# NARRATIVE ECOSYSTEM FOR EDUTAINMENT:
## Applying an Ethical Mindset to Children's Series and YouTube

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| KEYWORDS | ABSTRACT |
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| Narrative<br>Brand<br>Ethic<br>Edutainment<br>Educommunication<br>Transmedia<br>Child | *Children's series and videos on social media are increasingly recognised as important educommunicative tools. This study aims to identify values, positive educational contributions, and pedagogical challenges in the first season and accompanying songs of the children's brand Cleo & Cuquin (C&C). A qualitative and interpretative investigation was conducted to generate a grounded theory. Data were collected and analysed through unstructured and semi-structured interviews, document review, and participant observation. Validation was ensured through triangulation, and theoretical coding was conducted using Atlas.ti. The findings reveal key values such as solidarity, learning from mistakes, and teamwork, while also pointing to concerns including unclear explanations and games that may not be appropriate for pre-school audiences.* |

## 1. Introduction

The accessibility of platforms such as YouTube and TikTok has transformed the dynamics of early-age media consumption, shaping new forms of learning and socialisation within a technologically mediated context (Livingstone and Blum-Ross, 2020). These contents shape socioemotional competencies and strengthen the construction of children's cultural and social identities, acting as educommunicating agents (Buckingham, 2019). Their multimodal and engaging format, combined with immediate availability in familiar digital environments, facilitates their integration into both educational and recreational contexts. The interactive and dynamic features of these platforms enhance informal learning and influence children's behaviour. Analysing the reach of these series and videos enables us to understand how they contribute to the holistic development of children within an environment profoundly shaped by transmedia innovation.

The digital media ecosystem plays a crucial role in children's daily lives, as they regularly consume multiscreen content according to their preferences. This phenomenon is especially evident in children's leisure activities, underscoring its significant influence within the framework of convergence culture (Contreras-Espinosa et al., 2015). It is therefore crucial to reconsider the role these media play within the context of hybrid warfare (Scolari, 2024). Indeed, Piotrowski and Krcmar (2017) examine how pre-schoolers interact with touchscreens, noting that their use is intuitive and can influence attention and comprehension of content. Conversely, computer use is positively associated with the development of language, memory, and social perception skills (Rosenqvist et al., 2016). However, despite the growth of digital platforms and access to various devices, children aged 4 to 12 years still spend a considerable portion of their time watching television, with an average of 2.5 hours daily. Although television use has decreased in recent years, it continues to hold an important place in children's entertainment routines. Consequently, the so-called 'attention economy' of multi-channel, multi-platform, and 'multi-everything' consumption becomes apparent (Barlovento, 2025).

Technological evolution has facilitated the integration of diverse systems and languages, creating a network dynamic in which algorithms and viral dissemination are fundamental (Pérez-Tornero, 2020). According to data from Qustodio (2023), YouTube is the most popular online video platform among children worldwide, with a notable presence in Spain, where it reaches seventy-three per cent; followed by the United Kingdom at sixty-seven per cent; the United States at sixty per cent; and Australia at fifty-eight per cent. Despite its widespread use, there is limited research on how children interact with this platform (Neumann and Herodotou, 2020). Many children use YouTube to acquire new knowledge, learn specific skills, or support their learning process (Saurabh and Gautam, 2019). Although YouTube is intended for users aged 13 and over, many children access it daily. This led to the creation of YouTube Kids, a parental-controlled version designed for different age groups: pre-schoolers (up to five years old), younger children (5–7 years old), and older children (8–12 years old). The platform offers appropriate and safe content for children and is available on Android, iOS devices, and smart TVs. It combines automatic filters with manual review to select educational and entertaining videos. While not without flaws, it represents a safer alternative to YouTube, provided that controls are configured appropriately (Ayudaley, 2025). Institutions such as the Spanish National Cybersecurity Institute 'INCIBE' (2025) have developed guidelines to assist parents in the responsible use of these digital tools, including managing screen time, restricting access to inappropriate content, and securing privacy settings. YouTube has become an essential platform for teenagers, serving as a tool for learning, exploration, and socialising. It is valued for its extensive catalogue of content, which fosters creativity and offers limitless opportunities for discovery. Young people prefer it over traditional television due to its accessibility and customisability, which reinforces their sense of belonging within the digital environment. Moreover, YouTube plays a crucial role in youth entertainment, acting as a key platform in digital life that influences both identity formation and the learning process (Pires et al., 2019).

Digital narratives have transformed the way stories are created and experienced, particularly in children's literature, fostering a global cultural exchange that enriches the reader's experience. These narratives not only influence fiction but also have a tangible impact on children's everyday reality (Isnah et al., 2021). Through various narrative techniques, ideologies are conveyed that shape young readers' perceptions and behaviours, influencing their understanding of the world and their social interactions (Lluch, 2003). The construction of characters with detailed physical, emotional, and social traits enables children to identify with them, facilitating the internalisation of values and attitudes (Vandaele, 2018).

A character performs their actions and reactions with specific intentions and purposes, displaying individual or collective behaviours within the social and cultural sphere (Castillo et al., 2023). Moreover, young viewers tend to interpret what they see as real, particularly before the age of three, which underscores the importance of adequate supervision when consuming digital content (Marino-Jiménez et al., 2019). Animations and other fictional materials serve as effective pedagogical tools, enabling minors to learn and adopt behaviours through their connection with favourite characters (Aierbe-Barandiaran and Oregui-González, 2018). During play, young audiences incorporate elements of these narratives, blending identity, marketing, and family dynamics, thereby reflecting the profound influence of transmedia franchises on their daily lives (Wohlwend, 2012). Furthermore, by recreating these narratives in their games, children may inadvertently introduce stereotypes present in the original stories, which can shape their perceptions of social roles and behaviours (Collier, 2012; Pahl, 2007). It is therefore essential to evaluate how audiovisual content is organised, rather than focusing solely on its capacity to convey or counteract values (Oregui et al., 2019).

Storytelling in children's series enables young viewers to explore their experiences and construct meaning within a shared context, thereby strengthening language skills and fostering social cooperation in group settings (Nicolopoulou, 2011). The use of interactive digital narratives promotes deeper learning by linking abstract concepts to concrete examples that are easier to understand and remember (Ferreira et al., 2022). Moreover, narrative-based strategies enhance the ability to reconstruct stories and generate personal narratives, which are fundamental to language and social development (Spencer and Slocum, 2011). Providing storytelling opportunities across diverse contexts is essential to support infants in developing advanced language skills, such as abstraction and comprehension of complex concepts (Curenton et al., 2008). Technological tools can further enrich storytelling and creative skills, while fostering peer collaboration (Sylla et al., 2012). Similarly, the incorporation of songs in both educational and non-educational contexts is effective for learning, as it combines different sensory stimuli to elicit positive responses in children (Barrio and Rebeque, 2015). Urbano and Aguaded (2022) emphasise that creators' primary aim is for children to have fun while unconsciously absorbing educational messages. These productions, rich in values, do not seek to replace the role of the educator but rather benefit the child by integrating values with entertainment, offering optimistic outcomes and employing humour derived from the characters' personalities and the emotions they express. To better understand the impact of transmedia children's narratives on development, it is essential to analyse both how audiences interact with the media and the production processes that give rise to these experiences (Norton and Kovacs, 2017).

Social media narratives, particularly on platforms such as YouTube, often present imaginary worlds featuring commercial protagonists and anthropomorphic animals that are frequently not aligned with children's learning rhythms and do not encourage family participation (Martín-Gómez et al., 2022). Recent studies of children's YouTube channels highlight the promotion of values such as fun and solidarity, but also, in some cases, violence, alongside the perpetuation of gender stereotypes within the context of children's play. A significant correlation has been observed between the values promoted and the categories of toys associated with the brands that finance this content. Consequently, measures have been proposed to increase the visibility and accountability of toy companies involved in these channels to ensure more appropriate content for vulnerable audiences (Neira-Placer and Visiers, 2024). Furthermore, the persistence of inappropriate content directed at children on YouTube has been documented; many previously identified disturbing videos remain accessible, and the channels responsible continue to operate (Gkolemi et al., 2022). Such channels often avoid using the 'MadeForKids' tag while employing child-related keywords to attract young viewers. Machine learning models have been developed that can predict, from the point of channel creation, the likelihood of posting inappropriate content, which could enhance moderation and reduce children's exposure. Additionally, comments containing offensive language, inappropriate references, and potentially harmful messages highlight the urgent need to improve moderation mechanisms on platforms targeting children (Alshamrani et al., 2021).

Developing digital literacy skills is crucial to preventing the proliferation of stigma and social fragmentation (Pérez-Rodríguez et al., 2022). Efforts focus on cultivating in Spanish children an analytical and engaged approach to media consumption, emphasising the importance of sharing information ethically and consciously (Renes-Arellano et al., 2018). Transmedia literacy redefines the

information user as a dynamic actor who interprets new narrative formats and actively participates in the creation and distribution of digital content (Scolari, 2016). Media and Information Literacy (MIL), alongside the promotion of digital skills, aims to equip society with the tools to critically evaluate information, navigate the digital environment confidently, and build trust within today's technological ecosystem (UNESCO, 2013). In this regard, the Committee of Experts on Youth and Children has proposed 107 actions to protect minors in the digital environment. These measures include regulating device use according to age, limiting access for young children, and establishing restrictions for adolescents. Additionally, the committee calls for greater responsibility from the technology industry through the implementation of parental controls and risk warnings. It is also recommended that device use in educational contexts be limited exclusively to pedagogical purposes, and that training for families on safe Internet practices be promoted. The committee further emphasises the importance of protecting minors' privacy through age verification tools and reducing the exposure of personal information, thereby creating a safer and more informed digital environment (Ministry of Youth and Children, 2024).

## 2. Methodology

This is qualitative research employing an interpretative approach based on a case study. Such a qualitative study seeks to decipher the meanings behind human actions to better understand social organisation (Barrantes, 2014). It focuses on gaining a deep understanding of phenomena through direct interpretation of reality, prioritising interpretative analysis over statistical methods (Stake, 2010). The approach also involves a cyclical process, incorporating stages such as theoretical sampling, saturation, and data collection (San-Martín, 2014). Throughout the research process, continuous reflection throughout the research, repeatedly evaluating whether the methods, categories, and theories applied are appropriate for the data and the object of study, thereby ensuring alignment with the phenomenon under investigation (Flick, 2018).

Following Stake (2010) and Strauss and Corbin (1997), and in order to develop grounded theory through the case study method, the transmedia children's brand *Cleo & Cuquin* (C&C) was selected. Aimed at preschool audiences aged three to five years, it was created by the production company Ánima Kitchent, a leading figure in the children's animation sector in Spain and Mexico. As noted in the introduction to this study, both branded series and children's videos on social networks have become influential tools in the developmental processes of infants. Consequently, there is concern that some of this content may convey inappropriate values or contain questionable pedagogical elements, potentially having a negative impact on children. This concern has motivated the present research. The general objective of the study is to analyse the values and ethical perspectives conveyed in children's series and videos on YouTube, with the aim of developing a grounded theory on the subject. The specific objective is to identify the values transmitted, both the positive educational contributions and the potential pedagogical challenges, present in children's YouTube series and videos based on the transmedia brand *Cleo & Cuquin* (C&C), thereby contributing to the construction of this grounded theory.

Regarding the show, the CEO ($E_1$) and Development Manager ($E_4$) lead content creation and brand strategy, with production coordination overseen by the Production Manager ($E_{12}$). Also notable are the Creative Director of *Cleo & Cuquin* ($E_6$), the Communications Director ($E_2$), and the Sales Director ($E_3$). Scriptwriting involves both in-house and American writers, while departments such as art, animation, lighting, layout, story, rigging, and post-production engage in shared, partly outsourced work processes. Key personnel have been identified and coded to enable detailed analysis while preserving anonymity. According to Suddaby (2006), these interactions reflect a subjective reality shaped by individual experiences and decisions.

Access to the study field was secured through prior communication with the CEO, during which the research objectives and requirements were outlined. An ethical commitment was signed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, providing transparency to participants and guaranteeing the responsible use of collected data. In total, eleven face-to-face sessions were conducted, each lasting between eight and ten hours, supplemented by communications via email, Skype, and additional meetings. Observations captured internal dynamics, while initial, semi-structured, and follow-up interviews offered detailed insights into the creative processes. Documentary analysis encompassed key materials such as strategies, style guides, and audiovisual files. The cyclical design of the research (Gürtler & Günter, 2007) allowed for adjustments to the instruments in response to the production's progress. This approach facilitated an in-depth understanding of creative decisions and the symbolic interactions

between creators and their products, revealing the challenges and opportunities inherent in transmedia development.

Three main instruments are employed to analyse the series and videos on the *Cleo & Cuquin* (C&C) social network: participant observation, interviews with the creators, and analysis of documents and YouTube posts from the first season of the series, spanning 2015 to 2025. Participant observation, the primary instrument in this research, is designed to comprehensively record and interpret the dynamics within the production company. This method combines field notes, interview recordings, and photographs as visual support, enabling the capture of both human interactions and everyday activities. Jorgensen (1989), cited by Flick (2012), emphasises that participant observation centres on human interactions, the interpretation of behaviour, and the specific context of the study, with a focus on in-depth qualitative research. Spradley (1980) outlines three stages in the process: descriptive, to contextualise the field; localised, to identify key situations; and selective, to validate and contrast data. Open-ended notes are preferred over structured protocols, allowing for a flexible and comprehensive capture of the environment, although the researcher must acknowledge the limitations inherent in their unique role (Flick, 2012). This instrument ensures a contextualised and enriched interpretation of the phenomenon under study, reinforcing its importance in qualitative analysis. Accordingly, the study establishes a sequence of participant observation in three phases: descriptive, localised, and selective.

The second instrument is the interview, which is understood as a direct interaction to explore participants' perceptions and knowledge and is a key tool in this research. Its purpose is to capture the multiple realities of each case (Stake, 2010), focusing on the experiences and decisions of the principal creators involved in the production of *Cleo & Cuquin* (C&C). The interview design evolved according to the research stages. In the initial phase, unstructured interviews were conducted, characterised by open-ended, flexible questions that allowed for an unconstrained exploratory approach. In later phases, semi-structured interviews were employed, enabling an in-depth investigation of specific topics while maintaining an adaptable framework. Transcription followed detailed guidelines based on Flick (2012), supplemented by customised parameters such as speech overlaps, pauses, accents, and non-verbal behaviours, utilising Dragon NaturallySpeaking software. The interviews were designed to be in-depth, fostering a subjective and emotional understanding of the experiences shared. This flexible approach allowed the interviewer to adapt questions and explore emerging topics as necessary, ensuring that responses accurately reflected the creative dynamics and decision-making processes.

The third and final instrument involves the collection and analysis of over 200 documents related to *Cleo & Cuquin* (C&C) and the production company, organised chronologically by visits and years (from 2015 to the present). These documents, including internal records, publications, audiovisual content, and digital data, complement the observations and interviews, and are systematically managed to prevent disorganisation or loss of information (Stake, 2010). Documentary analysis follows an approach similar to other qualitative methods, evaluating the relevance and usefulness of each source in accordance with the research objectives. As Bardin (2002) notes, this process combines both objective and subjective elements.

The validation of information collected through the instruments was achieved via multiple triangulation (Denzin, 1970), integrating data triangulation, which encompasses temporal, spatial, and personal perspectives, with methodological triangulation, combining observation, interviews, and documentary analysis. This approach enhances the reliability and depth of the analysis by cross-verifying information from diverse sources. The data were processed and coded to facilitate the construction of knowledge through grounded theory (De-la-Espriella & Gómez-Restrepo, 2020; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Coding in Atlas.ti was conducted in open, axial, and selective phases, identifying 34 codes within the 'animation' family; 7 in 'applications'; 16 in 'pedagogical advisor'; 19 in 'education'; 23 in 'script'; 72 in 'characters'; 23 in 'social networks'; 9 in 'values'; and 36 in 'YouTube video clips.' The central category, 'children's transmedia brand,' integrates subcategories such as creative development, strategic decisions, transmedia storytelling, and educational values, providing an interpretative model that explains the interaction of creative, pedagogical, and strategic factors in the content creation and storytelling of these franchises.

# 3. Results

In production, the creators, who have no background in education or psychology, collaborate with a psycho-pedagogist to ensure that the narrative and values are appropriate for children aged 3-5. This mentoring guarantees that the scripts and concepts meet the pedagogical needs of the audience ($E_1$). The selection of specialists varies according to the target audience, including psychologists and expert teachers, thereby ensuring a professional and rigorous approach ($E_3$). These specialists assess the relevance of values and narratives according to the developmental stage of the target group ($E_4$). In addition, producers often base their content on personal experience and common sense. However, if the production does not meet the standards for children's audiences, broadcasters may reject it, as it might fail to capture children's attention and could face resistance from parents. To avoid this, producers and broadcasters tend to adapt to external standards, resulting in a form of self-censorship in the creative process. Such a cautious approach may limit learning from challenging situations, which were common in earlier generations that consumed less regulated content. For example, the teaser for *Cleo* shows a child climbing on a stool without adult supervision, which could generate rejection among certain audience sectors and hinder its market acceptance. Content creators recognise the importance of balancing spontaneity and learning through challenge with current social and commercial expectations to ensure the success of their productions in a global market ($E_6$). The international expansion of educational brands must take into account the cultural particularities of each region, especially within Arab cultures, which differ significantly from other global contexts. Once established, a brand can become a trendsetter, leading to the creation of franchises that share similar characteristics in animation, content, and modes of interaction. The producer ($E_2$) notes that experience with projects such as *Jelly Jamm* highlighted the necessity of consulting a specialist in children's pedagogy to ensure that content is both appropriate and viable for international audiences. For instance, certain narratives acceptable in Spain, such as characters hiding in a fridge, could be misinterpreted in other countries as promoting dangerous behaviour. In such cases, collaboration with US scriptwriters and educational experts enabled the content to be adapted to global standards, with further edits made for specific markets, such as Arabic-speaking regions, in order to respect cultural sensitivities. Moreover, the consultant identifies which types of content are suitable for children and which elements should be avoided, while also analysing current trends in children's consumption, akin to those in fashion or digital media. Examples such as *Peppa Pig* and *Pocoyo* demonstrate how, by setting successful standards, these productions influence the sector and give rise to new properties featuring similar elements and styles.

The pedagogical review within the series is limited exclusively to the animated content for children, while other associated products, such as social media posts, educational videos, and toys, remain unsupervised. During production, the creators adapted the scripts based on their reflections and the consultant's reports. From May 2018 onwards, some episodes underwent significant changes, including modifications to titles and narrative structure, while others were not produced. The completed episodes include detailed information regarding their distribution, release, and reception, allowing for an assessment of their impact on preschool audiences. For example, the episode initially titled *Colitas' Cold* was renamed *Magic Cleo*, whereas episodes such as *The Treasure of the Greenbeard Pirate*, *The Crazy Bouncing Ball*, *The Darkness* and *The Gobblers* were never produced. The episodes that were produced provide key details about their content, including distribution platforms (YouTube, television, and website), episode number, release date, duration, views on digital platforms such as YouTube, and a brief synopsis. This compilation enables a comprehensive analysis of the impact and reception of each episode in relation to the series' objectives and its target audience. The C&C YouTube channel highlights several elements that promote effective educational and ethical values. Music is employed as a learning tool, with songs and melodies adapted to be engaging and memorable for children, thereby encouraging language development in an enjoyable manner. Furthermore, the content is culturally adapted and presented in a way that is both educational and entertaining, maintaining a light hearted tone appropriate for young audiences. These efforts demonstrate a deliberate approach to children's education that seeks to integrate learning with entertainment ethically and constructively. As the educational consultant does not directly oversee YouTube content, these findings are based on available documentation, interviews with creators, and observations conducted during the study.

Decisions regarding the production of episodes are not determined solely by the pedagogical advisor, who evaluates aspects such as educational values, positive contributions, and educational challenges. For example, although the episode *The Gobblers* is notable for featuring four educational values, it was

not produced. Other episodes, such as *Magic Cleo* and *Paseando a Pelusín*, each include three educational values. In terms of positive contributions, *The Treasure of the Greenbeard Pirate* leads with eight, followed by *The Jumping Tooth* with seven. Regarding educational challenges, *The Jumping Tooth* has five, while both *Magic Cleo* and *The Darkness* have four each. Despite these positive assessments, some episodes were not produced, which indicates that the assessor's opinion is advisory and the final decision rests with the creators. They must balance educational considerations with other critical factors, such as a narrative that resonates with children, clarity of messages, and parental acceptance, which influences content consumption.

The study of the values represented in the episodes of the series enables the identification of predominant educational themes, based on reports provided by the pedagogical advisor. These values have been classified into three main dimensions: educational contributions, positive contributions, and pedagogical doubts. The episode *Colitas' cold* highlights values such as hope, fantasy, and empathy towards others (P201: 3). In *The Championship*, the importance of promoting environmental education and the ability to prioritise problems is emphasised (P199: 2). Meanwhile, *Drums & Drumser*, later renamed *My Little Big Band*, promotes friendship and the capacity to compromise as essential foundations for children's development (P198: 4). The unproduced episode *The Treasure of the Greenbeard Pirate* focuses on themes such as family love, cooperation in group activities, and the satisfaction derived from sharing moments with loved ones (P202: 1). In *Smiles and Tears, Lots of Tears*, later renamed *The Jumping Tooth*, themes related to the acceptance of natural changes, such as the loss of baby teeth, are addressed, incorporating the myth of *Ratón Pérez* as a symbolic source of comfort (P203: 1). The episode *The Crazy Bouncing Ball* highlights solidarity with those facing difficulties, the desire to engage in play, and the importance of sharing resources cooperatively (P204: 1). *The Perseids* emphasises personal effort as a means to achieve goals, using virtual representations to support the communication of these concepts (P466: 1). In *The Darkness*, assistance for the elderly, the courage to confront fears related to darkness, and the concept of care in challenging situations are foregrounded (P206: 1). *The Gobblers* explores themes of making amends for mistakes, establishing clear rules, and the importance of order, presenting a narrative that moves from initial chaos to ultimate success, with Cleo leading the process (P207: 1). Finally, *Walking Miss-ter Daisy* addresses the rectification of errors, the limitation of over-ambitious plans, and the necessity of attending to the immediate environment and its details (P208: 1).

The analysis of the positive ethical mindset presented in the first ten episodes of the series reveals a wide range of values aimed at enhancing the learning and development of preschool audiences. These values have been identified through the pedagogical advisor's reports, which consider symbolic, pedagogical, and narrative elements carefully integrated into each episode.

In the episode entitled *Colitas' cold*, values such as caring for others, the capacity to enjoy oneself despite adversity, and the excitement of the unknown are emphasised. The episode also employs symbolic elements reflecting the transition from illness to vitality, using nature as a metaphor to encourage empathy and teamwork (P201: 1). Meanwhile, *The Championship* promotes group conflict resolution, environmental awareness regarding waste accumulation, and the importance of resilience in children. This episode includes messages about cooperation in artistic activities without gender bias and highlights the value of recycling and its positive impact on creativity (P199: 1). In the episode *Drums & Drumser*, later renamed *My Little Big Band*, concepts such as friendship and collaboration through music are explored, underscoring the importance of building positive relationships to achieve shared goals (P198: 1–2). *The Treasure of the Greenbeard Pirate*, one of the highest-rated scripts, integrates learning such as individual effort, teamwork and appreciation of family ties. The use of narrative elements such as light, nature, and time cycles adds depth to the educational content aimed at 4–5-year-olds (P202: 2–3). *The Jumping Tooth*, originally titled *Smiles and Tears, Lots of Tears*, addresses issues related to growing up and accepting physical changes, such as the loss of baby teeth, while also incorporating the myth of the *Ratón Pérez* as a symbol of emotional reward. This episode encourages healthy habits in dental care and highlights the importance of motor skills through play (P203: 2–3). On the other hand, *The Crazy Bouncing Ball* uses playful and environmental elements to transmit values such as teamwork, solidarity and respect for the environment, with symbolic references to stars and ants as representations of order and effort (P204: 2–3). In *The Perseids*, symbols of light and darkness are used to address the fear of darkness, while the act of catching a star represents the fulfilment of a

wish through personal effort. This episode also highlights individual growth through problem solving and the use of safe spaces to foster self-confidence in children (P466: 2–3). Although *The Darkness* was never produced, it included values such as managing fear and building protective relationships between characters. This episode emphasises the importance of mutual help and emotional exploration through narrative (P206: 2–3). The episode *The Gobblers* introduces concepts such as managing frustration, fulfilling promises and understanding desire beyond material value. In addition, the use of colours with symbolic meanings, such as blue, associated with tranquillity, reinforces the emotional connection of the children's audience with the content (P207: 2–3). Finally, *Walking Miss-ter Daisy* highlights problem-solving through playful activities, underlines the protective figure of Cleo, and stresses the importance of fostering artistic skills in children (P208: 2–3).

The pedagogical reports identified 41 positive contributions in the episodes analysed. Symbolism features prominently, with 11 mentions, followed by artistic expression activities and emotional intelligence, each with three mentions. Other core values include group conflict resolution, environmental awareness, resilience, personal maturity and responsibility, each mentioned twice. Additional educational contributions include overcoming fears, creating healthy habits, recycling, keeping promises, and strengthening creativity, demonstrating a holistic approach to narrative design aimed at fostering the development of preschool audiences.

The analysis of the episode scripts reveals several areas requiring attention, particularly regarding educational values. In the episode entitled *Colitas' Cold*, problematic aspects are evident, such as the absence of father figures, with the older sister, Cleo, taking their place, and the use of 'white lies'. The script also incorporates magical elements, such as the depiction of splitting a person in two, which are inappropriate for a pre-school audience. Furthermore, the dialogue includes adult expressions, such as 'cool' and 'freak out', which do not contribute to the expansion of children's vocabulary at this developmental stage (P201: 2). In *The Championship*, the script presents problematic statements concerning the possession of toys and material goods, exemplified by phrases such as 'that's the coolest ball!'. This could encourage a materialistic perspective in children. Additionally, there is a scene depicting accumulated rubbish that is unrelated to any character present in the episode, resulting in a narrative disconnect (P199: 3). In the episode *Drums & Drumser*, there is a lack of transitions to maintain the child's interest between conflicts, and Cleo displays a perceived lack of empathy, resorting to threats to impose her judgement. Furthermore, the episode contains musical references seemingly aimed at adults, which may alienate the child audience (P198: 2–3).

In contrast, the unproduced episode *The Treasure of the Greenbeard Pirate* is recognised as one of the best-structured scripts and does not present significant educational concerns. However, in *Smiles and Tears, Lots of Tears* (later entitled *The Jumping Tooth*), issues such as the stereotypical association of Maripí with the colour pink and the lack of representation of symbolic play are observed. A rushed transition between emotions is also evident, which could hinder the development of emotional intelligence. The depiction of the *Ratón Pérez* myth lacks the necessary fantasy, as it is portrayed as a literal mouse, potentially causing confusion for children. Additionally, cultural references, such as allusions to *The Godfather*, are included, which are inappropriate for the target audience (P203: 3–4). In *The Crazy Bouncing Ball*, characters do not face the consequences of their negative actions, thereby normalising irresponsibility; for example, characters spill juice without addressing the resulting damage. Furthermore, Cleo loses previously established traits, such as her fear of the dark, leading to inconsistencies in her character development (P204: 3). In the episode *The Perseids*, the concept of 'being a star' is overly abstract and adult-oriented for a child audience, making it difficult for preschoolers to comprehend (P466: 3). The script of *The Darkness* introduces a profession, psychology, that may be difficult for young children to understand and could be presented in a more accessible manner. Additionally, problematic behaviour is depicted, such as one character pressuring another to carry out an unwanted action, reflecting a lack of empathy. Certain character traits are also underdeveloped, notably in Maripí, who displays egocentrism and a lack of emotional depth (P206: 3–4). In 'The Gobblers', the script includes problematic statements such as 'tidying and messing up is cool', which fail to reinforce positive educational values. Moreover, the narrative suffers from a disconnect due to unresolved conflicts being abandoned in favour of shifting focus to new situations. Furthermore, lying is presented as a conscious strategy, which is inappropriate for a young audience (P207: 3–4). Finally, *Walking Miss-ter Daisy* lacks authority figures to regulate behaviour, resulting in chaos and

disorder. Characters do not express remorse for their actions, and Cleo's self-deceptive narrative about her profession is insufficiently integrated into the plot (P208: 2–3).

## 4. Conclusions

Throughout the study, the objectives have been carefully analysed and addressed. With regard to the general objective, the research has carried out a detailed examination of the ethical mindset reflected in the C&C children's YouTube serie and videos, thereby contributing to the development of a grounded theory on the topic. Regarding the specific objective, both the positive ethical mindset and the pedagogical challenges inherent in the content of the children's branded YouTube series and videos have been identified, enabling a deeper understanding of the messages conveyed and their impact on children's development. Future research could explore the long-term effects of such social media narratives and ethical values on children, as well as investigate storytelling techniques and gender roles in social media marketing, influencers, and toy companies. Additionally, analysing the effectiveness of media literacy initiatives within families, schools, and children's brand producers would be a valuable avenue for further study.

Brand storytelling for children thus possesses significant educational and communicative potential, as it helps them grasp complex concepts through concrete experiences (Ferreira et al., 2022) and supports their linguistic and social development by enabling them to reconstruct stories (Spencer & Slocum, 2011). These narratives form an integral part of children's everyday lives, shaping their identities and family dynamics through transmedia franchises, as discussed in the study's introduction (Wohlwend, 2012). However, such storytelling can also reinforce gender stereotypes and social roles (Pahl, 2007). Furthermore, on platforms like YouTube, some content contains violent elements or problematic messages linked to marketing strategies (Neira-Placer & Visiers, 2024). In addition, the presence of inappropriate material for minors underscores the urgent need to improve moderation and regulation within these digital environments (Kolemi et al., 2022). While animations can serve as valuable tools for children's learning and creativity, careful oversight and a critical approach to their production are essential to ensure a positive impact on development. Media literacy emerges as a key solution to the challenges posed by brand narratives for children, as it enables young audiences to develop a critical perspective on the content they consume and fosters responsible use of digital platforms. Scolari (2016) emphasises that transmedia literacy, alongside media and information literacy, transforms users into active participants who interpret and create digital content, thereby promoting a deeper understanding of media.

As a grounded theory, it is established that creators of children's brands collaborate with educational psychologists to adapt the content of series aimed at children aged 3 to 5, ensuring careful narrative development. However, this same level of oversight is not applied to YouTube content, as the educational professional is engaged solely to supervise the series as the main product. Creators must also balance these considerations with commercial pressures and television regulations, which can sometimes limit the inclusion of educational material. Consequently, content on YouTube does not receive the same degree of scrutiny and control as the series. While the storytelling in the children's episodes of the series incorporates appropriate ethical and educational values, this is not always the case for the accompanying YouTube videos. Key values such as teamwork, solidarity, empathy, making amends, friendship, personal effort, environmental awareness, and family love have been identified within the narrative. However, moral and pedagogical challenges have also been noted, including the absence of parental figures, inadequate references, the use of stereotypes, and inconsistencies in character development. Additionally, some episodes contain inaccurate statements, games unsuitable for pre-school children, and conflicts that remain unresolved, potentially hindering children's comprehension. These findings underscore the necessity of revising scripts and ensuring comprehensive supervision across all brand products to make them appropriate for children, thereby maintaining a balance between educational content and entertainment without compromising audience acceptance or the commercial viability of the production.

## 5. Acknowledgements

# References

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