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Carving out a Unique Brand Identity: The Big Four and their Narrative Distinctiveness

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Abstract

This study investigates corporate storytelling, and explores how four successful professional service firms, called the Big Four, leverage this discursive practice to enhance their corporate identity in progressively competitive and digitalised business environments. The nature of these firms is particularly in focus as their main marketing strategy is based on selling intangible products with a promise to effect business change. The implication is that potential clients often choose a service firm based on who they feel they can trust, suggesting that success for these corporations comes down to creating a brand that is relevant to clients, believable in its claims, and able to deliver on its promises. In particular, the study examines how the Big Four create narrative content across multiple digital media platforms and, for this purpose, a corpus of linguistic and visual data extracted from company websites and Twitter accounts is analysed by employing the theory of social semiotics and using multimodal critical discourse analysis. The data ensembles are examined with a special emphasis on how storytelling strategies are embedded in texts and images, and strategically constructed to legitimise specific social practices realised in discursive representations of each firm's identity.