



The Role of Short Videos in Brand Storytelling: Visual Scenarios for Audience Engagement

Gornova V.I.

Independent SMM specialist, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the possibilities of brand storytelling in the YouTube Shorts format as an effective communication tool and rapid consumption of video content. The relevance is determined by the need to adapt marketing strategies to the mobile format and the increased requirements for the speed of transmission of meanings. The novelty lies in the development of methodological recommendations for optimizing the content structure and visual design of short videos to increase audience engagement. The paper analyzes key trends in the consumption of short videos, evaluates the impact of dynamic editing and sound effects on attention retention, and identifies techniques for adapting the narrative to the vertical format. The purpose of the research is to identify universal principles for creating micro—stories that evoke an emotional response and stimulate audience interaction. The methods included content analysis, comparative method and synthesis of practices. In conclusion, the impact of the proposed approaches on key engagement indicators is discussed, and recommendations are given on the introduction of adaptive technologies in the production of short video content.

Keywords: Brand Storytelling; Youtube Shorts; Short Videos; Visual Storytelling; Audience Engagement; Microstorytelling; Content Analysis; Promotion Algorithms; Mobile Content.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, short videos have become a dominant format in the digital environment, emerging as one of the primary means of content consumption [1-3]. Platforms like YouTube Shorts, TikTok, and Instagram Reels offer users an endless feed of video clips lasting only a few seconds. New conditions for storytelling development have arisen for brands—where the brand narrative must fit into less than a minute while retaining its power and persuasiveness. The relevance of the topic “the role of short videos in brand storytelling on YouTube Shorts” stems from the explosive growth in popularity of short videos among audiences of all ages. Brand storytelling is the purposeful use of narrative structures and emotionally rich stories to form a stable perception of the brand’s values and identity in the audience, where communication is built not on direct information, but on creating meaningful and emotional interaction between the brand and the consumer [1].

Most consumers watch short videos daily on their smartphones; moreover, short videos elicit greater audience response and engagement than longer clips. Under these conditions, a brand’s ability to convey its message through

concise visual stories becomes critically important for maintaining the interest and loyalty of modern consumers.

The purpose of this work is to identify and substantiate effective principles of applying storytelling to increase audience engagement through visual scripts. To achieve this goal, the work addresses the following tasks:

1. To systematize the characteristics of the short video phenomenon, considering audience preferences and behavior models; to determine the structural and emotional components of effective brand storytelling in a brief format;
2. To classify visual scripts and techniques that ensure instantaneous viewer engagement;
3. To assess the impact of micro-stories and visual-auditory elements on attention retention and audience interaction metrics.

The research is based on modern foreign sources—analytical reports, publications by digital marketing specialists, and examples of practical storytelling application, which ensures the reliability and applied value of the obtained results.

Citation: Gornova V.I., “The Role of Short Videos in Brand Storytelling: Visual Scenarios for Audience Engagement”, Universal Library of Business and Economics, 2025; 2(4): 21-26. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70315/uloap.ulbec.2025.0204004>.

METHODS

The research material consists of publications reflecting modern practices of short video in marketing and brand storytelling: O. L. Tsvetkova in her work studied storytelling as a brand communication tool and identified main narrative construction techniques in marketing [1]. X. Huang, X. Li, and J. Yao analyzed the role of visual storytelling in increasing audience engagement in digital journalism [2]. M. Manic examined the connection between brief stories and digital consumer engagement levels [3]. A. Mosby collected and published on the Yaguara marketing platform an overview of applied statistics on short video usage and trends, highlighting the most significant metrics for assessing content effectiveness [4]. W. Finkler and B. León developed a conceptual framework for visual storytelling in scientific communication, modifying marketing practices, which is also applicable to brand communication [5]. S. Verma analyzed narrative perception mechanisms and their role in creating emotional connection with the audience [6]. T. Bakirova investigated factors influencing short video effectiveness in selling goods in mobile applications [7]. S. M. Babu et al. studied content marketing features in the era of short clips and showed the format's impact on consumer engagement [8].

Content analysis, comparative method, and synthesis of obtained data were used to write the article. Content analysis was used for systematic study of selected publications [1-8] to identify, classify, and describe key elements (e.g., "hook" for attention capture, plot structure, visual techniques) and successful brand storytelling scenarios in short videos. The comparative method was applied to juxtapose data and conclusions from various sources: statistical data on effectiveness [4], analysis of different platforms [7, 8], and communication approaches [1, 2, 5] were compared, allowing identification of general trends and most effective engagement practices. The synthesis method allowed generalizing analyzed data and developing classifications based on them (presented in Tables 1-3), as well as formulating universal principles and methodological recommendations for creating effective brand storytelling in the YouTube Shorts format.

RESULTS

The evolution of content consumption has led to user attention now dissipating in mere seconds. The average

internet user decides whether to watch a video within the first few seconds of viewing. Under these conditions, the short format (11–60 seconds) proved optimal for retaining interest [4]. The YouTube platform, having launched the Shorts service, quickly gained a huge audience. Such popularity is explained not only by shrinking attention spans but also by social media algorithms actively promoting short video content [4]. As a result, brands are forced to adapt: short video has become one of the most effective tools for capturing audience, surpassing static images and long texts in engagement [3].

Short videos are particularly valuable for brand storytelling due to their emotional saturation and viral potential. Studies show that people retain information better when it is presented as a short story evoking emotion, rather than in a dry commercial [4]. Limited runtime requires concentration on one semantic element, making it possible to convey the brand's main idea in a compressed form. Within a short video clip, it is possible to structure the narrative to demonstrate solving a problematic situation with product participation, thereby forming a positive emotional reaction in the audience. Marketing experts note that it is emotion, not information volume, that ensures message memorability [5]. Even a tiny-runtime clip can impact the audience more strongly than a minute-long ad if it has an emotional hook. This means a successful brand story told in half a minute has chances for viral distribution, significantly increasing audience reach without additional investment.

Analysis of foreign sources allows highlighting several key elements forming effective brand storytelling in a short format [6]. First and foremost is instantaneous attention capture. Since the first seconds decide the video's fate, successful clips begin with a powerful trigger: an unusual visual frame, a provocative question, or an intriguing phrase [5]. For example, a known formula is starting with a question directly addressed to the viewer: "Did you know that...?" or with a bold statement: "Imagine, your morning coffee can...". The goal is to make the user stop scrolling and linger. Brands mastering Shorts often use dynamic openings: sharp movement, a flash of color, a close-up of something surprising. This approach is justified: if a spark of curiosity arises in the first 2 seconds, the viewer will watch the clip to the end [5]. Below is a classification of attention capture types in brand YouTube Shorts (Table 1).

Table 1. Classification of attention capture types (compiled by the author based on [5, 7])

Capture Type	Description	Example Application
Visual "Shock"	Unexpected sharp frame or effect	Flash of color, dynamic movement
Provocative Question	Addressing the viewer with an intriguing question	"Did you know that...?"
Bold Statement	Brief bold assertion	"This will change your breakfast forever!"
Emotional Frame	Frame evoking strong emotion (joy, surprise)	Tear, laughter, surprised face
Sound Hook	Sound effect or familiar melody	Trending sound, recognizable melody

The next element is a clear and concise plot conveying the brand's main message. In classic storytelling understanding, a story has setup, development, and climax. In short video, all these phases are compressed to the limit. Successful brand clips on Shorts manage to unfold a mini-story in the remaining 20–25 seconds after the hook: show a problem or situation and immediately its solution/resolution linked to the product or brand idea [5]. For example, a clip might show: hero faces difficulty – hero uses product – hero succeeds, smile, slogan. All this –

at an accelerated pace, without excessive details. It is very important to focus on one main idea. Specialists advise: “one video = one message,” no attempts to fit the entire spectrum of product benefits into half a minute [1]. Below is the structure of a mini-narrative in Shorts format (Table 2). The short form does not forgive information overload – it can cause the viewer to lose the thread or feel ad intrusiveness. Therefore, the strongest, unique selling proposition or the brand's emotional core is placed at the center of the plot.

Table 2. Mini-narrative structure (compiled by the author based on [1])

Plot Stage	Content	Stage Goal
Hook	Instantaneous attention capture	Retain attention
Setup	Brief introduction to the problem	Form context
Climax	Demonstration of product use	Show solution
Resolution	Emotional finale, slogan	Strengthen brand association

The third element is the emotional component [5]. A short story must make the viewer feel something: joy, surprise, inspiration, laughter, or even light nostalgia. Facts and characteristics are almost absent in this format – instead, mood is conveyed through image and sound. For example, a sportswear brand in a 15-second clip is more likely to show a jubilant runner crossing the finish line than list fabric technology. Emotional response ensures deep engagement: viewers are more likely to like and comment on a video that touched or entertained them than a purely informative clip. Therefore, brands actively use music, rapidly changing inspiring frames, humor, and other emotional engagement techniques in Shorts. Short videos with pronounced emotion have significantly more chances to go viral because people willingly share content evoking feelings.

An integral part of storytelling is visual and technical

techniques making the narrative dynamic. Since we are talking about visual scripts, YouTube Shorts clips employ all means of cinematic expression: unusual angles, rapid shot changes, graphic captions, animations, and filters. The vertical video format (9:16) characteristic of Shorts dictates close-ups and concentrated frames – often the subject is shown closely, without “air,” to maintain expressiveness on a small smartphone screen [8].

The use of augmented reality technologies and visual filters is gaining popularity: virtual effects around the product or character enhance impression and create an engagement effect. In short clips, such techniques must be maximally noticeable and organically fit into the plot, not distracting the viewer with unnecessary details. Below are systematized key technical techniques for dynamic storytelling (Table 3).

Table 3. Key visual-technical techniques (compiled by the author based on [3])

Technique	Description	Effect on Perception
Fast Editing	Alternation of short shots (0.5–1 sec)	Maintains pace and holds attention
Vertical Frame	Close-up in 9:16 format	Increases expressiveness on mobile
AR Effects & Filters	Virtual additions and overlays	Enhances visual interest
Graphic Captions	Brief text inserts over video	Emphasizes key messages
Musical Soundtrack	Trending melody or sound	Strengthens emotional resonance

Fast editing is another critical factor: the viewer does not have time to get bored if the shot changes every second or new action occurs. A good example is the practice of some brands alternating ultra-fast cuts (shots 0.5–1 sec) with slightly longer key scenes – this creates a sense of high pace but allows focusing on the main point at the right moment.

Incidentally, musical accompaniment plays a huge role: trending melodies or sounds often determine Shorts' virality. Using a popular sound trend can bring a video thousands of

additional views thanks to algorithmic promotion of content with the same sound. Brand storytelling effectively fits into this trend if it manages to choose an audio track enhancing the story – dramatic music for an inspiring plot, fast beat for demonstrating something dynamic, comedic sound for a humorous mini-skit. Thus, visual-auditory scripts of short videos are a synthesis of clip-making art and storytelling.

Typical scenarios for audience engagement in Shorts. Several most common plot approaches brands use in short videos to

engage viewers can be identified [2-5,7,8]:

1. Micro-stories of success or transformation. Such clips show the path “from problem to solution” with product participation in half a minute. For example, a dirty room turns into a cozy space after using a cleaning agent; or a person experiencing stress becomes smiling thanks to fitness app exercises – all in time-lapse. These stories resonate with the viewer because they demonstrate a solved everyday problem, causing a feeling of satisfaction from the result seen;
2. Behind-the-scenes sketches. Brands invite the audience to peek behind the scenes of product creation or event: a master applies final touches to new jewelry, a chef in a restaurant kitchen quickly prepares a signature dish, a team packs the first parcels of the day. Such clips create perception of content as authentic and engagement-oriented, strengthening viewer trust. The short format is ideal for showing the process accelerated and interestingly, without monotony;
3. Humor and memes. Comedic sketches and situations involving the brand are popular engagement scenarios, especially for young audiences. Brands sometimes participate in viral trends: for example, picking up a popular challenge or audio meme, adapting it to their theme. Content with humor elements is characterized by high sharing rates, forming positive association with the brand. It is important that humor matches the image: a funny video must still reflect brand character; otherwise, it brings no strategic benefit [5];
4. Direct interactive with audience. Many clips end with a call to interaction: “Write in comments...,” “Guess what happens next...,” “Like if it was useful.” Although there is no possibility to unfold discussion in a short video, even short interactive (e.g., poll using on-screen text) engages viewers deeper, turning passive viewing into active participation. YouTube algorithms also consider comments and reactions, so this technique helps video promotion.

The effectiveness of listed scenarios is confirmed by engagement metrics [2,4,6]. Short videos with storytelling elements significantly increase audience engagement, resulting in higher completion rates for such clips (i.e., most viewers watch them almost to the end). Moreover, branded Shorts telling a story, not just demonstrating a product, receive noticeably more comments and shares – viewers more willingly share content that touched them somehow. For brands, this means increased visibility and influx of organic interest without direct advertising.

DISCUSSION

The reviewed results confirm that the YouTube Shorts format and similar services provide brands a unique opportunity to narrate in the language of modern audience – the language of short visual stories. A peculiar paradox arises: with extremely

short runtime, a brand can form positive perception if it builds the script correctly. From a scientific point of view, this phenomenon can be explained by the “micro-narrative” effect, where the viewer’s brain completes missing story details independently. A short sketch only directs attention and emotions, the rest is thought out by the viewer, which involves them even more in the narrative. The practical consequence of this is – brands do not necessarily need to tell everything; it is enough to outline bright strokes, and the audience itself will form a whole image in their head, often more convincing than direct advertising explanation.

At the same time, discussing brand storytelling in YouTube Shorts, one must note the difficulties of this genre:

1. High content density: the short video feed is characterized by continuous content loading, and right next to a branded clip immediately follow dozens of others, often from bloggers or competitors. This sets the task not just to be on par – but to surpass in creativity and dynamics. Brands have to adapt to this “clip culture,” which is not always easy for traditional marketing teams;
2. Too short format complicates trust-building. If the viewer has no prior acquaintance with the brand, it is difficult to establish an emotional connection in 15–30 seconds, especially when the main goal is to quickly entertain or surprise. Short videos are good for attracting attention and initial engagement, but turning a viewer into a loyal customer requires deeper communication, for example, additional long videos or interaction through other channels.

This leads to the thought that YouTube Shorts are effective as part of a comprehensive content marketing strategy: they attract and introduce but must be supported by further brand narrative on other platforms where the story can be unfolded in more detail.

Nevertheless, many brands have already learned to combine brevity and expressiveness. In the discussed context, real examples can be given: global sports brands (Nike, Adidas) publish 30-second clips with emotional sketches of training sessions, inspiring millions of viewers and strengthening brand association with overcoming and victory. Technology companies focus on visual demonstration of innovations – for example, showing in 15 seconds how a drone flies through an entire apartment delivering a package, thereby telling a story about the future of delivery. Often the hero of such stories is the user themselves, and the brand only provides them a tool ensuring achievement of expected result. This technique – putting person, not product, at the center of the plot – is especially effective for engagement: consumer identification with the presented behavior model arises.

It is important to emphasize that visual scripts of short videos require compliance with platform spirit. YouTube Shorts audience (predominantly young, mobile) values originality, sincerity, and entertainment. Too obviously promotional,

staged clips are perceived worse. Therefore, brands have to be more flexible and creative, sometimes even deviating from strict corporate style for content nativeness. Discussing this, we actually observe a change in marketing paradigm: advertising masquerades as story, and brand as storyteller sharing valuable or entertaining content with audience, not imposing product. Short videos stimulate this transformation of advertising rhetoric into narrative one.

In conclusion of the discussion, it should be noted that despite challenges, the future belongs to those brands mastering micro-storytelling. YouTube Shorts and similar platforms already demonstrate examples of how an emotional bridge between brand and millions of viewers can be built in half a minute. For the scientific community, this provides interesting field for further research – for example, studying cognitive impact of ultra-short stories, comparative analysis of different visual script type effectiveness. And for marketing practitioners – it is stimulus to continuously experiment and perfect storytelling art using new digital tools.

CONCLUSION

The conducted research allows formulating several conclusions regarding brand storytelling in YouTube Shorts format and similar short videos:

It is confirmed that short video format has become effective audience engagement tool: thanks to explosive Shorts popularity growth, brands gained opportunity to reach huge audience in mobile environment and influence it through dynamic visual stories;

1. Effective storytelling in short format is built on special principles – instantaneous attention capture, concentrated plot with one message, emotional saturation, and use of expressive visual-auditory techniques. Observing these principles allows evoking necessary response from viewer – surprise, joy, interest – and conveying key brand message even in 15–30 seconds;
2. Visual scripts of short videos can significantly increase engagement: audience more actively watches, shares, and comments on content presented as mini-story, unlike direct advertising.
3. This emphasizes scientific significance of research: obtained results align with theory about narrative importance in communication and expand it applying to ultra-short formats. Practical significance of conclusions lies in providing guidelines for marketers on creating successful content in YouTube Shorts. Recommendations based on analysis – focus on emotions, apply fast editing, integrate trending culture elements – can be implemented directly into company SMM strategies.

Main research findings indicate: brand storytelling in short videos is not just possible but extremely effective with competent approach. Despite time constraint, brand can

build emotional connection with audience and broadcast its story so that viewer wants to become part of it. Such approach has high practical value – it helps brands stand out in oversaturated information field, win trust of younger consumer generation, and strengthen reputation as innovative companies close to audience.

Summing up, it can be confidently stated that visual scenarios for audience engagement in short videos are not short-term trend but long-term strategy for successful communication. Short stories became organic part of users' lives, and brand wishing to be heard must itself become master of small but bright story. "30-second future" of brand storytelling has already arrived, and those companies learning to speak language of this future gain competitive advantage in battle for audience attention and hearts. This study showed which approaches bring best results in this new format. Further work in this direction can be devoted to more detailed measurement of specific content type impact on consumer behavior; however, it is already obvious: ability to tell big stories with small runtime becomes new marketing communications paradigm.

REFERENCES

1. Tsvetkova, O. L. (2021). Storytelling as a Brand Communication Tool. *Upper Volga Philological Bulletin*, (4 (27)), 66-74. – URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/storitelling-kak-instrument-brend-kommunikatsii> (data obrashcheniya: 25.07.2025).
2. Huang, X., Li, X., & Yao, J. (2023). Investigating the Role of Visual Storytelling in Enhancing Audience Engagement in Digital Journalism. *MEDAAD*. – URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/384820077_Investigating_the_Role_of_Visual_Storytelling_in_Enhancing_Audience_Engagement_in_Digital_Journalism (data obrashcheniya: 25.07.2025).
3. Manic, M. (2024). Short-form video content and consumer engagement in digital landscapes. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov. Series V: Economic Sciences*, 45-52. URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382232350_Short-Form-Video-Content-and-Consumer-Engagement-in-Digital-Landscapes/fulltext/669296c1b15ba5590756ab8d/Short-Form-Video-Content-and-Consumer-Engagement-in-Digital-Landscapes.pdf (data obrashcheniya: 11.07.2025)
4. Mosby A. 20+ short form video statistics of 2025 (usage & trends) // Yaguara. 2025. URL: <https://www.yaguara.co/short-form-video-statistics/> (data obrashcheniya: 11.07.2025)
5. Finkler, W., & León, B. (2019). The power of storytelling and video: a visual rhetoric for science communication. *Journal of Science Communication*. – URL: https://jcom.sissa.it/article/pubid/JCOM_1805_2019_A02/ (data obrashcheniya: 25.07.2025).

6. Verma, S. (2024). Once Upon A Brand: Crafting Connections through Storytelling in Modern Marketing. URL: https://joirem.com/wp-content/uploads/journal/published_paper/volume-10/issue-5/J_QdzjG7Qk.pdf (data obrashcheniya: 14.07.2025)
7. Bakirova, T. (2025). Research on Influencing Factors of Short-Form Video Marketing Effect in Mobile Home Sell. *Open Access Library Journal*, 12(4), 1-19. URL: https://www.scirp.org/pdf/Oalib2025%2012null_1113145.pdf (data obrashcheniya: 12.07.2025)
8. Babu S.M., Iqbal A., Saha S., Koneti C., Eni L.N., Premkumar I., Suman S. (2024). Content Marketing in the Era of Short-Form Video: TikTok and Beyond. *Journal of Informatics Education and Research*, 4(2). URL: <https://jier.org/index.php/journal/article/download/1179/1013/2037> (data obrashcheniya: 10.07.2025).