

How Narrative-Driven Marketing Shapes Consumer Perception of Tech Products

AYOMIPOSI FEYISEKEMI AKINWALE

Abstract- Narrative marketing involves incorporation of narratives in marketing communication to attract consumers at the emotional and not merely factual level. The paper reviews the role of storytelling in branding of technology products, with Apple Inc. as a prime example of consumer perception. We consider recent studies on narrative branding, digital storytelling practices and consumer psychology, observing that the strategic narratives promote a good brand identity and emotional connection. We base our theoretical framework on the narrative transportation, social identity, and signaling theories in order to understand the persuasive effect of stories. Under methodology, we perform a case analysis of Apple campaigns and a qualitative literature review. The results show that Apple has been marketing its products as heroic creativeness and lifestyle enablers, which form its brand image and brand loyalty. As pointed out in the discussion, aspects of authenticity and hero figures in narratives increase consumer involvement and purchase intention. To sum up, narrative marketing is a very effective instrument in the branding of technological products, and it can be enhanced to foster strong relationships with consumers in the long run provided that it is properly integrated into psychological theory and practical knowledge.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the current overcrowded digital economy, technology firms compete over scanty consumer interest through hundreds of platforms. To become memorable, companies are increasingly resorting to narrative-based marketing - the craft of taking a product and brand and integrating it into a captivating storey (Chang, 2025). The storeys are also unlike the feature-centric ads because they capture both emotional and cognitive processes that make the audience connect with the values and identity of a brand. To consumers, narratives add context: rather than giving product details, storeys demonstrate how products can fit into the meaningful life situations (Li, 2024). It is particularly effective in technology branding, where an innovation may be abstract; stories bring it to life with human experience. Apple Inc. is one such company, as its campaigns such as Think Different and Shot on iPhone subtly narrate a story of creativity, self-expression and community.

Studies indicate that brand perception is influenced through narrative marketing because it creates emotional bonds and evokes brand associations that are memorable (Louati, et al., 2025). Customers carried along the narrative of a brand are more likely to develop a deeper attachment and be more responsive to its messages. The paper addresses the following dynamics: how narrative techniques shape attitudes towards tech products and the reasons why these techniques are so psychologically appealing.

This paper reviews the literature on narrative branding and consumer behaviour in detail, provides a qualitative research approach by using Apple as a case study, and constructs a theoretical framework connecting storytelling to conventional theories of persuasion and identity. Our discussion is the synthesis of information on digital storytelling, brand image influences and consumer psychology. The paper asserts that narrative-based marketing is a vital tool that must be employed to enable tech brands to achieve more engagement and loyalty in the contemporary marketplace.

Narrative Marketing and Consumer Psychology

A prominent trend in modern-day marketing is brand storytelling. The literature underlines the fact that narratives become effective as humans are storytelling creatures - we process information in terms of narrative patterns that reflect our experiences and values (Sanders and Krieken, 2018). According to social psychological studies, well-crafted stories engage emotional brain mechanisms (such as the amygdala and prefrontal cortex), increasing branded content attention and memory. Actually, messages that have emotional colouring (such as in stories) perform much better than fact-based messages that are dry (Chang, 2025).

The narrative persuasion theory (Theory of transportation) suggests that as the consumer takes part in the story, their attitudes and intentions follow the narrative consequences (Qaissi, 2024). Recent research validates that narrative transportation enhances affective brand engagement and increases

purchase intention and advocacy. To illustrate, in an experiment, participants who were driven to a brand narrative demonstrated much more vigorous online brand promotion and purchase intention than those who were subjected to non-narrative advertisements (Trebs, 2022).

Stories also promote thinking. Stories simplify the perceived complexity of the brand by integrating events in a logical storyline and enable consumers to take cognitive shortcuts (heuristics) during brand assessment. Effortless yet satisfying decision-making is facilitated by emotional cues in stories as heuristics (Chang, 2019). As a result, narrative-based messages are usually believed to be more credible; believable and authentic stories create trust and loyalty because they reflect real-life situations and social reality. Storytelling is consistent with constructivist and signaling theories in the context of persuasive communication: it enhances attitudes (the Theory of Planned Behavior) and communicates brand authenticity and values in situations where information is skewed (Fries, 2024).

Overall, the literature indicates that the psychological grounding of narrative marketing is high: stories increase the level of emotional appeal, retention, and credibility, all the factors that lead to positive brand attitudes and customer loyalty.

Digital Storytelling Techniques in Tech Marketing

Digital storytelling techniques now play a key role in brand communication due to the emergence of social media and mobile platforms (Lund, et al., 2018). Digital storytelling may come in a number of different forms: short movies, interactive multimedia, users, and serial brand storytelling on various platforms. In spite of that, efficient digital storytelling can be associated with multi-sensual clues, such as visual, auditory, and experience-inducing, to enhance the immersion (Weber and Grauer, 2019). An example is the use of evocative cinematography and music (to a certain extent, Apple applies it in its video ads) to increase the emotional appeal (Brown, 2023). Online brand films and mini-web-documentaries are forms of interaction that enable consumers to create or customize the story (e.g., by uploading their own stories or selecting narrative paths), which can dramatically enhance the level of engagement (Mehra, and Kansra, 2024).

This trend is reflected through user-generated campaigns. For example, Apple's long-running, multi-year campaign, Shot on iPhone, encourages customers to share photos and short videos that capture their daily experiences as the story of creativity. Apple digital storytelling builds a community and brand loyalty by highlighting authentic user experiences (TBH, 2024). Studies indicate that this type of authentic digital story (based on real user experiences) works especially well; people will trust it more than directly promotional content. Moreover, the global distribution of digital platforms enables brands to show cultural contextualization to narratives without losing the overall brand narrative (Liu, 2024).

The digital storytelling marketing literature identifies three foundational strategies: (1) Authentic Content - the sharing of real stories or testimonials that resonate with the brand values, (2) Emotional Arc - the creation of a narrative where the audience can empathize and (3) Interactive Formats - through technological tools such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and social apps, the audience can actively engage in the narrative. Together, these methods make sure that digital stories about the brand do not only attract attention but further a more psychological engagement.

Narrative Branding and Brand Perception

The narratives the brands share have a significant impact on brand perception (Hong, et al., 2022). A story gives a means by which consumers make inference about brand identity and values. A brand that consistently tells a concise, emotional story can take up a unique niche in the minds of consumers. As an example, a product with a hero-solves-a-universal-problem story (the product is the hero) has a tendency to encourage a solid psychological connection with customers (Mills and John, 2025). According to available evidence, a strong connection to the story (or protagonist) of a brand leads to increased brand love and loyalty. This is because the consumer is made to feel as if they are part of a much greater cause.

The branding of Apple depicts these ideals. According to academic case studies, the story-based advertisements of Apple (e.g. Share Your Gift, Welcome Home) literally position Apple products as protagonists in the story (Lim and Puspita, 2020). Studies have established that these advertisements

have a high narrative probability and narrative fidelity. This implies that they narrate believable, emotionally persuasive messages and this makes Apple marketing messages reasonable and convincing (Li, 2024). In addition to the case of the individual ads, the overall brand narrative of Apple focuses on ingenuity, creativity, and aspirational lifestyle. Apple makes its products match its ideals (creative freedom, elegance, and innovation), which prompts consumers to integrate the brand into their own identities. Narrative branding makes Apple not only a manufacturer of gadgets but a source of creative thinking and self-expression, which increases its brand equity and consumer perception.

Consumer Engagement and Cultural Context

Cultural resonance and audience engagement is also important to the success of narrative marketing. Modern research emphasizes that effective brand narratives usually engage common values and narratives that apply to the target audience (Rigby and Lee, 2024). In the case of technology (Tech) brands, this would be the knowledge of consumer desires related to innovation, connectivity, and lifestyle. Narratives that mirror these cultural scripts (such as the one about the self-made biomarker, the disturbing force behind the status quo, or the professional who is tech-savvy) can make the consumer feel recognized and listened to (Price, 2024).

Co-creation of brand meaning is also promoted through storytelling (Stoica, et al., 2021). Consumers are able to extend the brand story through social media and online communities where they are able to exchange their own experiences with a brand. Such a participatory aspect makes the process more engaging: when the customers see that the brand has been endorsing the stories of their peers, it makes the trust and personal relevance stronger. Surveys of digital storytelling indicate that the greater the brand engages consumers in their storytelling, the more it builds emotional resonance and the sense of belonging to the brand community (Aime, 2023).

Based on the above, it is indeed possible to conclude that storytelling marketing within the technological industry is the strongest when it resonates with consumer identities and cultural values. Indicatively, the creative genius and superior design story of Apple, echoes through the mass culture around new

technologies as a means of empowering the individual and the beauty of aestheticism.

II. METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

The research design that will be used in this study is a qualitative, multi-method research design which consists of systematic literature review and a case study analysis of Apple Inc. To begin with, the extensive literature review through academic databases and industry publications was performed to collect the recent findings on the narrative marketing, storytelling, and consumer behaviour. The keywords used were narrative marketing, brand storytelling, digital storytelling, brand perception, and consumer psychology. The necessary themes and theories in the story branding field were identified within the framework of this review.

Second, Apple Inc. was selected as a major case study because it has a globally known narrative-oriented branding. The information about the Apple marketing practices was gathered in a variety of sources: academic analyses, industry news, the official Apple media releases, and archived advertisements and videos. We also explored some of the leading Apple campaigns to determine the application of elements of storytelling. Campaign messages were analyzed using content analysis to categorize features of narratives and the desired consumer effect.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In a bid to articulate the reasons why narrative-based marketing is so compelling, we contextualise storytelling within the mainstream psychological and marketing theory. There are three interconnected frameworks upon which this study is based.

Narrative Transportation Theory - listeners become psychologically engaged when exposed to a well-put-together storey. Consumers in a transportation state are less judgmental and more susceptible to influence (Green, 2021). According to this theory, an engaging brand storey may change the attitudes of consumers by making them lose themselves in the storey. Recent studies validate that increased narrative transportation results in brand engagement and positive behavioural intentions (Kang, et al., 2020).

Social Identity and Self-Congruity Theories: people form a portion of their identity of social groups and

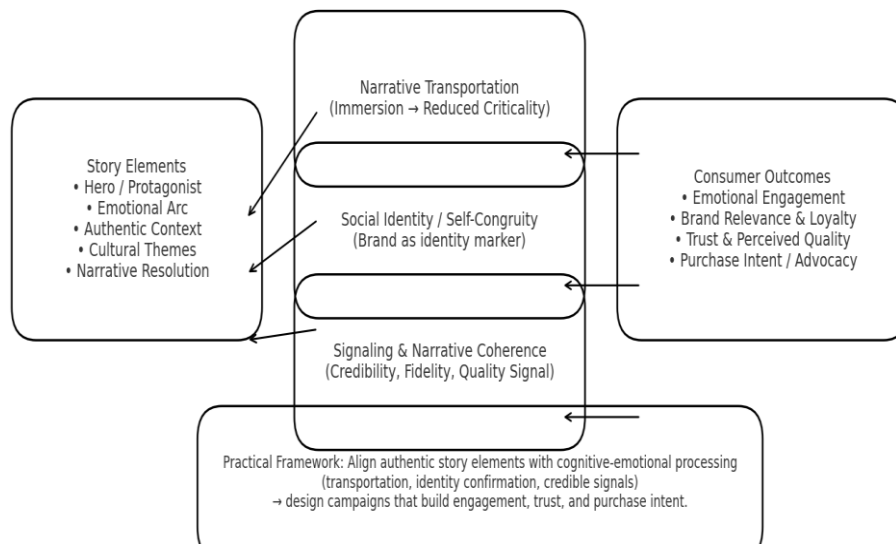
brands (Islam, et al., 2019). The storey of a brand helps people identify whether they share values and characteristics with that brand. As an illustration, the storytelling at Apple focuses on creativity and nonconformity, which informs consumers that the possession of Apple products is an indicator of a novel, exclusive community. Narrative marketing increases brand relevance and brand loyalty by connecting brand narratives with how consumers self-conceived (Crespo, et al., 2023).

Signaling and Narrative Coherence: Spence, (1973; Connelly, et al., 2011), contend that believable tales indicate the quality and reliability of products. Complex information can be digested through coherent narratives (that have a clear protagonist, plot, and resolution). Brands that share similar stories provide an air of consistency and genuineness. The narrative paradigm in particular by Fisher holds that individuals evaluate stories on the basis of their

probability (internal consistency) and fidelity (truthfulness and consistency with known reality). The example of Apple advertisements is high in narrative fidelity, as they depict realistic and common issues that are addressed using their products. Having the stories intertwine with relatable details creates a psychological connection between the story and the consumer, thereby reducing the consumer defences, therefore, increasing the persuasive appeal (Benucci, and Gesto 2025).

Combined, these theories describe how storytelling can form affective bridges between brand and consumer. Practically, we think of narrative marketing as the correspondence of genuine components of a narrative such as characters, conflicts, and values, to cognitive-emotional reactions such as transportation, identity confirmation, and indicators of trust.

Theoretical Framework: Narrative-Driven Marketing → Psychological Mechanisms → Consumer Outcomes



The diagram maps how narrative-driven marketing (left) activates three psychological mechanisms (center), which in turn produce measurable consumer outcomes (right). The bottom box is a short practical translation, where the brand aligns their

story features to the psychological processes they want to trigger, and thus design campaigns that increase engagement, trust, and purchase intent.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic Table

Narrative Element	Marketing Application (Example)	Consumer Perception Impact
Hero/Protagonist	Apple product as hero	Positions brand as empowering/inspiring; users identify with hero overcoming a problem.

Emotional Arc	Inspiring or humorous climax in ad (e.g. “Shot on iPhone” stories)	Enhances emotional engagement and recall; viewers feel joy or empathy.
Authentic Context	Real user stories showcased (user-generated content)	Signals trust and transparency; reduces skepticism.
Cultural/Mythic Themes	Underdog narrative (“Think Different”), innovation myth	Aligns brand with shared values; bolsters brand identity and loyalty.
Narrative Resolution	Product solving a conflict (device as solution)	Creates satisfaction and coherence; boosts perceived problem-solving value.

V. DISCUSSION

i. Apple’s Case: Narrative in Tech Branding

The Apple marketing approach reflects narrative branding, on a massive scale. Throughout campaigns, the company does not often take the lead with technical specifications. Rather, it narrates stories that make its products heroes that facilitate human dreams. In the Welcome home ad, an example is when one of the dancers comes back to a boring apartment and when she gets in touch with the HomePod music, her home turns into a colorful imaginary world. The Apple products (iPhone and HomePod) are presented as *magical enablers* of creativity (the heroes of this visual story). According to the available evidence, such Apple ads were crafted with high narrative coherence and fidelity, making the selling message believable and emotionally resonant.

Moreover, Apple’s broader brand narrative of innovation, elegance, and empowerment is reinforced in each product launch and store experience. The Next big Thing campaign, by Apple, narrated the stories of individuals who have broken the rules, and implicitly, Apple was seen as their partner. More recently, the Shot on iPhone series features everyday people capturing extraordinary photos and video. Every picture or mini-video suggests a narrative: a child who is playing with the outside world, a cook who makes some food, a dancer who plays in the street. When Apple chooses such snippets, it sends a message that its product can make anyone a creator. By doing so, user-created stories are integrated into the Apple brand narrative, creating community and loyalty.

Academic commentary notes that Apple’s narrative marketing extends into customers’ social identity. One analysis observes that Apple’s brand strategy “leaves a unique impression” on consumers by emphasizing emotional connection and social

identity. The study highlights Apple’s use of brand storytelling to satisfy consumer needs (citing Maslow’s hierarchy) and cognitive-affective-behavioural factors. Similarly, another case study points out that Apple’s marketing “has become part of consumers’ lifestyles,” making the brand synonymous with “innovation, style, and social acceptance. Practically, it translates to the idea that the possession of Apple products delineates a personal story, the owner is innovative, creative, and forward-thinking. This integrative story is shaped by Apple design of minimalistic wrappings, award-winning shops, as well as the story of product launch (teasing and reveal).

Quantitatively, the narrative focus of Apple appears to have paid off. The brand has extremely high brand equity and brand loyalty. A key reason why consumers are often ready to pay high prices when purchasing Apple devices can be explained by the fact that the psychological bonds created through the use of storytelling tend to be strong. It is revealed in surveys that Apple customers have many Apple products, and they carry them as a status symbol - a successful narrative branding result.

ii. Effects on Brand Perception and Consumer Response

The example of Apple illustrates larger trends within the literature. The storytelling marketing in technology can always enhance brand perceptions through emotional connection. When consumers experience the brand as a character in a powerful narrative, their attitudes shift to align with the findings of the narrative. Evidence in a variety of different environments demonstrates that story-based advertisements positively influence the following main results: viewers indicate better brand liking, better purchase intent, and willingness to pay. Interestingly, the JDMC research observed that narrative transportation enhanced purchase intention and brand advocacy in the minds of engaged

customers significantly. The same may be said about the campaigns run by Apple: using clear stories, they make the company memorable and convincing.

The image of a brand is also shaped by narrative elements, the constellation of beliefs and emotions that consumers possess. Storytelling marketing (with plausible, emotionally appealing plots) can, as cited above, strengthen brand value and can foster emotional relationship. This can explain why brands such as Apple hold high spots in the mind of consumers. True and coherent stories are a good indicator of quality and reliability and promote the brand image. Perception, on the other hand, can be destroyed by incoherent or inauthentic stories. Nevertheless, Apple offers a high level of narrative coherence in touchpoints strengthening the brand image on a global scale.

The influence can also be explained in consumer psychology literature. Narratives appeal to empathy and identification to the extent that consumers tend to place themselves in the situation depicted. Here, the consumers share in the hero journey of the brand, making it more loyal. Practically, such a commercial of the Apple company as the Real Stories (the collage of users and their moments in their lives) asks viewers to think about their stories. This personal meaning of experience renders the brand personally relevant. Moreover, psychological reactance (resistance to persuasion) can be decreased through storytelling. Stories make consumers lower their guard and digest the message more readily since they are not treated as sales pitches.

By the end of the day, one can assume based on the evidence that narrative marketing in technology equates the brand story with consumer ambitions and values, which are used to form perceptions of the product. Studies have revealed that believable storytelling has the potential to boost brand trust and loyalty by closing the gap between the brand and personal experience of the consumer. In the case of technology products, where commonality in features among competitors is frequent, the story emerges as a differentiator which generates emotional value.

The evidence suggests that narrative-driven marketing transforms consumer perception by making brands more relatable, emotionally engaging, and psychologically meaningful. Apple's example shows how this can translate into real-market

success: a passionate customer base willing to advocate for the brand, and perceive Apple products not just as tools, but as symbols of a desired identity.

CONCLUSION

The narrative-driven marketing has become an effective force behind consumer perception in the technology market. A brand leverages the most potent psychological mechanisms of memory, emotion and identity by integrating products into compelling narratives. As our review will show, marketing storytelling results in increased emotional connection, purchase intention and brand associations. The example of Apple Inc. can be viewed as such, with a steady brand narrative, including heroic product marketing and community-focused campaigns, establishing its reputation as a progressive and inspiring company. These effects can be explained using the theoretical frameworks of narrative transportation, social identity, and signalling: stories attract the consumer to the brand, enable them to imagine themselves in the brand, and convey an authentic message.

For tech marketers, the lesson is simple enough: stories sell. To build such a brand, designers, psychologists, and data analysts must collaborate interdisciplinary to ensure that every campaign appeals to specific target groups in a unique and authentic manner. With the emergence of new forms (augmented reality, interactive video), it is important to study the role of evolving narratives in the future to keep shaping the audience of the new technology. In practice, the brands are advised to use the model of credibility, resonance, extensibility: creating genuine, emotion-based stories that would resonate with consumers' values and be able to evolve when the time comes.

Narrative marketing redefines consumer perception by making technology products more human, placing them in context within a significant life narrative. When executed properly - as we have seen with Apple - storytelling can make a brand an emotional experience and a source of personal identity for the consumer. This paper has highlighted the fact that in the digital era, the power of story is not a mere exercise of creative whim, but a strategic imperative that technology brands should employ in an effort to establish enduring consumer relationships.

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