

Unveiling the Power of Storytelling: A Comparative Analysis of Consumer vs. Brand Narratives in Shaping Favorable Attitude Toward Brands Through Emotions and Cognition

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling, as an interactive form of communication, is key to delivering product information compellingly and fostering consumer acceptance and engagement. Stories may originate from companies or consumers. Brand storytelling has emerged as a pivotal component of companies' communication strategies, facilitating the expression of values and fostering robust customer relationships. This study explores the effectiveness of consumer storytelling versus brand storytelling in shaping brand attitudes. It was experimental research involving 384 respondents randomly assigned to two groups that were either exposed to consumer or brand stories. Through comparative analysis, consumer storytelling emerged as superior in eliciting positive brand attitudes, cognition, and emotions. However, its direct impact on brand attitude was not significant. Instead, the study uncovers the mediating role of cognition and emotion, highlighting their crucial influence on shaping favorable brand perceptions. Consumer storytelling, characterized by its emphasis on real values and emotional engagement, enhances cognitive personalization and imagery processing, fostering deeper consumer-brand connections. These insights underscore the imperative for emotionally resonant and cognitively stimulating storytelling in brand communication. This study contributes to the scant literature on examining the comparative effectiveness of consumer brand storytelling versus firm-generated brand storytelling. It elucidates the underlying mechanisms driving the superiority of consumer storytelling in shaping favorable brand attitudes. Contextually situated within the Pakistani market, particularly focusing on clothing buying behavior, this research offers actionable insights for brand managers seeking to harness the power of storytelling to garner favorable consumer responses and enhance brand resonance.

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing serves as the vital link between society and individuals, fostering innovation and nurturing communities through the exchange of value, ultimately shaping a positive impact on the world (Kotler, 2002). Marketing in this emerging world has gone through many phases (Dias & Cavaleiro, 2022). Marketers need to be cognizant of the new challenges and opportunities coming their way, as consumers are more informed and understand the market better (Crockett & Davis, 2016). One of the contemporary challenges that marketers face today is to understand and analyze the right way of communicating and conveying messages to consumers to make them converse and convert (Chandy et al., 2021; Raoof et al., 2020). A recent trend is to connect with customers through engaging brand stories to develop favorable responses from them (Junior et al., 2023)

Storytelling is an interactive communication between two entities: a speaker who narrates the story and a listener who absorbs and understands the information presented in the form of a story (Page & Thomas, 2011). Consumers' sentimental reactions are independent of their intellectual processing, but they are closely connected to each other (Kuuru & Närvänen, 2019). Storytelling stimulates consumers' sentiments (Lee et al., 2015).

Storytelling does not always trigger a response from consumers, but only those stories that are meaningful leading towards a positive response from buyers (Boldosova & Luto, 2019). Consumers are more likely to remember and understand the story if it has organized information (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004). Therefore, a story needs to accommodate a sequence of events. When consumers are exposed to stories, they imagine the scenario and create a brand image in their minds. Among all other formats, a narrative story is more likely to be imprinted in consumers' minds and processed more significantly (Twitchell, 2004) that can lead towards repurchase of a product (Olson et al., 2019). The effect of narration increases when consumers explain events. The narrative story influences brand attitude and guides consumers in their purchase decision-making (Yueh & Zheng, 2019).

The brand stories either originate from marketers or consumers. The story of a marketer in a marketplace is built through the narrative and tends to be very different from the one consumer tells, as the perspective changes for both. These stories consist of causality, plot, characters, and chronology (Granitz & Forman, 2015), but both of them have an emotional and cognitive impact on an individual (Bruner, 1987). The narrative in the form of a story makes people dream of whatever they want, as It enables an individual to think and imagine a new world (Yuch & Zheng, 2019).

Consumers' brand storytelling is the emotional affiliation between an individual and a brand to which they relate and feel a connection (Magdalena et al. , 2020). In Consumer storytelling, consumers share their experience with a brand regarding how they feel, what they expect, and their feedback provides marketers with valuable insight (Granitz & Forman, 2015).

Another source of brand storytelling comes from marketers, who narrate the story to consumers so that they connect with brand's status and brand values created for them (Mitchell & Clark, 2021). Marketers use storytelling to raise awareness, crafting their brand image because storytelling is an effective tool that plays a crucial role in conveying messages to the audience (Delgado-Ballester & Fernandez-Sabiote, 2016). Marketers can also use storytelling as a tool to transmit a real, authentic, and transparent brand image (Fog et al, 2010). When marketers use strategies like relevant storytelling to convey a message, customers tend to benefit from the brand more and criticize it less (Rosen, 2000)

The influence of brand storytelling, whether via consumers or firms, has received attention as a recent area of research. Recent literature suggests that consumers' brand storytelling is relatively more effective and positively perceived than firm-generated brand storytelling (Lund et al., 2019), but there are very few comparative studies. This study contributes to the literature review in three aspects. First, it aims to contribute to the scant literature examining the comparative effectiveness of consumer brand storytelling and firm-generated brand storytelling through experimental research. Second, it aims to examine underlying factors that indicate why consumer storytelling is superior to brand storytelling in crafting a favorable attitude toward the brand. The third contribution is contextual. It is arguably the first study in the Pakistani market, especially focusing on clothing buying behavior. This study will help brand managers understand the role and usage of brand storytelling in reaching out to their target audience to get favorable consumer responses. To make it easier for the reader, we will refer to firm-generated brand storytelling through brand storytelling (BS) and consumer-generated brand storytelling through consumer storytelling (CS).

Theoretical Background

Narrative Transportation Theory

Narrative transportation theory, developed by Green and Brock (2000), is a psychological framework that explores how individuals become immersed in a narrative, whether it's a story, movie, or other forms of communication. The theory suggests that when individuals are transported into a narrative, they undergo a cognitive and emotional journey, temporarily escaping their reality and engaging with the story on a deep level. Chronology and causality help construct any story in people's brains (Escalas, 2013). Roles and events are created at the beginning, the middle, and the end. Simultaneously, causality links the events. The continuation of this sequence helps the audience develop a story in their brains (Woodside et al., 2008).

Narrative transportation is a process that aids in information processing involving attention, feelings, and imagination (Seyfi & Uzunçarşılı Soydaş, 2017). It profoundly influences the persuasive nature of a story. At times, listeners or readers may feel completely lost or highly involved during the storytelling. Consequently, the negative cognitive responses, such as criticism and counterarguments, decrease, positively influencing the recipients' responses (Green & Brock, 2000). The way narrative transportation occurs in a story creates an impact on listeners' or readers' perceptions, making them believe in the realism of the narrative (Feifei &

Mimi, 2022). Hence, the narrative transportation of a story, attracts consumers and strengthens the persuasive effect (Escalas & Stern, 2003).

Kang et al. (2020) and Grigaliunaite and Pileliene (2016) proposed in the field of marketing as well as advertising that a story has the power to generate a solid emotional connection with consumers. They also added that a narrative story is more likely to increase or create purchase intentions compared to an informational story because brand storytelling can easily connect with consumers.

In the light of the Narrative Transportation Theory, when consumers listen to or read the narrative information, it has the power to impact their attitudes and behavior (Seyfi & Uzunçarşılı Soydaş, 2017). Thus, consumers believe the story.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Storytelling

Brand storytelling is now one of the most powerful tools in advertising (Yang & Kang, 2021). A good brand story must be well-crafted and organized in a manner that captivates the attention of consumers (Weinberg, 2021). Otherwise, it can have adverse effects, such as loss of connection with consumers. Without structure, a brand narrative story does not become memorable, recognizable, and appealing (Walter & Gioglio, 2018). Consumers may feel disconnected from a series of events when jumping from one part to another part of the story in the hope of understanding the concept (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). This indicates that it has become essential for a brand to construct its brand story most memorably; otherwise, the entire advertising campaign may not yield significant returns.

Brands use storytelling methods to communicate and build a strong emotional and cognitive bond with their target audience (Fog et al., 2005). According to Kaufman (2003), brand storytelling has become an enormous and effective tool of communication. Brands are striving to make their stories different from those of other local and international competitors in the market (Delgado-Ballester, 2020). Over time, it becomes evident that a brand can quickly establish and maintain its relationship and reputation with consumers with the help of effective and meaningful brand storytelling (Júnior et al., 2023)

Technology ignites the brand storytelling process. With social media and the internet, spreading any brand information now takes a matter of seconds (Moin, 2020). Through this strategy, companies can breathe life into their business and provide vast brand exposure to the most relevant audience. Consequently, consumers have more opportunities to interact with brand stories. On the one hand, it benefits brands that their stories reach so many consumers in the blink of an eye (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). On the other hand, it becomes challenging to control the flow of information (Kang et al., 2019). If a negative brand story spreads, it gets tough to maintain brand values and attitudes.

Consumer Storytelling

Storytelling significantly impacts consumers especially, when it comes from another consumer. Individuals are more interested in telling and sharing stories that connect with them unconsciously, portraying a personal image, and conveying meaning rooted in their culture (Zhang et al., 2012). Delgado and Escalas (2004) have stated that storytelling influences interpersonal relationships and judgments. According to McGregor and Holmes (1999), storytelling has a two-dimensional impact. One dimension involves recounting experiences happening in a consumer's mind, but with their perception; the second involves a specific slippage from the fundamental factors of the episodes that are supposed to be portrayed. Consumers often utilize this type of slippage to craft a compelling story.

Emotions and Cognition

Emotions are feelings that can evoke different expressions. When you are happy you behave differently, as compared to when you are sad. Emotions affect our judgment and play a significant role in our lives (Reeve, 2018). Cognition is defined as a human-made perception of relatable things, experiences, and events from the past, and it is related to their mental processing (Karampourioti & Wiedmann, 2021). Cognition is the mental process of understanding, acquiring, and experiencing knowledge and information to become more aware (Human-Vogel, 2004). Well-structured and organized storytelling has a prominent effect on consumers' memory (Burke & Srull 1988; Tulving & Psotka, 1971). Lang et al. (1989) further explained that the chronological order of a narrative story helps enhance consumers' memories.

Brand Attitude

The brand attitude tends to evaluate whether the brand is favorable or unfavorable in consumers' perception (Park, 2005). Fishbein and Ajzen (1977) proposed that brand attitude is interlinked with the consumers' preferences towards a particular brand. In other words, Howard and Sheth (1969) stated that brand attitude is based on consumers' preferences, evaluations, and trust in the brand. Narrative storytelling has a persuasive effect on consumers' cognition with influential power to drive emotional appeal and create brand attitudes. When consumers are highly satisfied with the brand, they are more likely to proceed to the next step, i.e., purchase intention. It can be concluded that the impact of brand attitude affects purchase decisions. emphasizing the importance of brand attitude (Shin & Yoo, 2004).

Hypotheses Development

Consumer Story and Brand Attitude

The brand story generated by a company could be perceived as irrelevant, especially when compared to consumer stories, which are considered more reliable and relatable due to the increasing technology, educational backgrounds of consumers, and globalization that make it easier for consumers to use their cognitive thinking to develop stories (Escalas, 2004). People make even more sense of it if the story is spontaneous. Consumers' story helps brands establish

attitudes, images, and elevate their positioning (Muniz et al., 2015). In other words, consumer storytelling helps other consumers connect and relate to the brand, contributing to building a favorable attitude toward the brand (Grace & Kaufman, 2013). The narrative of consumers helps shape product information according to consumers' points of view (Zaltman, 2003). The effect of narration increases when consumers are explaining events. The narrative story influences brand attitude, leading to purchase decision-making (Yueh & Zheng, 2019).

Hypothesis 1: The brand attitude will be more favorable in the consumer story group than brand story group

Emotions and Cognition

Consumers, when considering storytelling, get triggered by both emotions and cognition. Together, these elements affect an individual's mind mapping, cognitive processing, and emotional attitude. Emotions play a crucial role in cognitive processing influencing decision making, intentional effort, and memory processing (Kuuru & Närvänen, 2019).

Emotion is one of the most prominent components that affect consumers' attitudes toward a brand. It includes both positive and negative feelings such as joy, love, sadness, and anger. Both types of emotions strongly contribute to creating a perception in consumers' minds. Moreover, positive and negative emotions have both long-term and short-term effects on the minds of consumers.

Consumer storytelling enables others to understand the brand, and the story helps articulate the experience (Fog et al., 2005). Consumer storytelling allows people to evoke positive emotions because consumers' stories make brand information relevant, authentic, and reliable. It aids in the cognitive processing and remembrance of a brand, which has a positive impact on brand attitude (Denning, 2006).

According to Zemke (1990), a story can stimulate consumers' moods and behaviors, such as sadness, nervousness, happiness, etc. Furthermore, it indicates that stories could change consumers' moods in positive and negative manners. When consumers are emotionally excited due to a narrative story, they are more focused and inclined to remember and share the story with others. However, if the story fails to excite them, consumers may forget it quickly (Hong et al., 2018). Stories have an impact on consumers' cognitive processing of information and resulting emotions. Storytelling plays an important role in increasing the brand's value and enabling consumers to become emotionally engaged with the brand (Mills & Robson, 2019).

Hypothesis 2: Consumer storytelling will lead to a higher level of cognition than a brand story

Hypothesis 3: Consumer storytelling will lead to a higher level of emotions in comparison to brand story.

Some prior studies have illuminated the influential role of consumer storytelling across various dimensions, such as brand attitude (Nagar, 2019), purchase intention (Solja et al., 2018), and brand preference (Kao et al., 2017). This means that a good, well-organized, and positive

consumer story has a positive impact on brand attitude, purchase intention, and brand preference (Hong et al., 2022).

The marketing research stated that emotions and cognitive involvement construct a brand’s attitude. The cognitive element depends on logical arguments, whereas the emotional part is about the brand's feelings. Therefore, a brand's attitude could be changed or adjusted based on how the storytelling is processed and which type of emotions are associated with it. The undeniable fact is that emotions and cognitive aspects are crucial in shaping a brand’s position in consumers’ minds. When the narrative story is emotional, it is more likely to influence consumers' reactions, increase their attention rate, and impact brand attitudes (Panda et al., 2013).

We assume that:

Hypothesis 4: Consumer story leads to higher emotions which consequently lead to a favorable brand attitude

Hypothesis 5: Consumer story leads to higher cognitive activity which consequently leads to a favorable brand attitude.

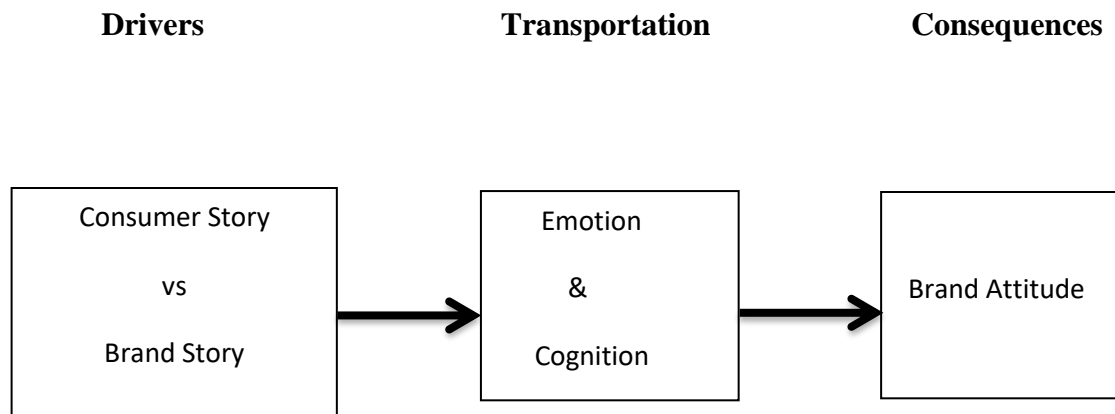


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used experimental research design using 2 (Brand Story vs Consumer Story) * 1 (Clothing brand) factorial design. The stimulus for the data collection was either a consumer story or a brand story. The subjects were randomly assigned to two groups. In one group, participants were shown a brand story crafted by the company, while in another group, participants were shown a consumer story crafted by consumers before data collection. A print advertisement highlighting a clothing brand was shown to participants. The advertisement was real, but to control its branding effect, its name was replaced with the fictitious brand name. Both versions of advertisements were

reviewed by an industry expert to ensure external validity. Data was collected from 384 respondents, with 179 participants in the brand story group and 205 participants in the consumer story group.

Measurement

To measure emotions, cognition and brand attitude, established scales from previous studies were used. The scales to measure cognition and emotion were adopted from Schmitt's study (1999), while the brand attitude scale was adapted. The two manipulated variables were brand storytelling and consumer storytelling. The independent variables were assigned dummy codes for data analysis. The consumer story was coded as 1 and the brand story as 0. We labeled the brand story with "story A" And the consumer story with "story B" (see Appendix A).

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using Smart-PLS 3 software.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile

Male participants accounted for 45%, while the female participants constituted 55% of the total. Examining age distribution, the largest segment was in the 27 to 35 age range, comprising 31% of respondents. Following closely, 29% fell within the 18 to 26 age brackets, with the 36 to 44 age group representing 27%. A smaller proportion, 11%, belonged to the 45 to 53 range, while those above 53 constituted 2%. When considering educational attainment, most respondents, 42% held a bachelor's degree. Those with a master's degree comprised 29%, followed by 15% with intermediate education, 6% with matriculation, and 8% with other educational backgrounds.

Manipulation check

To verify the success of experimental stimuli, two statements were included in the questionnaire for both groups: After showing the brand/consumer story, respondents were asked "The above story highlights the company's brand perspective" and "The above story highlights the consumer's brand perspective". The means of manipulation check statements groups were compared through a t-test. (refer to Table 1 for manipulation statistics). In the brand storytelling group, respondents' perception of consumer perspective and brand perspective was compared through the t-test. The mean of brand perspective ($M= 3.212$; $SD = 1.333$) was significantly higher than consumer perspective ($M=1.756$; $SD=0.964$), $t(179) = 12.783$, $p < .05$. It means that in the brand story group, respondents also perceived that brand perspective was presented in the story. Similarly, in the consumer story group, the mean of the consumer perspective ($M=3.463$, $SD=1.333$) was significantly higher than the brand perspective. ($M=1.810$; $SD=0.934$), $t(205) = 13.873$, $p < .05$. It also means that most of the respondents in the consumer story group also perceived consumer perspective in the story shown to them. Therefore, both experimental manipulations were successful.

Table 1: Manipulation check statistic

Comparison	Mean	Sig.	t
BP vs. CP	3.2123 vs. 1.7561	0.000	12.783
CP vs. BP	3.4634 vs. 1.8101	0.000	13.873

BP: Brand perspective, CP: Consumer perspective.

First three hypothesis required comparison of consumer and brand story to influence emotion, cognition and brand attitude. Therefore, we checked whether means of emotions, cognition, and brand attitude were significantly different in both groups or not. An Independent t-test was performed to compare the means of consumer story and brand story group. Table II shows that emotions in the consumer story group (M=3.967, SD=0.834) were significantly higher than in the brand story group (M=3.407, SD=0.994), $t(179) = 5.987, p < 0.05$. The cognitive processing was also observed more in the consumer story group (M=3.988, SD=0.789) than in the brand story group (M=3.396, SD=1.040), $t(179) = 6.313, P < 0.05$. Likewise, there was significantly higher favorable brand attitude in consumer story group (M=4.127, SD=0.694) than the one present in the brand story group (M=3.542, SD=1.029), $t(179) = 6.584, p < 0.05$. Therefore, the first three hypotheses (H1, H2 and H3) dealing with the supremacy of consumer story over brand story were accepted. In the second stage of data analysis, structure equation modelling technique was used to find the direct and indirect impact of consumer stories on shaping favorable brand attitude

Table II: Consumer Story vs Brand Story Comparison

Comparison	Mean		Sig.	T
	CS	vs BS		
Emotions	3.967	vs 3.407	0.035	5.987
Cognition	3.988	vs 3.396	0.000	6.313
Attitude	4.127	vs 3.542	0.000	6.584

Note: CS: Consumer Story, BS: Brand Story

Measurement Model

Cronbach's alpha is a measure determining the reliability of a construct. Results in Table III clearly show that the outer loadings of all items are greater than 0.7. The composite reliability of all the constructs is also above the required threshold. Convergent validity of scales is ensured if Average Variance Extracted (AVE) criterion values are greater than 0.5 (Surucu & Maslakci, 2020). The following table shows that the AVE of each construct is above the benchmark.

Table III: Reliability and Convergent Validity Tests

Latent	Construct	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Attitude	All in all, I evaluate it positively.	0.846	0.914	0.933	0.700
	I'm sure about my evaluation of this brand	0.826			
	I like the way it looks	0.818			
	I believe this brand appeals to people like me	0.845			
	I enjoy this brand	0.846			
Cognition	I can easily imagine the brand in my mind	0.838	0.823	0.895	0.739
	The brand tries to convince me.	0.845			
	The brand stimulates my curiosity.	0.888			
Emotion	The brand appeals to my creativity.	0.845	0.841	0.904	0.759
	The brand drives my mood.	0.860			
	The brand makes me respond emotionally	0.877			
	The brand appeals to my feelings.	0.876			

Measurement Model (Discriminant Validity Tests)

Discriminant validity is the degree to which a measure of one construct is distinguishable from other constructs (Yusoff et al., 2020). The Fornell-Larcker criterion is a statistical method for evaluating the discriminant validity of a measurement model (Yusoff et al., 2020). To ensure discriminant validity through this test, the square root of the average variance extracted by a construct must be greater than the construct's correlation with all other constructs (Afthanorhan et al., 2021). Table IV reflects that the square root of each construct is greater than its correlation with other constructs.

Table IV: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	BA	CO	EM
BA	0.837		
CO	0.804	0.860	
EM	0.768	0.768	0.871

BA: Brand attitude, CO: Cognition,
EM: Emotion

PLS Structural Model

The results in the below table display that consumer storytelling is found to have positive and significant impact on cognition ($b=0.310$, $p<0.05$) and emotion ($b=0.294$, $p<0.05$).

Table V: Path Coefficients

Direct Relationships	Beta	T-Statistics	P Values	Result
CS -> CO	0.310	6.86	0	Significant
CS -> EM	0.294	6.417	0	Significant
CS -> BA	0.057	1.945	0.052	Insignificant
CO -> BA	0.511	9.313	0	Significant
EM -> BA	0.358	6.461	0	Significant

BA: Brand attitude, CS: Consumer storytelling, CO: Cognition,
EM: Emotion, BS: Brand storytelling

The results in the above table V shows that consumer storytelling (0.057 , $p>0.05$) is found to have insignificant impact on the brand attitude (p -value greater than 0.05). This leads to acceptance of our null hypothesis. The results also show that cognition and emotion constructs are found to have positive and significant impact on the brand attitude (p -value less than 0.05).

The results of mediating the impact of emotion and cognition is mentioned in the below table VI. Both emotions and cognition are mediating the impact of consumer story telling on brand attitude. Therefore, hypotheses 4 and 5 are accepted.

Table VI: Mediating Role of Emotion and Cognition

Mediating Relationships	Beta	T Statistics	P Values	Result
CS -> EM -> BA	0.105	4.588	0.000	Significant
CS -> CO -> BA	0.159	5.490	0.000	Significant

Brand Attitude, CS: Consumer storytelling, CO: Cognition,
EM: Emotion, BS: Brand storytelling

Model Performance

The performance of the model is analyzed by using following measures: The adjusted r-square of brand attitude stands at 0.702 or 70.2% i.e. all the independent factors explain 70.2 % variation in predicting brand attitude (table VII).

Table VII: R-square

Construct	R Square	R Square Adjusted
BA	0.704	0.702
CO	0.096	0.094
EM	0.087	0.084

Note: BA: Brand attitude, CO: Cognition,
EM: Emotion

Table VIII: Hypothesis Assessment Summary

S. NO.	Hypothesis	Result
H1	The brand attitude will be more favorable in consumer story group than brand story group	Accepted
H2	Consumer storytelling will lead to higher level of cognition than a brand story	Accepted
H3	Consumer storytelling will lead to higher level of emotions in comparison to brand story	Accepted
H4	H4: Consumer story leads to higher emotions which consequently lead to favorable brand attitude	Accepted
H5	Consumer story leads to higher cognitive activity which consequently leads to favorable brand attitude	Accepted

Brand storytelling has always been an important part of the company's communication strategy. Nowadays, brands are realizing the power of storytelling to express their values and build strong customer relationships (Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2020). This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of consumer storytelling in comparison to brand storytelling (firm-generated storytelling). First, it compared the impact of both types of stories on brand attitude, cognition, and emotions (hypotheses 1-3). In all three cases, consumer storytelling was found superior to brand storytelling. In the second stage, the mechanism of the effect of storytelling over brand attitude was examined through structure equation modeling. The direct impact of consumer storytelling on brand attitude was insignificant. There are not many studies that have empirically examined the comparative performance of CS and BS. The study by Hong et al., (2022) is arguably the only exception. Contrary to the findings of Hong et al., (2022), consumer storytelling did not directly impact the brand attitude in our study. However, there were significant mediating effects of cognition and emotions in the relationship between consumer storytelling and brand attitude (hypotheses 4-5). It reflects the importance of influencing consumer emotions and cognitive processing to shape favorable brand attitude.

One of the most crucial characteristics of stories is that they instill high standards of quality based on real values to make the consumer emotionally attached to the brand (Lundqvist et al., 2013). Moreover, when consumers engage in storytelling, it not only enhances cognitive personalization but also enriches imagery processing. This, in turn, leads to improvements in both consumer cognition and emotional experiences. Storytelling about brands allows consumers to relive their special moments and endorse their memories (Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2020). Consumers' brand storytelling reveals a greater intensity of positive emotions, leading to a higher brand attitude. To improve brand attitudes, the advertisement should be emotionally engaging (Pan et. al, 2019). Storytelling with weak emotional or cognitive messages can play no role in influencing consumers' perceptions of the brand.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

The purpose of this study was to find the effectiveness of consumer stories and firm-generated brand stories. This study also aimed at understanding the mechanism through which these stories impact behavioral outcomes, such as brand attitude. The findings indicated that consumer stories resulted in a high level of emotions, increased cognitive processing, and a more favorable brand attitude than brand stories generated by the firm. Studying the influencing mechanism of stories revealed that consumer stories could not impact brand attitude directly. The efficacy of consumer stories was demonstrated when these stories emotionally engaged the target audience and resulted in active cognitive processing, leading to favorable brand attitude.

The findings of the study indicated that consumer storytelling via emotion and cognition has a positive impact on brand attitude, so marketers should work on these factors. Storytelling must be transparent and authentic for people, as they believe in the story told while they imagine the brand. Consumer storytelling is an emotional affiliation between an individual and a brand, which relates to a strong connection between a consumer and a brand. In this time of social media and technology, people read reviews of consumers before shopping, and consumer feedback is an important aspect of it. In the field of marketing as well as advertising, a story has the power to generate a solid emotional connection with consumers.

The research shows that emotion and cognition have a significant impact on brand attitude. It indicates that people imagine the brand when they are reading stories and they recognize the story that belongs to the brand, as well as a story that belongs to the consumer.

There is a positive effect of storytelling content on the brand image when it is linked with emotions and cognition. Therefore, companies can increase their revenue through social commerce with the help of storytelling content. Managers must link consumers' and brand's storytelling with emotions and cognition to achieve a positive brand attitude. Based on the findings of our research study, it is suggested that whether it is consumer storytelling or brand storytelling, it will not make any difference in shaping a favorable brand attitude unless the content emotionally connects with the target audience, leading to higher cognitive processing. Therefore, the conclusion that can be drawn from the research is that the marketing content must be engaging (Russell-Bennett et al., 2009).

Pakistan is facing economic crises, and marketers have low budgets, making advertising a daunting task these days. Brand managers must focus on the stories that excite consumers and highlight points that empathize with consumers so that they get involved with the story, leading to better image building for a brand and better connectivity with end users.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations that can be addressed in future research. While this study focused on real brands, but it only considered the positive aspects of the brand, and negative content was not included. This is an interesting part as people explore both positive and negative content in a story and how they evaluate the brand. The respondents' data was limited to Karachi city only. Future studies may include a larger sample size and consider other important cities as well. This study was conducted in the context of clothing. Future studies may replicate this study using other product categories.

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Appendix A- QUESTIONNAIRE

Story (A):

As flowers bloom across the length and breadth of our country, so does our summer lawn collection, drawing inspiration from old-age craft tradition and weaving them together with the fashion-forward spirit of the nation. We took inspiration from nature, our culture, our traditions, and our beauty to pay tribute to our mothers, sisters, and daughters, the unsung heroes of our nation. This is why we are your fast favorite and the constant unmatched lord of lawn collection every year. A vibrant medley of colors, exploring local sartorial sensibilities and taking inspiration from nature, we are here to stay as we want you to be UNFORGETTABLE with ZOHSIA.



جیسے جیسے ہمارے ملک کی لمبائی اور چوڑائی میں پھول کھلتے ہیں، اسی طرح ہمارے موسم گرما کے لان کا مجموعہ، پرانے زمانے کی دستکاری کی روایت سے متاثر ہو کر اور قوم کے فیشن کو آگے بڑھانے والے جذبے کے ساتھ مل کر بنتا ہے۔ ہم نے فطرت، اپنی ثقافت، اپنی روایات اور اپنی خوبصورتی سے متاثر ہو کر اپنی ماؤں، بہنوں اور بیٹیوں کو اپنی قوم کے گمنام ہیروز کو خراج تحسین پیش کیا۔ یہی وجہ ہے کہ ہم آپ کے تیز ترین پسندیدہ اور ہر سال لان کلیکشن کے مستقل بے مثال مالک ہیں۔ رنگوں کا ایک متحرک میٹلے، مقامی فنی حساسیتوں کو تلاش کرتے ہوئے اور فطرت سے تحریک لیتے ہوئے، ہم یہاں رہنے کے لیے ہیں کیونکہ ہم چاہتے ہیں کہ آپ ZOHSIA کے ساتھ ناقابل فراموش رہیں۔

Story (B):

The weather has changed, and so has my preference for choosing clothes. As the heat hits, I want to wear light, vibrant colors close to my tradition yet fashion-forward. Entering the store gave me a feeling of belonging, and satisfaction and appealing visuals convinced me to buy such ethereal apparels that caught my eye.

The fine material, elegant design, and catchy prints left me no choice but to shop from there. The reasonable prices backed with enticing offers were the cherry on top, and I got the absolute pleasure of grabbing the fine collections as soon as they got released. Overall, it was an UNFORGETTABLE experience that put me in awe.



موسم بدل گیا ہے، اور اسی طرح کپڑے کے انتخاب میں میری ترجیح بھی بدل گئی ہے۔ جیسے ہی گرمی پڑتی ہے، میں اپنی روایت کے قریب بلکے، متحرک رنگوں کو پہننا چاہتا ہوں لیکن فیشن کے لحاظ سے۔ سٹور میں داخل ہونے سے مجھے اپنے تعلق کا احساس ہوا، اور اطمینان اور دلکش بصری نے مجھے اس طرح کے ایتھریل ملبوسات خریدنے پر آمادہ کیا جنہوں نے میری نظروں کو پکڑ لیا۔ عمدہ مواد، خوبصورت ڈیزائن، اور دلکش پرنٹس نے میرے پاس وہاں سے خریداری کے سوا کوئی چارہ نہیں چھوڑا۔ دلکش پیشکشوں کے ساتھ سہارا دینے والی معقول قیمتیں سب سے اوپر چیری تھیں، اور مجھے ان کے جاری ہوتے ہی عمدہ مجموعوں کو حاصل کرنے میں مکمل خوشی ہوئی۔ مجموعی طور پر، یہ ایک ناقابل فراموش تجربہ تھا جس نے مجھے حیرت میں ڈال دیا۔