



Demystifying Consumer Engagement: Sentiment Analysis of Brand Storytelling through QSR NVivo

Dr. Heena Arora¹, Dr. Mohita Mathur², Dr. Renu Sharma³, Ms. Kanika Nagpal⁴, Ms. Himanshi Joshi⁵

¹Assistant Professor, Asian School of Business, Asian Education Group) *

²Professor, Institute of Innovation in Technology & Management Janakpuri, GGSIPU

³Professor, Institute of Innovation in Technology & Management Janakpuri, GGSIPU

⁴Student, Institute of Innovation in Technology & Management Janakpuri, GGSIPU

⁵Student, Institute of Innovation in Technology & Management Janakpuri, GGSIPU

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Heena Arora

Assistant Professor, Asian School of Business, Asian Education Group

Email: heena.arora@asb.edu.in

Cite This Paper as: Dr. Heena Arora , Dr. Mohita Mathur , Dr. Renu Sharma, Ms. Kanika Nagpal, Ms. Himanshi Joshi (2026) Demystifying Consumer Engagement: Sentiment Analysis of Brand Storytelling through QSR NVivo. The Journal of African Development 1, Vol.7, No.1, 598-610

KEYWORDS

Brand Storytelling, Consumer Engagement, Emotional Connection, Authenticity, Narrative, Consistency, Brand Loyalty

ABSTRACT

In today's competitive and technology-driven environment, consumers increasingly resist traditional advertising, perceiving it as intrusive or inauthentic. Consequently, brand storytelling has emerged as a powerful strategy for fostering emotional connections, enhancing engagement, and building lasting loyalty. This qualitative exploratory study investigates how consumers perceive, interpret, and respond to narrative-driven brand communication. Using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis supported by sentiment analysis in QSR NVivo, the study identifies key narrative elements that resonate across platforms such as social media, websites, and advertising campaigns. Findings reveal that authentic stories grounded in personal values and relatable experiences significantly strengthen emotional bonds and increase brand loyalty. Additionally, storytelling proves most effective when adapted to diverse media formats while maintaining narrative coherence. The study contributes to narrative marketing literature and offers actionable insights for marketers, advertisers, and content creators seeking to leverage storytelling as a strategic tool for brand expression...

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's congested digital economy, brands are aiming to create meaningful and long-lasting connections with customers rather than simply competing for their attention. The vast availability of digital content, along with evolving audience preferences, has made it increasingly difficult for marketers to create messages that resonate. According to studies, building good brand-consumer relationships requires credibility, integrity, and shared values. According to Edelman's Trust Barometer (2022), 64% of customers believe that shared values drive their ongoing relationship with a brand, while 81% believe that a brand must act ethically. These findings highlight the growing relevance of emotional connections in maintaining consumer loyalty.

However, traditional advertising approaches are quickly losing their persuasive effectiveness. According to HubSpot (2023), the use of ad-blockers has increased by 30% worldwide, which is indicative of consumer frustration with obtrusive and excessively promotional marketing strategies. In this regard, brand storytelling has become a strong substitute that puts authenticity and emotional resonance ahead of direct persuasion. Brands may convey their identity, values, and purpose in a way that is relevant and genuine by incorporating marketing messaging into meaningful and human-centered storylines.

Storytelling elevates brand communication into immersive experiences, encouraging customers to interact with brands on a more emotional level. Forbes (2023) reports that companies who employ narrative-based tactics see a 22% boost in customer engagement over ads that are primarily focused on products. This effectiveness can be credited to the psychological idea of "narrative transportation," in which consumers become emotionally invested in a story, internalizing the intended message and positively connecting with the brand

The present research intends to investigate how and why brand storytelling improves consumer engagement, with an emphasis on the emotional and psychological factors. Using a qualitative exploratory methodology, it examines consumer viewpoints, emotional responses, and the significance of authenticity in narrative-driven brand story telling through in-depth interviews. The findings are supposed to help marketers, advertisers, content creators and strategists to create compelling brand narratives that encourage engagement, trust, and enduring loyalty in the present fragmented digital era.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To establish a strong foundation for the present study, a review of prior research is essential. The literature review examines key themes, addresses the researcher's guiding questions through past findings, and provides valuable insights that inform and strengthen the current investigation.

How Stories Help Us Connect with Brands?

Brand storytelling originates from the broader domain of narrative communication, where stories serve as vehicles for shaping consumer perceptions, emotions, and loyalty. The foundational concept of narrative transportation proposed by Escalas (2004) explains how consumers become mentally and emotionally immersed in brand narratives. When individuals "lose themselves" in a story, the narrative enhances engagement and fosters deeper emotional bonding with the brand. This immersive mechanism demonstrates that emotional connection is co-created through both story elements and brand attributes. Advancing this perspective, Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) argue that brands act as protagonists within their own narratives, enabling them to adopt identities, personalities, and human-like qualities. By positioning the brand as a relatable character, storytelling transforms abstract brand attributes into something consumers can emotionally connect with. Together, these contributions reveal how brand narratives foster identification and relational closeness, laying the conceptual foundation for understanding how storytelling humanizes brands and strengthens long-term consumer relationships.

Why True and Relatable Stories Matter?

A central pillar of effective brand storytelling is authenticity the perception that a story is sincere, credible, and aligned with brand values. Fog et al. (2010) emphasize that authentic narratives differentiate brands in saturated markets by resonating with consumers' moral, emotional, and cultural values. Kotler and Keller (2012) further reinforce this view, arguing that authentic storytelling supports brand positioning by embedding brand values into consumers' everyday lives.

Storytelling also functions as a mechanism for identity reinforcement. Brown et al. (2003) note that consumers are naturally drawn to stories that reflect their self-concepts, aspirations, and social identities. This identity-based alignment intensifies emotional resonance and deepens brand attachment. Guber (2011) similarly argues that emotionally charged stories significantly outperform rational, product-oriented appeals because they evoke affective responses that translate into loyalty and long-term memory. Fournier's (1998) seminal work conceptualizes brand-consumer relationships as analogous to interpersonal relationships, where narratives play a critical role in sustaining feelings of intimacy, trust, and emotional closeness. Collectively, this body of literature highlights that authenticity and emotional resonance are the psychological drivers through which brand stories shape consumer perceptions and reinforce identity-based connections.

How Storytelling Builds Trust, Loyalty and Engagement?

Beyond emotional connection, research shows that storytelling enhances consumer memory, trust, and behavioral engagement. Woodside et al. (2008) find that narrative-based strategies positively influence customer retention and brand-related behaviors because stories facilitate recall and meaning-making more effectively than factual messages. Pulizzi (2012) adds that content marketing grounded in storytelling increases engagement by shifting consumer attention from sales messages to narratives that deliver value, relevance, and meaning. From a cultural standpoint, Holt (2002) advances the theory of cultural branding, arguing that powerful brand narratives create shared myths and cultural symbolism that foster community, group belonging, and long-term loyalty. Similarly, Mossberg (2008) notes that stories gain strength when consumers attribute personal meaning to them, enhancing relevance and emotional connection.

Trust also emerges as a recurrent theme. Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2005) emphasize that the perceived authenticity of stories enhances brand credibility, while Gilliam and Zablah (2013) demonstrate that emotionally resonant storytelling promotes positive word-of-mouth when the narrative aligns with the brand's actual behavior. In addition, Schmitt (2011) highlights the importance of sensory and experiential elements, suggesting that immersive, multi-sensory storytelling enhances the brand experience and elevates emotional value. Denning (2005) broadens the scope by positioning storytelling as a tool not only for marketing but for leadership and organizational influence, reinforcing the idea that narratives shape perceptions across both internal and external stakeholders. Together, these findings demonstrate that storytelling fosters engagement, trust, and cultural connection, making it a powerful strategic tool in brand building.

How Digital Media Changes Brand Storytelling?

With the rise of digital communication, storytelling has become more interactive, participatory, and multi-platform. Hudson et al. (2015) find that social media storytelling enhances engagement by enabling consumers to interact with, reinterpret, and share narratives within online communities. Ashley and Tuten (2015) also note that digital storytelling improves perceptions of authenticity and brand quality because social platforms provide transparent, real-time interactions. Simmons (2006) introduces the concept of narrative arcs, suggesting that consumers prefer brand stories that evolve with dynamic yet coherent across platforms. This adaptability is crucial in a digital environment where storytelling must remain consistent but flexible enough to reflect consumer experiences.

Lundqvist et al. (2013) link storytelling directly to emotional branding, arguing that emotionally charged narratives enhance emotional engagement and brand loyalty, particularly in digital environments where consumers expect personalized content. Zhang et al. (2019) expand this perspective through interactive storytelling, showing that participatory narratives where consumers contribute ideas, co-create content, or engage in brand experiences generate significantly higher engagement than passive storytelling.

Collectively, these studies underscore the increasing importance of digital storytelling and highlight the need for understanding how consumers interpret stories in fragmented, multi-platform environments characterized by interactivity and co-creation.

Research Gap and Problem Statement

Although extensive research establishes storytelling as a powerful marketing tool, most prior studies rely on quantitative metrics such as purchase intention, brand recall, engagement rates, and social media analytics. While these measures confirm that storytelling influences consumer behavior, they offer limited insight into the subjective, emotional, and interpretive processes through which consumers experience brand narratives.

Moreover, in today's fragmented digital ecosystem, consumers engage with brand stories across multiple platforms each with distinct formats, interaction styles, and levels of engagement. Yet there is a notable absence of qualitative research exploring how storytelling elements such as authenticity, emotional resonance, narrative consistency, and interactivity shape consumer perceptions in this multi-platform environment.

Thus, a significant research gap emerges concerning how consumers emotionally interpret, internalize, and respond to brand storytelling, particularly in digital contexts where narratives are dynamic, participatory, and multi-sensory.

3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

How do consumers perceive brand storytelling, and what narrative components elicit emotional engagement and loyalty?

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What emotional responses do brand tales elicit in consumers?

RQ2: Which elements of storytelling engage consumers the most?

RQ3: How does story consistency across digital channels influence consumer engagement?

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative exploratory approach to acquire an in-depth understanding about how consumers perceive as well as emotionally connect with brand storytelling. The qualitative method was selected because it enables the investigation of experiences that are subjective and the discovery of subtle insights that may be missed by quantitative approaches.

Sampling: The study included 30 individuals aged 18 to 45 who regularly follow brands on the internet and interact with their stories content, which included videos, social media postings, and blogs. A purposive sampling strategy was utilized to choose participants that possess direct experiences with brand stories, ensuring that the data obtained was relevant and insightful.

Data Collection: Data was collected through Semi-structured interviews of around 45 minutes each. The questions were intended to stimulate participants to delve into their emotional responses towards brand stories, as well as the significant variables impacting their engagement.

Interview Questions

Main Questions:

1. Can you recall a memorable brand story?
 - Could you elaborate on the story? What was unique about it?
 - What emotions did this tale evoke in you?
 - What certain elements stand out in your memory the most from the brand story?
2. What components of the story resonated with you?
 - Did you personally relate to any of the story's messages?
 - How were the story's characters or situations portrayed by the brand? Did this influence your perception towards the brand?
 - Did the story evoke any feelings in you, such as joy, inspiration, or empathy?

Follow-up Questions:

3. How has this story influenced your perception towards the brand?
 - How did you feel about the brand prior to hearing the story? After reading the narrative, how did it change?
 - Do you feel more devoted to the brand upon hearing their story? Why not?
4. Do you believe that the narrative was authentic?
 - What, in your opinion, made the narrative appear authentic or synthetic?
 - Was there anything in the narrative that caused you to doubt or lose faith in the brand?
5. Was the narrative consistent with your own beliefs or life experiences?
 - Did you relate to the narrative in any way? If yes, how?
 - Do you believe the brand intended to appeal to certain emotions or values? Which ones?
6. How did the narrative style (video, social media post, advertisement) affect your emotional bond with the brand?
 - How did the format shape your perspective of the brand story?
 - Which narrative medium (text, images, or video) was better at evoking strong feelings? Why?
7. Do you recall if the narrative was consistent across several channels (e.g., social media, internet, TV)?
 - Did you see a consistent story across different touchpoints? How did it affect the consistency of the brand in your opinion?
 - Were there any differences or contradictions in how the story was presented across multiple platforms?
8. How did you interact with the brand narrative after experiencing it?
 - Have you communicated the story on social media or shared it with others? Why?
 - Did the story encourage you to buy anything from the brand or learn more about it?

9. Did the brand narrative affect your future action with the brand?
 - Based on this story, would you buy from the particular brand again in the future?
 - After hearing their story, how likely are you to suggest the brand to others?

10. Over time, how do you believe the story affected your emotional connection with the brand?
 - Was the emotional connection made by the brand narrative temporary, or did it last?
 - What is the emotional effect of the particular brand's narrative compared to that of other brands?

Modus Operandi: After interviewing the respondents the transcripts were coded using NVivo software. Open coding was used to find early themes from the responses, resulted via generation of word cloud & thematic analysis frequency bar chart. Themes highlighted during the operation were "Authenticity," "Emotional Resonance," and "Narrative Consistency." Hence, keeping in view the results of thematic analysis, a conceptual model was proposed for the study

Conceptual Framework & Proposed Model of the Study

Brand Storytelling

A key component of this model is brand storytelling, which illustrates how companies use captivating narratives on digital platforms like web pages social media, mobile apps, and new immersive worlds like augmented and virtual reality and the metaverse to communicate their values, identity, and messages. These narratives aim to emotionally engage consumers in addition to providing information, which increases brand recall and connection. Escalas (2004) emphasizes that consumers strengthen their bond with the company by using these storylines to create a sense of personal identity. According to Woodside et al. (2008), by encouraging empathy and resonance, emotionally charged narratives improve brand memory and have an impact on consumer preference. By establishing storytelling as the foundation of content marketing in the modern era and supporting brands in creating consistent, value-driven communication, Pulizzi (2012) provides more evidence in favor of this viewpoint. As a result, storytelling turns into a strategic tactic for establishing enduring emotional bonds with consumers.

Authenticity

In brand storytelling, authenticity refers to the consumer's perception of the genuineness and credibility of a brand's narrative. An authentic brand's narrative strikes a deeper chord with consumers, encouraging long-term engagement, trust, and an emotional bond. Authenticity includes emotional truth, alignment with company values, and conformity to consumer expectations in addition to factual correctness. Beverland (2005) highlighted that as people prefer to make emotional links with companies they believe to be real and honest, authenticity is essential to building strong brand attachments. Additionally, Molleda (2010) emphasized that genuine stories greatly increase a brand's legitimacy and cultivate consumer trust, both of which are critical in relationship marketing. Napoli et al. (2014) emphasized the significance of authenticity in online and offline settings in an era of digital saturation, contending that consumers are more likely to stick with brands that uphold authenticity throughout digital interactions. As a result, authenticity becomes a critical component in generating meaningful and long-term consumer engagement.

Emotional Resonance

Emotional resonance relates to how deeply a brand's narrative affects consumers, evoking emotions such as happiness, nostalgia, empathy, or excitement. Since emotionally charged stories are more likely to grab attention, encourage memory retention, and motivate action, it is a key instrument in brand storytelling. Consumers are prone to internalize a brand's message and form a long-lasting bond with it when they can relate to its narrative on a personal level. Escalas & Bettman (2005) showed that by enabling consumers to identify with the story on an emotional level, emotionally charged stories greatly increase brand preference. According to Heath (2007), emotional storytelling elicits affective responses, which result in unintended brand loyalty that transcends rational decision-making. Smilansky (2009) facilitated this by connecting emotional narratives to experiential marketing, which involves immersive and expressive brand encounters that strengthen consumer-brand connections. As a result, emotional resonance is a key factor in the success of brand storytelling and a potent motivator for consumer engagement.

Narrative Consistency

A brand's narrative coherence and uniformity across digital channels, including social media, websites, mobile applications, and ads, is known as narrative consistency. A brand strengthens its identity and wins over consumers when its concepts, tone, imagery, and message are all consistent. On the other hand, opposing storylines may lead to confusion, weaken the brand's message, and even drive viewers away. Bruhn et al. (2012) highlighted that continuous brand communication

improves consumer perceptions of brand quality and message trustworthiness. The significance of integrated marketing communication (IMC) was emphasized by Kliatchko (2008), who claimed that aligning all storytelling initiatives under a single framework ensures clarity and impact. Furthermore, Singh & Sonnenburg (2012) reported that in an increasingly fragmented digital landscape, narrative consistency improves consumer engagement in addition to preserving a unique brand identity. In a globalized digital environment, story consistency is therefore essential for establishing emotional connections, promoting consumer perceptions, and maintaining sustained brand engagement.

Brand Loyalty as a Consumer Engagement Outcome

Brand loyalty is the ultimate outcome of exceptional brand storytelling, and it occurs when consumers regularly connect with a brand owing to trust, emotional connection, and consistent message. It is about creating a psychological connection that shapes future actions and brand advocacy, not just about making repeat purchases. Over time, storytelling that is genuine, emotionally impactful, and consistent builds trust and fortifies the bond between the consumer and the brand. According to Fournier (1998), brand loyalty is a complex and dynamic connection that is molded by compelling and relevant stories. According to Sweeney and Swait (2008), consumer trust is largely influenced by emotional attachment and message consistency, which in turn promotes recurring engagement and loyalty. Iglesias et al. (2013) additionally discovered that a brand's advocacy and enduring loyalty are fostered when its story and basic principles are in harmony. As a result, brand loyalty does not constitute only a transactional result but rather a relational accomplishment fueled by emotionally compelling and well-crafted digital storytelling.

Proposed Model of the Study

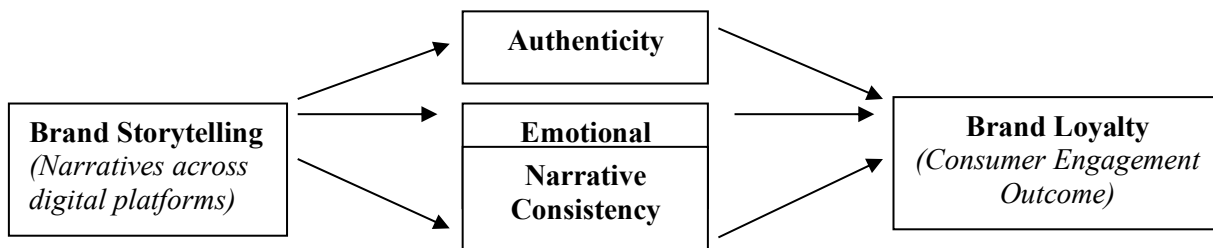


Fig.7.6.1 Represents the proposed model for the study

Figure 7.6.1 depicts the proposed conceptual framework that motivates this research. Authenticity, narrative structure, emotional connection, consistency, and social media interaction are all important aspects of brand storytelling that are integrated into the model and their impact on customer engagement and brand loyalty is examined. These concepts work together to describe how storytelling components influence consumers' perceptions and emotional responses.

Research Analysis & Interpretations through Data Visualization Techniques

Word Cloud Analysis and Interpretation

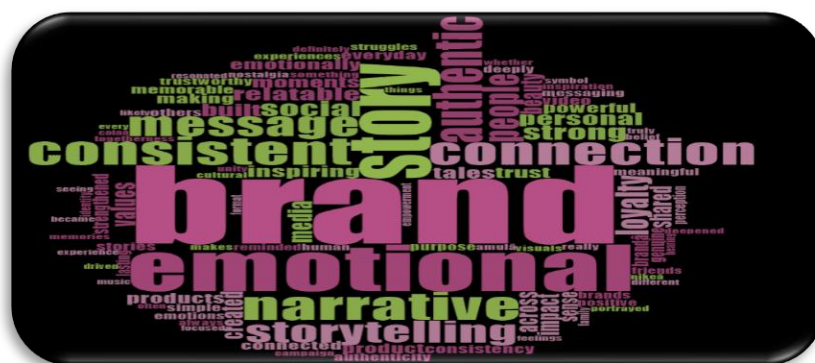


Fig. 7.6.2 Represents Word Cloud Analysis



The word cloud depicts the most frequently recurring terms retrieved from NVivo-analyzed interview transcripts. Word prominence is determined by their relative size, which reflects their frequency of occurrence. Emotions, brand, video, story, inspiration, images, appeal, music, advertising, and experience have all been recognized as key terms.

Interpretation:

The analysis show that consumers significantly identify brand storytelling with emotional and sensory attributes. The prevalence of the term emotions suggests that storytelling is processed primarily through affective responses rather than cognitive evaluation. Furthermore, the frequent use of multimedia elements such as video, images, and music emphasizes the significance of sensory engagement in improving narrative effectiveness.

The prominence of phrases such as inspiration and experience implies that consumers value brand stories as important and personally relevant. Overall, the word cloud shows that brand storytelling is considered an emotionally engaging, visually rich, and experience-driven communication strategy.

Hierarchy Chart Analysis & Interpretation

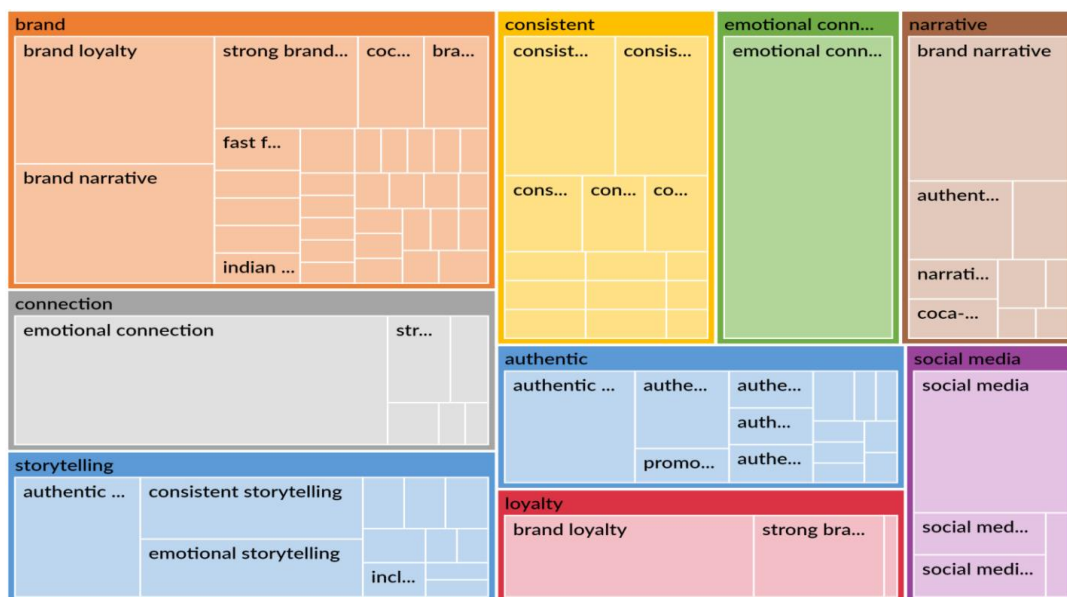


Figure 7.6.3 Represents Hierarchy Chart Analysis

Hierarchy Chart Interpretation

The hierarchy chart divides eight primary themes- authenticity, brand storytelling, connection, consistency, emotional connection, loyalty, narrative, and social media that depicts their sentiment patterns.

The outcomes show that positive sentiment dominates negative sentiment on all themes. For example, brand storytelling (52 positive vs. 4 negative), connection (23 vs. 2), narrative (18 vs. 0), and emotional connection (17 vs. 2) received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Interpretation:

The hierarchy chart demonstrates that customers have highly favorable responses towards brand storytelling, especially when narratives have authenticity, emotional depth, and consistency. The negligible presence of negative sentiment shows that there is little resistance or unhappiness towards storytelling practices

Furthermore, the high level of favorable sentiment concerning social media storytelling suggests that consumers value interactive and digitally mediated stories. The findings underscore that narrative builds trust, improves emotional relationships, and increases total customer engagement, reinforcing its strategic value in brand communication.

Thematic Map Analysis & Interpretation



Figure 7.6.4 Represents Thematic Map of Key Storytelling Dimensions

The thematic analysis identifies recurring patterns across participant responses, which are grouped into the following core themes:

- Authenticity builds trust
- Emotional experiences drive engagement
- Consistency strengthens credibility
- Narratives foster connection and loyalty
- Social media amplifies storytelling reach

Interpretation:

The findings imply that authenticity is a critical predictor of customer trust, as participants consistently chose stories based on true experiences and realistic narratives. Emotional expressiveness has emerged as a major aspect driving engagement, with consumers responding positively to stories that evoke empathy, inspiration, and relatability. Consistency across channels was consistently underlined as critical to preserving credibility and reinforcing brand identity. Participants stated that variations in messaging or tone undermine confidence and limit engagement. Overall, theme analysis shows that brand storytelling is a multifaceted construct that combines emotional, cognitive, and relational components, resulting in stronger consumer-brand relationships and long-term loyalty.

Sentiment Analysis Representation & Interpretation of NVIVO Coding

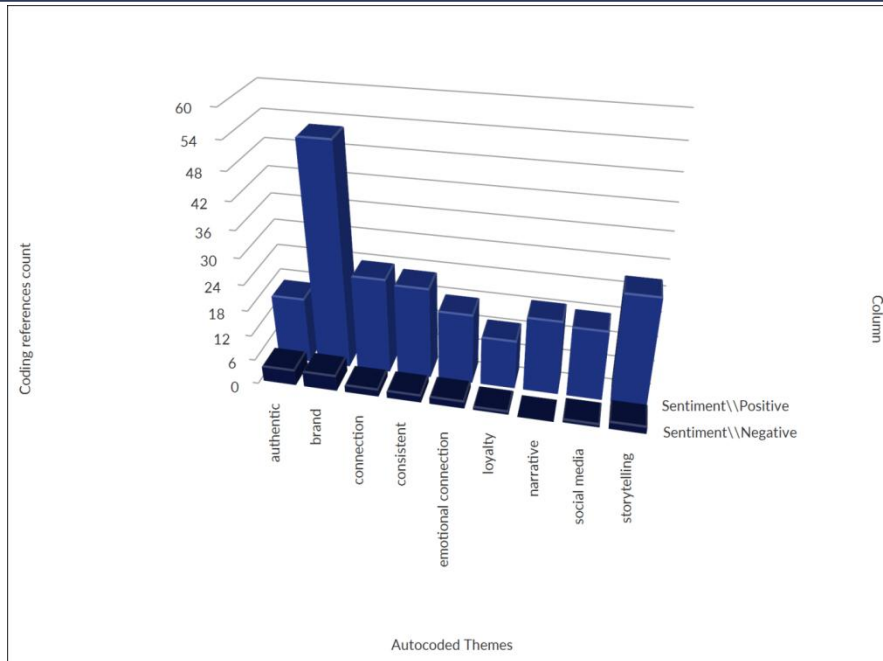


Figure 7.6.5 Represents bar graph distribution across storytelling dimensions

The sentiment analysis shows a largely positive disposition across all storytelling dimensions. Key dimensions such as brand narrative (52 positive vs. 4 negative), connection (23 vs. 2), consistency (22 vs. 2), emotional connection (17 vs. 2), social media storytelling (17 vs. 1), and loyalty (12 vs. 1) all show high favorable sentiment. Notably, the tale exhibits total positive sentiment (18 vs. 0 negative), showing universal acceptance among participants.

Interpretation:

The data indicate that consumers have very positive sentiments regarding narrative-driven brand communication. The significant positive sentiment across constructs demonstrates that storytelling features, particularly emotional connection, consistency, and narrative quality, play an important role in developing favorable consumer responses.

Descriptors like "inspiring," "relatable," and "engaging" suggest that well-crafted brand stories elicit an emotional response from consumers. The insignificant negative feeling implies that unpleasant views develop primarily when narrative is not present in authenticity or consistency. Overall, this result demonstrates that brand storytelling is seen as emotionally engaging, credible, and compelling, which enhances consumer engagement.

	A : authentic	B : brand	C : connection	D : consistent	E : emotional connection	F : loyalty	G : narrative	H : social media	I : storytelling
1 : Sentiment\Negative	4	4	2	2	2	1	0	1	2
2 : Sentiment\Positive	16	52	23	22	17	12	18	17	26

Figure 7.6.6 Represents Sentiment Matrix of NVIVO Coding

The NVivo sentiment matrix emphasizes the dominance of positive sentiment across all coded nodes: authenticity (16 vs. 4), brand (52 vs. 4), connection (23 vs. 2), consistency (22 vs. 2), emotional connection (17 vs. 2), loyalty (12 vs. 1), narrative (18 vs. 0), social media (17 vs. 1), and storytelling (26 vs. 2).

Interpretation:

The analysis reveals that brand storytelling and sense of connection are the most positively viewed constructs, indicating a critical role in increasing consumer engagement. The absence of negative sentiment in the narrative component underscores the power of structured storytelling in shaping consumer perspectives.

The relatively low negative sentiment across all variables suggests minimal resistance to storytelling strategies, with occasional concerns about noticeable inconsistencies or lack of authenticity. Importantly, the high level of positive sentiment across social media and storytelling nodes indicates that digital storytelling platforms considerably improve consumer engagement and message receptivity.

Overall, the sentiment matrix demonstrates that brand storytelling is a unified and positively viewed mechanism in which emotional resonance, narrative clarity, and consistency all contribute to stronger consumer engagement and enhanced brand loyalty.

Insights from Sentiment Analysis

Both results show that positive sentiment dominates consumer perceptions of brand storytelling. The convergence of high positive across all aspects demonstrates storytelling's effectiveness and widespread acceptance as a meaningful communication approach.

The research results confirm that emotional engagement, authenticity, and compelling narrative strength are the principal drivers of positive consumer responses, with negative sentiment remaining marginal and context-specific. This establishes storytelling as an effective strategy for developing memorable, trustworthy, and engaging brand experiences.

6. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Consumers perceive brand storytelling as a highly emotional and relatable form of communication that strengthens their connection with a brand. The analysis shows that narratives evoking empathy, authenticity, and inspiration generate the strongest emotional reactions, making stories feel meaningful and personally relevant. When storytelling incorporates real experiences, human elements, and visually engaging content, consumers develop a deeper sense of trust and attachment. Moreover, consistency across digital platforms enhances the credibility of the narrative, reinforcing a unified brand identity. As a result, consumers are more likely to build long-term relationships with brands whose stories are authentic, emotionally resonant, and coherently presented, demonstrating that these narrative components play a crucial role in fostering emotional engagement and brand loyalty.

RQ1: What emotional responses do brand tales elicit in consumers?

The analysis shows that consumers experience a range of strong emotional responses when engaging with brand stories. Participants consistently expressed empathy, nostalgia, inspiration, and emotional warmth, indicating that emotional resonance plays a central role in how brand narratives are interpreted. Stories that reflect real human experiences, struggles, or relatable moments triggered deeper emotional involvement, helping individuals form meaningful connections with the brand. These emotional triggers not only enhance engagement but also strengthen long-term brand loyalty. The high frequency of emotion-related words and overwhelmingly positive sentiment further confirm that emotion is the primary driver of consumer-story interaction, shaping how consumers relate to and remember brand narratives.

RQ2: Which elements of storytelling engage consumers the most?

Consumers were particularly drawn to stories that blend strong visual elements and emotional depth. Visual content—such as videos, imagery, appealing aesthetics, and music—played a crucial role in capturing attention and enhancing the overall storytelling experience. Beyond visuals, authenticity and alignment with personal values emerged as key factors that keep consumers connected to the story. Participants responded most positively to narratives that felt genuine, meaningful, and inspirational. These stories were memorable because they offered clarity, emotional appeal, and relatable messages. The word cloud and frequency counts highlight that emotions, visuals, inspiration, and brand values form the core components that elevate consumer engagement in brand storytelling.

RQ3: How does story consistency across digital channels influence consumer engagement?

The analysis reveals that consistency across digital platforms is essential for building trust and maintaining consumer engagement. Participants expressed higher levels of confidence and loyalty when brands presented a unified story across social media, websites, and advertisements. In contrast, inconsistency—such as a change in tone, message, or visual style—



led to confusion and reduced emotional involvement. A coherent narrative across channels helps strengthen brand identity, ensuring that consumers form a stable and reliable impression of the brand. Moreover, consistent storytelling on social media further boosts interactive engagement, as consumers appreciate familiar and predictable brand messaging. The hierarchy chart and thematic patterns reinforce the finding that story consistency is a critical trust-building factor in today's multi-platform digital environment.

Discussion & Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that consumers view brand storytelling as a meaningful, emotionally rich experience rather than a simple promotional tool. Interviews and NVivo analysis showed that stories evoking empathy, nostalgia, and inspiration create deeper emotional reactions and strengthen brand connection. Authentic stories—especially those based on real experiences, personal struggles, or relatable values—were perceived as more trustworthy and memorable. Visual elements such as videos, music, and appealing imagery further enhanced narrative engagement, making stories more immersive and easier to connect with. Additionally, consistency across digital platforms emerged as a crucial factor; consumers felt more confident in brands whose stories remained stable and coherent across social media, websites, and advertisements.

This study concludes that effective brand storytelling depends on emotional resonance, authenticity, and cross-platform coherence. Consumers become loyal to stories that feel real, inspiring, and personally relevant. Narrative clarity and visual appeal increase engagement, while inconsistency weakens trust. As digital communication becomes more fragmented, maintaining a unified storytelling voice becomes essential for building strong relationships. Overall, storytelling serves as a powerful strategy that helps brands move beyond functional benefits to create emotional value and lasting consumer loyalty.

Significance & Implications

This research contributes significantly to narrative marketing by offering a qualitative understanding of how consumers emotionally interpret brand stories—an area previously dominated by quantitative outcome-based studies. By uncovering how authenticity, emotional tone, and consistency influence perceptions, the study fills a major gap in understanding the subjective and psychological side of storytelling. It highlights why emotional experiences matter more to consumers than transactional messages, and provides deeper insights into how stories shape brand trust and loyalty in today's digital environment.

The study has practical implications for marketers, advertisers, and content creators. Brands should focus on crafting emotionally meaningful, authentic stories that reflect their values and resonate with consumer identities. Investment in strong visual and multimedia storytelling is essential to deepen engagement. Maintaining consistent narratives across all digital platforms is critical for strengthening trust and brand credibility. These insights can guide the development of more effective storytelling strategies, helping brands build long-term emotional relationships with consumers and stand out in competitive markets.

References

1. Anette Lundqvist., Liljander, V., Gummerus, J., & van Riel, A. (2013). The impact of storytelling on brand equity. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(4), 283–297.
2. Annette Simmons. (2006). *The Story Factor*. Basic Books.
3. Arch G. Woodside., Sood, S., & Miller, K. E. (2008). When consumers and brands talk: Storytelling theory. *Psychology & Marketing*, 25(2), 97–145.
4. Bernd Schmitt. (2011). *Experience Marketing: Concepts, Frameworks and Consumer Insights*. Foundations and Trends in Marketing.
5. Beverland, M. B. (2005). Crafting brand authenticity: The case of luxury wines. *Journal of Management Studies*, 42(5), 1003–1029.
6. Bruhn, M., Schoenmueller, V., & Schäfer, D. B. (2012). Are social media replacing traditional media in terms of brand equity creation? *Management Research Review*, 35(9), 770–790.



7. Christina Ashley., & Tracy Tuten. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(1), 15–27.
8. Douglas B. Holt. (2002). Why do brands cause trouble? *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(1), 70–90.
9. Edelman. (2022). Edelman Trust Barometer 2022.
10. Elena Delgado-Ballester., & Munuera-Alemán, J. L. (2005). Brand trust in the context of consumer loyalty. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39(11/12), 1238–1258.
11. Escalas, J. E. (2004). Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1–2), 168–180.
12. Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2005). Self-construal, reference groups, and brand meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(3), 378–389.
13. Forbes. (2023). The Power of Storytelling in Marketing.
14. Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), 343–373.
15. Heath, R. (2007). Emotional persuasion in advertising: A hierarchy of effects approach. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 47(3), 297–310.
16. HubSpot. (2023). The State of Marketing Report 2023
17. Iglesias, O., Singh, J. J., & Batista-Foguet, J. M. (2013). The role of brand experience and affective commitment in determining brand loyalty. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(7), 551–566.
18. Jennifer L. Escalas. (2004). Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1–2), 168–180.
19. Joe Pulizzi. (2012). The rise of storytelling as the new marketing. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 28(2), 116–123.
20. Klaus Fog., Budtz, C., & Yakaboylu, B. (2010). *Storytelling: Branding in Practice*. Springer.
21. Kliatchko, J. (2008). Revisiting the IMC construct: A revised definition and four pillars. *International Journal of Advertising*, 27(1), 133–160.
22. Lena Mossberg. (2008). Storytelling: Branding in experiential marketing. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 14(3), 195–206.
23. Molleda, J. C. (2010). Authenticity and the construct's dimensions in public relations and communication research. *Journal of Communication Management*, 14(3), 223–236.
24. Napoli, J., Dickinson-Delaporte, S., & Beverland, M. B. (2014). Measuring consumer-based brand authenticity. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(6), 1090–1098.
25. Peter Guber. (2011). *Tell to Win: Connect, Persuade, and Triumph with the Hidden Power of Story*. Crown Business.
26. Philip Kotler., & Kevin Lane Keller. (2012). *Marketing Management* (14th ed.). Pearson.
27. Pulizzi, J. (2012). The rise of storytelling as the new marketing. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 28(2), 116–123.
28. Rick Gilliam., & Alex Zablah. (2013). Storytelling during crisis. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 150–157.
29. Simon Hudson., Huang, L., Roth, M., & Madden, T. (2015). The influence of social media interactions. *Tourism Management*, 47, 68–76.
30. Singh, S., & Sonnenburg, S. (2012). Brand performances in social media. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(4), 189–197.



-
31. Smilansky, S. (2009). *Experiential marketing: A practical guide to interactive brand experiences*. Kogan Page.
 32. Stephen Brown., Kozinets, R. V., & Sherry, J. F. (2003). Teaching old brands new tricks: Retro branding. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(3), 19–33.
 33. Stephen Denning. (2005). *The Leader's Guide to Storytelling*. Jossey-Bass.
 34. Stephen Herskovitz., & Malcolm Crystal. (2010). The essential brand persona: Storytelling and branding. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 31(3), 21–28.
 35. Susan Fournier. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), 343–373.
 36. Sweeney, J. C., & Swait, J. (2008). The effects of brand credibility on customer loyalty. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 15(3), 179–193.
 37. Woodside, A. G., Sood, S., & Miller, K. E. (2008). When consumers and brands talk: Storytelling theory and research in psychology and marketing. *Psychology & Marketing*, 25(2), 97–145.
 38. Xiaoyan Zhang. et al. (2019). Interactive storytelling and engagement. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*..
-