.252).

With Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” is easy to see that being able to make the reader be synced in time with the narrative in the “Stories” is essential. This type of narrative is not only part of our daily life, but for a long time now is how most movies, comics and most of the visual narratives being created is represented like that. As explained by Barthes, “part of contemporary literature is no longer descriptive but transitive, striving to achieve so pure a present in speech that the whole of discourse becomes identified with the act that delivers it, the whole logos being reduced-or extended-to a lexis” (1975, p. 263-264).
7. DISCUSSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

My thesis revolved around the newest and most popular trend in social media right now, the feature of “Stories”. For the course of three weeks (06/03-26/03), I observed 25 daily active common users of Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” and screenshot all of their posts, so then I could analyze according to my theoretical base. Additionally, I conducted semi-structured interviews with five of those participants in order to get their perspective in the feature and ask if they are aware of the narrative construction. To understand the concept of digital storytelling, I used Lundby (2008) and Couldry’s (2008) definition, the one that was broad enough to englobe the variety of stories that can be find in Snapchat and Instagram, after that, to have a suitable theory sustaining the concept, I used Nguyen’s work in connecting the concept of digital storytelling with Narrative Theories. In addition, I explained with more detail what a digital story is considered as well as semiotic theories for my data collection and Image Intertextuality to understand the complexities of sequenced images. The aim of this research was to understand the process of digital storytelling through the lens of narrative theories in the feature of “Stories” in both Snapchat and Instagram.

With my research, I believe I was able to fulfill my aim and answer (RQ1) which themes young educated users approach when using Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” and (RQ2) which are the narrative elements, features and sings they use to tell their story, as well as if they are aware of the digital storytelling process.

The collected and analyzed data led me to conclude, in relation to RQ1, that the observed participants approached theme patterns following the structures of narrative in the feature of “Stories” in both Snapchat and Instagram. Mainly according to Chatman (1980) and Ryan & Thon (2014), but following the post-structuralist definitions, the narrative elements according to Narrative Theory are events and existents. The patterns I observed were divided according to these elements, where events are formed by actions and happenings, and existents are formed by characters and finding. After observing my data and categorizing the patterns based on nuances and not frequencies, following qualitative content analysis (Ball & Smith, 1992), I uncovered that they fit in the narrative elements presented above. In this case, eight categories were defined, in actions, I placed demonstrating emotions, eating and interacting. In happenings, the only category was the updates. When it comes to characters, I could
categorize people, selfies, and animals; while for setting, I defined environment. For a better display, it is possible to see below the categories in the Table 2.

Table 2: The theme categories organized according to narrative elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>HAPPENINGS</th>
<th>CHARACTERS</th>
<th>SETTING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td>People</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating</td>
<td>Updates</td>
<td>Self-portraits</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Animals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These categories are based on the content the users shared, where I could observe what they were doing and what they were showing. While categorizing the patterns, it was interesting to observe that, in the end, users were indeed aware of the narrative elements such as the need to have an action or a happening, characters or settings. The participant users in this research had all of their posts selected in at least one of the categories, leading me to reflect that they are aware of the importance of these elements to make sense for themselves and the audience. The stories produced in “Stories” have all the elements of a narrative and users are posting with this understanding in the back of their minds. In my perspective, this only reinforces the Narrative Paradigm used in my research to understand how digital storytelling happens in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”:

“In theme, if not in every detail, narrative, then, is meaningful for persons in particular and in general, across communities as well as cultures, across time and place. Narrative enable us to understand the actions of others “because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives” (MacInteyre, 1981, p.197)” (Fisher, 1984 p. 8).

In the era of social media, the natural storyteller inside people arise and make use of all elements of meaning to express a message and tell a story. In a feature like “Stories”, users make use of classic elements of a story to make sense of their daily lives through photos and videos that will last for only 24 hours. In my opinion, the instantaneity of digital stories conceived by the Internet also makes the users of “Stories” more connected to their storyteller nature to seek for meanings of a story that is happening right now. For that reason, most of the posts were related to daily subjects, especially showing the location where the
users are, people they are hanging out with, the pets they have and what they are eating, for example.

The collected and analyzed data also led me to conclude, in relation to RQ2, that Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” users tell their stories through seven means offered by the feature, which are (1) images, (2) text, (3) video, (4) emoji, (5) doodles, (6) instant information and (7) filters. All of these means are semiotic resources, used by the Snapchat and Instagram storytellers to reinforce their stories since they are signifiers for communication that have meanings used in the past and now uncovered by the users based on their needs (Ryan & Thon, 2014). One interesting finding to reflect on is that, even though considered classic digital storytelling tools, images, texts, videos and the other resources were used by the participants with the media mix, characteristic of digital storytelling (Miller, 2004), for making sense of the narrative. The signs embedded in the content complemented each other with the purpose to construct meaning in the story for both the producer and the viewer. Starting off with the fact that images and videos (as moving images) are considered messages without codes for imitating reality but filled with representations of signs with a lot of meaning for people, until using extra elements, which are new and particular to the feature, that also have meanings, the user’s message was sent. In my opinion, emoji and filters are vastly used on the Internet already, which reinforces their meaning (Ryan & Thon, 2014) as narrative elements for Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” making them still important for the narrative in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”.

However and in my perspective, among all the used semiotic resources, the instant information are the most interesting of the findings. The reason is that following the idea that digital storytelling replicate the Internet trends (Miller, 2004); users are adopting signs that are further connected to the instantaneity of the story. More than ever, especially with the popularity of a feature like “Stories”, users are finding extra importance in showing exactly what is happening in the moment of production in order to offer a more real-time experience for the viewers, who also want to experience the same. In my opinion that is why the instant information tools are particular to the “Stories” feature because besides being known as narrative elements by definition (time and setting), they also belong to the specific moment the users were present.
Still in relation to RQ2, but answering the sub-question about the users’ digital storytelling awareness, I could conclude that, consciously or not, the participant users were aware of the digital storytelling process and the narrative construction. During the interviews, one of the questions was precisely if the users knew or thought on a daily basis that they were telling a story, if they thought about constructing a narrative while posing in the feature. Most of them answered at first that they did not think about that, but after reflecting more on the subject, they gave answers (presented in the section 6.4) somehow related to the narrative construction process, like the connectivity between content and the elements giving more detail on what was being posted. Besides the interview, the data collection also presented the seven means of how the storytellers create the stories in the feature, which are image, text, video, emoji, doodles, instant information and filters.

I also observed the importance of the time sequence offered by the feature for the narrative. It was previously explained that the sequencing of images is already related to temporality (Werner, 2004), so the chronologic sequence helps further with creating a narrative by being the most connected to daily life as possible, therefore being the most common way to narrate something, from the beginning until the end. For users, starting with the first snap of the day, following until the last is the best way to understand someone’s day. I can conclude that from observing the participants, but mainly when asking the interviewees if they were aware they were telling a story in the platform because many of them said that they are not. In my point of view, the fact that the users might not think consciously about the narrative is that the feature already put them in order and present the story in order for the viewer that clicks in the “Story”. Since the feature already organizes in a time sequence that makes sense for whom is going to watch, the users have no need to think constantly about making sense.

In the end, I believe that I answered the questions of my research. Indeed, I saw what the participants of my research posted in the course of three weeks and could categorize the patterns in the stories they were sharing in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”. Additionally, I discovered how they tell their stories in such feature, through which means their narrative is created during the production and visualization of these stories. From that I had important discoveries, knowing that the feature does a lot for the narrative and that the users make use of many visual features to complement their stories.
Limitations

However, it is very important to highlight the main limitations I went through while trying to answer those questions. One of them is definitely the feature itself, since the photos and videos stay up for only 24 hours, as it was stressed before, the three weeks of observation were notably intense, having to collect the data from the specific users every day. Another limitation related to the feature is that since the platforms, especially the “Stories” are only accessible through phones, to screenshot every single post was necessary a lot of available memory to be able to support all the images without getting full. Other limitations were the amount of time and available participants for the observation time. Even though the observation time of three weeks was enough to collect 800 screenshots, I only observed 25 users that posted very frequently, more than three times a week; in this sense, the number of users is not big enough to conclude in a bigger scale about “Stories” users. I also only focused in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories” and since the feature is appearing more and more often on other platforms, the results from posts in those platforms might change. The last limitation is related to only Snapchat “Stories” since I had an extra hard time in getting data from that specific platform because the selected users from Snapchat slowly stopped posting and migrated to Instagram “Stories”, making most of the collected data from this last platform. However, from the remaining users in Snapchat, it was possible to see a very similar behavior that might only differ in the intensity of elements, such as more personal since there are fewer followers.

New digital storytelling platform

Digital storytelling is still a developing concept connected to the world where everything changes in the velocity of a click. Dealing with Internet behaviors and phenomena is the same as studying something in constant change, where the competition for the most popular social media in the moment changes too frequently and in different ways. Understanding the practice of telling stories in online platforms is understanding communication as a whole, is observing how people narrate their stories and how other interact through their stories. Since once there was no study in storytelling in online platforms before, there was not a study about digital storytelling in social media by “ordinary” users. Moreover and more importantly, there was no platform offering a feature option called “Story”. Snapchat and Instagram are
between the most populated social media in the moment, with numerous daily active members, posting constantly and every day.

My research contributes to the field by being the first one in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”, a feature very recent in the web. As well as the first one in digital storytelling in combination with narrative theories and semiotics in the feature of the stories. The findings help with the confirmation that even in the most ephemeral types of communication provided by the Internet, people are willing to share their stories and show what they are doing. They also show that for an online narrative to happen properly the usage of more visual, more connected to reality and more “trendy” elements are important to make more sense of the message, confirming how online platforms are becoming more and more media mixed. The findings also add what a digital story is and what subjects a digital story can approach.

The field of digital storytelling, in the moment, has a lot of focus in educational digital storytelling for students and teachers and for professional story makers that want to produce digital content. The lack of focus in common digital storytellers posting their daily lives fails to give an insight on people’s narrative skills, which are exercised since they are born. Digital storytelling is not only a school assignment or a profession to take to the online world; it is also a way for people to express themselves in social media, especially with the feature of “Stories”. The findings in this thesis also contribute to the field of digital storytelling when connects the concept with narrative theories and semiotics. The combination of theories helps understanding digital storytelling through the narrative construction and elements; as well as seeing the produced content, the stories in the feature “Stories”, as signs that have meaning for both the producer and the viewer, helping the understanding of the narrative by both.

In addition, observing what the users post and how they create the narrative in Snapchat and Instagram “Stories”, helps understanding how the platform works, how can it be improved and used in other ways, especially how differently narratives can be produced on the Internet. Moreover, it helps to see a different dimension on digital storytelling that is not only commercial and for brands, but for people and in a more community building purpose. For educational purposes, because the definition of digital storytelling still has a lot connected to that, the findings in this research shows that if young users are present in the platform, not only posting content but also visualizing content produced by other users every day, the platform could and should be used in the class. Making stories in such platforms, where
students are present can create a better connection with the subject, as well as making it more fun.

For further research, a longer time scale of time and larger sample size would help achieve even better results for understanding different patterns in “Stories”, which could lead to new categories that were not grasped in my thesis. Understanding how digital storytelling develops differently in a comparative analysis between Snapchat and Instagram would also be very interesting and bring new conclusions and results. In addition, focusing on different type of users, not only “ordinary” but also activists and brands use the platform to tell their stories would definitely contribute to the field. Another last and broader suggestion would be to continuously research how digital storytelling arises in social media, since “ordinary” users, common people, brands and professionals are, on a daily basis, telling their stories in online platforms and with features like “Stories” the practice of telling online stories will only multiply in the course of time.
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY


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APPENDIX I

In this text, the text I used to contact the participant users in my observation period is presented.

Hey!
I’m writing my thesis and I really need your help!
My thesis is about Digital Storytelling and I want to observe what people post in their “Stories” in Snapchat and Instagram as well to see how people tell their stories. For that reason, I want to ask for permission to follow you daily for the course of three weeks (06/03-26/03) and to SCREENSHOT what you post. I will not display your username and the content will only be used for the thesis, but it might be used in the document as example.
So I have two questions for you:

1. Do you think you post in your Stories (either on Snapchat or Instagram) almost everyday?
2. If yes, can I observe you and screenshot your content?

Thanks in advance!
APPENDIX II

In this appendix, it is presented the common guide used for the in-depth and semi-structured interviews:

Q1: For how long you use the feature Stories? Do you like it?
Q2: Why do you post so frequently or why do you post at all?
Q3: What would you say is a very typical post from you?
Q4: When do you use emojis, location, time, etc?
Q5: The name of the feature is called Stories, right? Do you think you are telling a story? Do you think about it when you’re posting on a daily basis?
Q6: Can you describe the content of a good “Story” on Instagram or Snapchat?
APPENDIX III

In this appendix, the unique questions directed to the five interviewees about their specific behavior are presented.

**Sofia:** You generally post about recipes, showing the order of the ingredients and the final result of your cooking.
   a) Why do you do that?
   b) Do people comment on the dishes you are showing?

**Will:** You generally post about nature and where you are. Why do you do that?

**Dani:** From a group of 25 people you are the user that posted the most in three weeks, with a very big difference from the others.
   a) Why do you do that?
   b) How do you select what you will post?

**Leonilla:** From all the 25 people, you are the one most active in both Instagram and Snapchat Stories.
   a) Why do you use both platforms?
   b) Are they different at all for you?
   c) How do you select what you will post in both of the platforms?

**Ivanna:** It seems like you really take your time with the content of your “Stories”. You always post very beautiful pictures and choose the position of the elements and the filters apparently very carefully. Why do you do that?
APPENDIX IV

In this appendix, the transcribed interviews are presented. Following the questions presented previously and the additional unique question asked for each interviewee.

Sofia

1. “On Instagram, I use Stories since they started. And before that I used Snapchat, which I started in the beginning of 2014, I guess. In Snapchat I didn’t post that frequently, I took a long time to learn how to use it and then I just gradually stopped using it. Even though I don’t use Snapchat anymore, I open the app when I have nothing to do just to play with the funny face filters they have.”

2. “So, I think the Stories are more to follow someone daily, while the photos are more punctual. If I go to a party or something that I want to register a cool moment then I post a photo. But more basic daily things, I like to share in the Stories and this way I don’t fill my timeline with food. I thought about having an Instagram just for food, but it would be so much work… The Stories are perfect for this kind of simple daily posts.”

3. “I generally post food, because my foods are more beautiful than I am and more succesful than a selfie. It’s much more useful for other people to see food posts. I don’t want exhibition just for exhibition. I like to see content.”

4. “Well I don’t use them that much. I generally use captions. And I only use the time when I have to do something early, like a protest for not being sleeping.”

5. “Sometimes it looks like I do. Sometimes I try to connect my posts into a narrative. For me is more about to offer something for the other that are watching. And they can learn something cool for their lives. But also, what creates a narrative is not only me, posting my pictures, but also people interacting with me, sending a message related to what I posted.”

6. “I like funny things or unexpected things. I love animals too, so if I see a Story with a cat or a dog, I love immediately. But also like when the story has context, a meaning. I don’t like party posts for example. I’m not at the party so that is not interesting for me.”
7. “Since I was a kid, I always liked to cook and in my family that independency was always stimulated. But I noticed that some people are not like that, they ask for delivery food and if their mom doesn’t cook, they will starve to death. And I saw that a lot of things are easy to cook that are simple, with a few ingredients. And when I used to post what I was eating people would ask me for the ingredients, so I started posting the recipes. I started with only photos and then I saw Snapgram, I could show more than just a picture, I can show step-by-step what I’m doing. And some people give tips that they tried and think it’s cool. When I don’t post anything some people even ask why I’m not posting and ask me to do another type of dish or something. They even send me pictures when they try some of the recipes!”

Dani

1. “Since Snapchat came, around 2013. And I love the feature, because it’s a way to show people what you are doing without posting officially, like a photo or video. It’s more practical.”

2. “First because I like it, I like to watch again what I post. And to show people what I’m doing, friends and all.”

3. “When I’m at my work with my horses. And I post it because I love my work and I want people to know how nice it is.”

4. “I generally use when I’m not at home, I also put my location, even if it is University or a place that I don’t go very often. And emoji, I use everyday in every post, just because it’s easier, they can replace a word or a phrase. Temperature I only use when I’m by the pool and when it’s hot.”

5. “I don’t think I think about a story when I’m posting. I just add it there. However, sometimes it’s like a story, you want to tell something that happened and the time is short and so you have to do a lot of videos. Sometimes one video is not good enough or not making sense, so I delete and do another one.”

6. “I think a good story is one that make you laugh or make you think. But it’s more common to see people making something funny. When it’s a celebrity it’s cool when they show they daily basis, so you see something different.”
7. “First, because I’m addicted to this, I post everyday. I really like to post, it’s something that makes me feel good. When the stories came, as I said it’s something more practical, you can do it without the compromise of posting it forever. I know there are some people that don’t like that I post everything, but I like it. I do select but there are things that I post every day, kind of repetitive, but I like to show it. I have friends and family that are far and I like to show people what I like and what I’m doing”.

**Leonilla**

1. “Well the first time I saw Instagram Stories was last summer and I started using. At the beginning I thought it was a copy of Snapchat, but I got used to it now. Well, Snapchat I have for few years now, but I’m just really active on it for about one year and a half now. And I like it very much, it’s cool to follow people there.”

2. “On Instagram stories I don’t really think that much, I just post it randomly. But on Snapchat, I post more often when I wanna talk about something, specially if it’s something I wanna complain about and I don’t want the whole world to know, I just they my Snapchat followers. I don’t think that much for Instagram, I just post when I’m pole dancing, because I wanna show people or when I’m trying to learn something and I wanna ask people how should I do this. And I don’t post on the Instagram feed because of the quality or the content and on the Stories it’s just going to stay for a day, so It doesn’t need to be that good.”

3. “Well on Snapchat it can be complaining about something. But on Instagram I never complain. On Instagram I post hand standings and pole dancing. And a lot of cats on Snapchat.”

4. “Well, if I wanna show people where I am, well I don’t use the Umea filter anymore because most people already know that I’m here. But if I travel somewhere than it’s nice to show if it’s a different location. Stickers and emoji add an emotion, so I might be sarcastic but not everyone might understand so it adds emotion so people can know it’s not serious for example. Sometimes the face filters on Snapchat add the things I say or write like using a sad face when I’m sad and an angry filter when I’m angry or
even a funny filter when something is fun. Some of them make you look more pretty so if I feel ugly I might use one of them too.”

5. “No, I don’t think about it. I might record somethings a couple of times. If it’s a longer Snapchat, like 5 to 10, so it has to be interesting but if it’s only one than for me is very random.”

6. “Well on Instagram, I follow a lot of pole dancers, so it’s more like inspiration. On Snapchat is usually people talking or doing something funny like putting music on the background and dancing to it. On Snapchat is more entertainment, whereas on Instagram not a lot of people talk on their Instagram Stories, so it’s more inspirational to me.”

7. “On Instagram you reach more people and Snapchat it feels more closed, cause my Instagram is open so everyone can see it. I feel more comfortable posting on Snapchat because I know who is going to see it more or less. There is more pressure on Instagram because everyone can see it.”

Will

1. “I started with Snapchat, but not for long. But since Instagram launched the feature, I started to use. Actually, I always used Instagram more than Snapchat anyways, for photos and videos, so in the beginning I thought the Stories were a bit weird and hard to use, but I adapted quite fast and then it became easy until I stopped using Snapchat completely. I like to use “Stories” because I don’t like to post more than one picture on Instagram, so if I want to post something else in that day, I can use the “Stories”. Also, if I want to post something that is not on the theme of my feed, which is generally trips and nature, I post in the Stories because it will be gone after a while. Sometimes I also post something from my daily life, such as my dog or my family, or even just to tell a story about something that happened”.

2. “For me is very much automatic. But if I’m honest, I generally post to show other what I’m doing. I don’t think there is any other reasons besides that.”

3. “I think I generally post myself doing a sport or the location I am at the moment, like a touristic place or a beach. But I post it more naturally, like automatic.”

4. I rarely use a long caption in my “Stories”, it’s generally single words, like the one saying “Refúgio”. But generally, I use caption when I want to give a message to
someone. When it comes to emoji, I normally use the “annoying face” when I’m complaining about something and hearts for something that I love. I don’t use it very much, besides when there is an emoji that has a connection with the photo I’m posting, then I used, like a palm tree when I’m at the beach. So if I remember that there is an emoji that can be connected with the photo, I use it. If I want people to know where I am, I use location. If it is a place, like a beach, but there are people that don’t know where that beach is, I put the location. But I also put the location so my close friends that watch my Stories can know where I am like I’m close to you type of thing. And I think temperature I use it when traveling somewhere with really crazy temperatures that I’m not used to, like really cold or really warm.”

5. “I don’t think in a story, so I don’t really follow the name of the feature. I don’t think I’m telling a story, but sometimes I delete some things thinking that there is not connection with my “right now”. I delete thinking that some people will access and see something that I’m no longer doing. I don’t have the patience to watch long “Stories” for example, so in mine, I try to exclude so when people access they can see the most recent post, something I’m actually doing right now.”

6. “I think a good story has to do with the kind of things I like to post myself. So I like to see what other traveling Instagram are posting in their stories. But I also like to see funny things from my friends and follow their daily life.”

7. “Traveling and going to new places are my favorite thing to do. If I have a platform that I can post and show “live” what I’m doing, especially when it’s something that I love so much, I just want people to know and see. Maybe they can go in the place I am and feel the same that I feel.”

Ivanna

1. “Since it started to be in a function in Instagram, there was so much advertising there about it and everyone was trying. I didn’t really try Snapchat that much until my friends and everyone else were posting and then I decided to try, but never really active. I like the feature a lot, you can share things you would never post in your wall because it can be silly, it will not stay there forever, you can share and know that it
will disappear, you can be silly, post whatever you want, draw something, write something.”

2. “I like to make people feel part of what I’m doing and what I’m experience. Especially because of my studying abroad experiences and I want people to be part of my daily routine. Especially when it’s something interesting or cool. It kind of give you something to talk about later.”

3. “I post more about life style, not in a specific thing. It’s more about what it makes me, me. I also like to post panoramas, nature pictures, inspiring photos and videos.”

4. “When the picture is not really that impressed by itself, if it’s me lying in bed, having a cup of coffee or something that everybody does it every day, then you add something to make it more interesting or makes it say something more than just a random coffee picture. You add something like stickers so it makes it more fun and interesting. The doodles give the post more artisanal way of look. Because you’re leaving your handwriting in the post, so it has more of a personal touch. And the person that is watching your post can connect with you more.”

5. “I do, not always. So if I wanna post something now I try to think where is this going, what is going to be the end. I also know that people doesn’t like when people post a lot, so how can I tell this in five pictures? But I also know some people that post as it goes, so as long as it feels natural and not forced, it’s good. Just need to catch your attention. But I don’t think in a normal basis, but if I go in a road trip, something special, I try to tell the story, but on a daily basis I don’t wake up every day thinking ‘oh I’m gonna post this cup of coffee because of this’, I just post if because I like it. When I’m doing something that breaks my daily schedule, I put more think to it.”

6. “I like when the stories follow up. Even I myself try to do that, but it’s hard because you have to think about the whole context. For example today I had this big presentation, so I tried to start yesterday so I posted one picture getting ready, 24 hours left and then ‘oh my god I’m studying’ and then the next day I posted “it’s show time” with the whole group. So I think it’s really cool and people can follow up, so you get hooked and you want to see what will happen after.”

7. “In my case, that goes with my personality. This inspirational vibe, so I feel that what I post in a way represents what I am, so I like to make people see things as I see it. I
think about the colors, I show the time because it’s early in the morning, so it’s cool. But I feel that what I post kind of brand me in some way. If I want people to see it through my eyes and to see things the way I see it, then I have to think more about the details, so that’s what I do. Like having your signature.”