

The Role of Storytelling in Brand Building: A Meta-Analysis

Peran Storytelling dalam Membangun Merek: Sebuah Meta-Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the impact of interactive storytelling on perception, brand *authenticity* And *transparency* among Generation Z on various digital platforms. Given that Gen Z has high expectations for brand authenticity and openness, interactive storytelling has emerged as an important strategy in modern digital marketing. Using a meta-analysis approach with a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, this research examines previous studies that discuss interactive storytelling and its implications for consumer perceptions. The results of the quantitative analysis show that interactive storytelling has a significant positive effect on perception, brand *authenticity* And *transparency*, with variations in impact seen between different digital platforms. Qualitative analysis further highlights the specific aspects of interactive storytelling that Gen Z values most, including direct interactions with brands and personalized experiences. This research contributes to the digital marketing literature by offering a comprehensive understanding of how interactive storytelling can influence consumer perceptions, while providing practical guidance for marketers in designing more effective strategies. Final recommendations suggest implementing storytelling that actively engages consumers to build deeper and more sustainable trust among Gen Z consumers.

Keywords: interactive storytelling, brand *authenticity*, *transparency*, digital marketing, Generation Z, consumer perception, digital platforms, meta-analysis

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi dampak storytelling interaktif terhadap persepsi brand *authenticity* dan *transparency* di kalangan Generasi Z pada berbagai platform digital. Mengingat Gen Z memiliki ekspektasi tinggi terhadap keaslian dan keterbukaan brand, storytelling interaktif telah muncul sebagai strategi penting dalam pemasaran digital modern. Menggunakan pendekatan meta-analisis dengan kombinasi metode kuantitatif dan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengkaji studi-studi sebelumnya yang membahas storytelling interaktif serta implikasinya terhadap persepsi konsumen. Hasil analisis kuantitatif menunjukkan bahwa storytelling interaktif memiliki efek positif yang signifikan terhadap persepsi brand *authenticity* dan *transparency*, dengan variasi dampak yang terlihat di antara platform digital yang berbeda. Analisis kualitatif lebih lanjut menyoroti aspek-aspek spesifik storytelling interaktif yang sangat dihargai oleh Gen Z, termasuk interaksi langsung dengan brand dan pengalaman yang personal. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada literatur pemasaran digital dengan menawarkan pemahaman komprehensif mengenai bagaimana storytelling interaktif dapat mempengaruhi persepsi konsumen, sekaligus memberikan panduan praktis bagi pemasar dalam merancang strategi yang lebih efektif. Rekomendasi akhir menyarankan penerapan storytelling yang melibatkan konsumen secara aktif untuk membangun kepercayaan yang lebih mendalam dan berkelanjutan di antara konsumen Gen Z.

Kata Kunci: storytelling interaktif, brand *authenticity*, *transparency*, pemasaran digital, Generasi Z, persepsi konsumen, platform digital, meta-analisis

1. Introduction

Storytelling has become an essential element in modern marketing strategies, especially in the digital era where brands can interact directly with consumers. This approach not only serves to communicate the brand's message and values, but also builds an emotional connection with the audience, increases brand awareness, and strengthens consumer trust. Research shows that storytelling can significantly influence consumer behavior by creating

memorable experiences that resonate on a personal level. For example, Yang and Kang highlight that advertising through video storytelling can generate strong engagement by getting consumers involved in the narrative, thereby enhancing their experience and loyalty to the brand (Yang & Kang, 2021). In the same vein, Dias and Cavalheiro emphasize that storytelling as a communication technique effectively encourages emotional connections with brands, which is crucial for driving brand love and engagement in the online environment (Dias & Cavalheiro, 2021).

The development of storytelling from a linear format to an interactive one is very important to pay attention to in the current digital era. Consumers are no longer passive recipients of brand narratives; they actively participate in the storytelling process through various digital platforms, including social media and mobile applications. These changes allow for more dynamic interactions, where consumers can provide feedback and contribute to the brand narrative, thereby increasing their sense of ownership and attachment to the brand (Belova, 2021). For example, the concept of "storygiving," in which consumers participate in creating a brand narrative, is growing in popularity as brands seek to engage their audiences more deeply (Hughes et al., 2016). This participatory approach not only enriches the storytelling experience but also aligns with consumers' increasing demands for authenticity and transparency in brand communications.

Brand authenticity and transparency are increasingly important in shaping consumer perceptions, especially among younger generations such as Gen Z, who have high expectations for brands to be sincere and open (Belova, 2021). Research by Dessart and Pitardi shows how storytelling can create consumer engagement by fostering a sense of authenticity and emotional resonance (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). Additionally, the interactive nature of digital storytelling allows brands to demonstrate their values and commitments transparently, which is critical for building trust with consumers (Dias & Cavalheiro, 2021). As brands navigate this landscape, they must utilize storytelling techniques that resonate with their target audiences while ensuring that the narratives conveyed reflect their core values and mission.

In conclusion, storytelling in modern marketing is not just a communication tool, but a strategic approach that increases consumer engagement, builds emotional connections, and fosters brand loyalty. The interactive nature of digital storytelling allows consumers to actively participate in brand narratives, thereby increasing their investment in brand authenticity and transparency. As brands continue to adapt to the changing digital landscape, those who succeed in harnessing the power of storytelling effectively will likely see increased consumer relationships and loyalty.

Interactive storytelling has emerged as a transformative approach in digital marketing, leveraging platforms such as social media, websites and apps to engage consumers in a more immersive and participatory way. In contrast to traditional storytelling which usually follows a linear narrative structure, interactive storytelling invites users to influence the storyline, thereby increasing their emotional attachment to the brand and building a sense of community and involvement. This participatory nature is critical because it allows consumers to feel more involved and connected to the brand, which in turn influences their purchasing behavior and brand loyalty.

Research shows that storytelling can significantly increase consumer engagement and emotional resonance. For example, Júnior et al. emphasized that effective storytelling brings brands closer to consumers by evoking emotions and promoting engagement, which is crucial for persuasion and increasing consumers' willingness to pay more for products (Júnior et al., 2022). Likewise, Mavilinda highlights that features on social media platforms, such as Instagram Stories and reels, facilitate the creation of interactive storytelling content that resonates with consumers, making marketing messages more relatable and impactful (Mavilinda, 2023). These findings are in line with Pera and Viglia's research, which discusses how digital storytelling

videos can build relational experiences between brands and consumers, further emphasizing the importance of emotional engagement in marketing strategies (Pera & Viglia, 2016).

Furthermore, technological advances in digital platforms have enabled richer storytelling experiences. Rizvic et al. defines digital storytelling as the use of digital media and interactivity for narrative purposes, allowing users to influence the plot and content of the story (Rizvic et al., 2017). This interactivity is not only limited to consumer engagement, but also applies in educational contexts, where interactive storytelling can enhance the learning experience by deepening connection with the material (Jantakoon et al., 2019). The integration of immersive technologies, such as virtual reality and augmented reality, further enriches the storytelling experience by giving users a sense of presence and control in the narrative (Szita & Lo, 2021). In conclusion, interactive storytelling on digital platforms represents a significant shift from traditional marketing approaches. By encouraging consumer participation and emotional engagement, brands can create more personalized and immersive experiences that resonate with their audiences. This not only increases brand loyalty but also drives purchasing decisions, making interactive storytelling a vital component of contemporary marketing strategies.

Generation Z (Gen Z), born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, has clear expectations regarding brand authenticity and transparency. This group is highly selective, often evaluating brands based not only on their products, but also on conformity with values such as honesty, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship. Research shows that Gen Z consumers tend to support brands that demonstrate transparency and authenticity in their communications, especially regarding social and environmental issues (Tan & Trang, 2023; Sharabati et al., 2023). The importance of these values is further emphasized by their preference for brands that engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, which are increasingly considered essential for building trust and loyalty among this demographic (Huang et al., 2022).

Interactive storytelling is emerging as a powerful tool for brands looking to meet the expectations of Gen Z. This method facilitates two-way communication, allowing brands to interact with consumers in a meaningful way. By sharing narratives that are authentic and reflect their values and commitments, brands can build deeper relationships with Gen Z consumers (Tan & Trang, 2023; Rico et al., 2018). The integration of social media platforms is significant, as these channels serve as a vital space for Gen Z to discover and interact with brands that match their ideals (Tan & Trang, 2023; Harmon et al., 2022). A study found that 44% of Gen Z consumers reported discovering new brands through social media, highlighting its role in shaping their purchasing behavior (Tan & Trang, 2023).

In addition, Gen Z's high awareness of environmental issues influences their purchasing decisions. They tend to choose brands that not only promote sustainability but also actively participate in environmentally friendly practices (Huang et al., 2022; Sari, 2023; Sharma & Foropon, 2019). This trend is supported by findings linking environmentally friendly brand attributes with increased consumer awareness and positive perceptions of the brand (Sari, 2023; Sharma & Foropon, 2019; Lee, 2023). As a result, brands that successfully communicate their sustainability efforts and engage in transparent practices are more likely to build trust and loyalty among Gen Z consumers (Sharabati et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2022; Olšánová et al., 2021). In conclusion, Gen Z's expectations regarding brand authenticity and transparency are influenced by their values and awareness of social and environmental issues. Brands that leverage interactive storytelling and engage in CSR practices are better positioned to connect with this generation. By encouraging transparency and authenticity in their communications, brands can build trust and loyalty, ultimately driving consumer engagement and purchase intent.

Although many studies have discussed the role of storytelling in marketing, there is limited literature regarding in-depth analysis of the impact of interactive storytelling on

consumer perceptions of brand authenticity and transparency. Most previous research has focused on conventional storytelling or the general impact storytelling has on *brand awareness* And *brand loyalty*. Only a few studies have specifically explored the effects of interactive storytelling, particularly in shaping consumer perceptions regarding brand transparency and authenticity, especially among Gen Z. This gap creates an opportunity for further research into how interactive storytelling can influence perceptions of authenticity and transparency in digital contexts.

In order to answer the literature gaps that have been identified, this study asks the following research questions: "What is the impact of interactive storytelling on consumer perception of brand authenticity and transparency in digital platforms?" This question was designed to explore how interactive storytelling influences consumer perceptions of brand authenticity and transparency, especially in the context of digital platforms widely used by Gen Z. The results of this research are expected to provide new insights for marketing practitioners and academics regarding the effectiveness of interactive storytelling in building brands that are authentic and transparent in the eyes of digital consumers.

2. Methods

2.1. Study Design

This research uses a meta-analysis method with a combination approach *quantitative* And *qualitative* to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of interactive storytelling on consumers' perceptions of authenticity (*authenticity*) and transparency (*transparency*) brands. This meta-analysis not only aims to quantitatively measure the effects of interactive storytelling on various digital platforms but also qualitatively explores specific aspects that influence consumer perceptions, especially among Gen Z. Approach *mixed-methods* It is hoped that this will be able to provide results that are rich in insight, including a statistical perspective as well as in-depth analysis of the thematic data produced from various studies.

2.2. Data Collection

2.2.1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

In order for this analysis to be accurate and relevant, this research limited the data to only studies that focused on interactive storytelling on various digital platforms and included Gen Z as the main target group. Included studies had to include measures of related perceptions, brand *authenticity* And *brand transparency* as a research variable. In addition, only articles written in English and published in reputable journals were selected to ensure data quality. Studies that focus on generations outside Gen Z or that discuss storytelling with a non-interactive approach will be excluded, to maintain the relevance of the research to the specified specific focus.

2.2.2. Data source

Data was collected from reputable international journal databases such as Scopus and IEEE, which provide various articles from international Q1 journals that meet high research quality standards. Only articles that have gone through a peer-review process and published in reputable journals will be included in this meta-analysis. This search also included relevant articles from leading international conferences discussing interactive storytelling and consumer perception.

2.3. Quantitative Analysis

This study will use statistical analysis to evaluate the effect size (*effect size*) interactive storytelling on consumer perceptions, especially in terms of brand authenticity and transparency. Several planned statistical analysis steps include:

2.3.1. Calculation of effect size (Effect Size)

This analysis will identify and quantify the effect size of interactive storytelling on perceptions of authenticity and transparency. This effect size was calculated based on *mean differences*, *correlation coefficients*, or *odds ratios* depending on the type of data obtained from the various studies reviewed.

2.3.2. Analysis Variability and Heterogeneity

To understand the extent to which research results from various studies differ, heterogeneity analysis will be carried out by means of tests Q and index I^2 . It is important to identify inter-study variability that is not due to sampling error, thereby providing insight into factors that may influence differences in results.

2.4. Qualitative Analysis

To gain a deep understanding of the dimensions of interactive storytelling that influence perceptions of brand authenticity and transparency, this research also applies thematic analysis:

2.4.1. Identify Main Themes

Thematic analysis was carried out to identify and group emerging themes related to consumer perceptions of brand authenticity and transparency. Data analyzed includes qualitative studies or descriptive portions of quantitative studies that provide insight into consumer motivations, perceptions, or experiences with interactive storytelling.

2.4.2. Coding and Categorization

The coding process is carried out to assign labels to relevant parts of the text. After coding, the results were categorized into main themes related to perception *authenticity* And *transparency*, for example how interactive engagement or user participation in storytelling influences perceptions of the brand.

2.5. Data Validation and Reliability

2.5.1. Data Validation Process

To ensure that the data used in this meta-analysis is valid and accurate, each step in the data collection and analysis process will go through a rigorous validation process.

2.5.2. Reliability and Consistency Test

The reliability of qualitative data will be evaluated through inter-rater reliability tests (*inter-rater reliability*), especially in thematic analysis. Two independent raters will assess the same categories to ensure consistency in the identification of relevant themes. Reliability scores, such as the Kappa coefficient, will be calculated to measure the level of agreement between raters, thereby ensuring that the resulting data is consistent and can be accounted for.

With this structured method, the research is expected to produce comprehensive and valid data about the influence of interactive storytelling on perceptions of brand authenticity and transparency among Gen Z on digital platforms.

3. Results

3.1. Quantitative Findings

The results of this quantitative analysis show significant statistical data regarding the influence of interactive storytelling on related consumer perceptions, brand *authenticity* And *brand transparency*. Through the calculation of the effect size (*effect size*), it was found that interactive storytelling had a strong positive impact on both aspects, with *effect size* the average being in the high range, indicating the significant role of the interactive approach in building positive perceptions of the brand.

Further analysis shows that there are variations in perception based on the digital platform used. Platforms such as social media (e.g. Instagram and TikTok), which allow direct interaction between brands and users, tend to have a stronger effect in shaping perceptions of

authenticity and transparency than more static platforms such as websites or blogs. Additionally, interactive types of engagement, such as *live interactions*, *user-generated content*, or features *polls* And *Q&A*, contribute differently to consumer perceptions of brand authenticity and transparency. For example, *user-generated content* has a strong correlation with perceptions of authenticity, while features *Q&A* is more correlated with perceptions of transparency.

3.2. Qualitative Findings

Findings from the thematic analysis produced several main themes that reveal how interactive storytelling is received by Gen Z, especially related to aspects of authenticity and transparency. Gen Z, who places a high value on openness and authenticity from brands, shows a greater appreciation for storytelling that not only engages them directly but also allows them to see “behind the scenes” or transparent processes involving the brand.

Several case examples of brands or campaigns that were successful in building perceptions of authenticity and transparency among Gen Z were also identified in this analysis. For example, campaigns from fashion brands that invite consumers to participate in creative processes, such as selecting product designs or colors, show increased perceptions of brand authenticity. Another example, campaigns that feature real stories from employees or product users show that Gen Z responds positively to brand openness about the values they adhere to and the processes they carry out. Overall, interactivity in storytelling, such as the use of authentic stories from the user or employee perspective, was identified as an important factor in strengthening perceptions of brand transparency and authenticity in the eyes of Gen Z.

3.3. Integrated Analysis

The combination of quantitative and qualitative results provides a more holistic picture of the impact of interactive storytelling on consumer perceptions. These results show that an interactive storytelling approach not only increases perceptions of brand authenticity and transparency statistically, but also creates a deep emotional experience among Gen Z, strengthening consumer loyalty and attachment to the brand.

At a quantitative level, interactive storytelling has a significant impact in increasing perceptions of brand authenticity and transparency; meanwhile, qualitative analysis adds a dimension that shows how various forms of interactive engagement play a role in creating immersive experiences for consumers. The combination of these findings provides a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of interactive storytelling as an effective strategy in building long-term relationships with Gen Z consumers and enhancing brand image in the digital era.

4. Discussion

4.1. Interpretation of Findings

The results of this research support the concept that interactive storytelling has emerged as an important mechanism in shaping consumer perceptions of brand authenticity and transparency, especially among Generation Z (Gen Z). This demographic, characterized by digital sophistication and social awareness, exhibits unique preferences that influence their engagement with brands. The literature shows that storytelling techniques, especially interactive ones, significantly increase perceptions of brand authenticity. For example, storytelling techniques that incorporate elements of gamification have been shown to improve consumer retention and attitudes toward brands, although excessive interactivity can reduce narrative immersion (Vega, 2024). This shows that a careful balance is needed to maintain engagement without overwhelming consumers.

Additionally, Gen Z's affinity for authenticity in branding is emphasized by their expectations for transparency and genuine narratives from brands. Research shows that Gen Z

consumers prioritize brands that align with their values and demonstrate authenticity, which is crucial for building emotional connections (Trang et al., 2023; Singh, 2023). The role of storytelling in this context is multifaceted; it not only conveys the brand message but also facilitates emotional engagement, which is critical for building trust and loyalty among consumers (Hong et al., 2021; Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). The interactive nature of modern storytelling—especially through digital platforms—allows for more immersive experiences that can significantly increase consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity (Tazijan, 2023; Barbosa et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the impact of storytelling on consumer behavior is strengthened by interactive elements that allow consumers to actively engage with the narrative. Studies show that when consumers participate in brand storytelling, their emotional engagement increases, leading to more positive brand attitudes and higher consumer engagement (Hong et al., 2021; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). This is especially relevant for Gen Z, who are more likely to respond positively to brands that use interactive storytelling strategies that allow them to contribute to creating the narrative (Singh, 2023; Andhini, 2023). The integration of user-generated content and personalized storytelling further strengthens this relationship, making brand experiences more understandable and authentic (Trang et al., 2023; Singh, 2023). In conclusion, interactive storytelling plays an important role in shaping Gen Z's perception of brand authenticity and transparency. By leveraging storytelling techniques that encourage consumer interaction, brands can increase their authenticity and foster deeper emotional connections with this influential consumer segment. The literature consistently supports the idea that effective storytelling, especially interactive, is critical to engaging Gen Z and building positive brand perceptions.

In the context of previous research, most studies only explored static storytelling, whereas this research emphasizes the importance of direct interaction via digital platforms. Quantitative analysis showing a strong relationship between interactive storytelling and perceptions of brand authenticity and transparency provides empirical support that strengthens related branding theories *authenticity* And *transparency*. Theoretically, these results expand understanding of the influence of storytelling by emphasizing the role of interactiveness as a crucial aspect in modern digital marketing. These findings also suggest that consumer perceptions of authenticity and transparency are not just about the content delivered, but also about how that content is delivered—in this case, in a way that involves direct consumer participation.

This research provides new evidence that strengthens its significance *brand transparency* in the eyes of Gen Z, who tend to be skeptical of traditional marketing approaches and want more authentic and transparent engagement with brands. Specifically, the research question in this study is "What is the impact of interactive storytelling on consumer perception of brand authenticity and transparency in digital platforms?" answered through empirical evidence that digital platforms that allow direct interaction have a greater impact in improving perception *authenticity* And *transparency* compared to more passive media.

4.2. Practical Implications

For brands and marketers looking to target Gen Z, the research findings provide important advice for integrating interactive storytelling in their digital marketing strategies. This strategy must be designed to not only inform, but also involve consumers in the brand communication process. Through various interactive features such as *live sessions*, *user-generated content*, And *Q&A*, brands can strengthen perceptions of authenticity and transparency.

In practical terms, brands need to design interactive storytelling that not only focuses on commercial messages but also provides space for consumers to interact, ask questions, or

even contribute to brand content. For example, brands can take advantage of user *stories* or *behind-the-scenes* to build a more authentic and transparent narrative. The results of this research indicate that by involving consumers in the storytelling process, brands can create closer relationships and greater trust, which is critical in maintaining consumer loyalty in the Gen Z segment.

4.3. Limitations of the Study

Limitations in this research include limited access to the broader literature on interactive storytelling that focuses on specific digital platforms. In addition, although this research uses various data sources from leading international journals, differences in methods in each study can influence the results of the meta analysis carried out. Variations in definitions of interactive *storytelling* between one study and another can also be a challenge in generalizing the results. Therefore, the results of this research may be more relevant for popular digital platforms that are already widely used in marketing practice, and may not necessarily be generalized to new platforms or those with more specific audiences.

4.4. Future Research Directions

Future research could expand this study by exploring the long-term impact of interactive storytelling on brand loyalty. Additionally, further research could focus on differences in the effects of interactive storytelling across various demographic groups other than Gen Z, such as Millennials or Baby Boomers, to understand variations in intergenerational perceptions of the concept. authenticity And transparency.

Another recommendation for future research is to explore the role of specific elements in interactive storytelling that are most effective in building perceptions of authenticity, for example, the role of visualization, language style, or level of consumer involvement. In this way, future studies can provide deeper insight into the storytelling elements that have the greatest influence on consumer perceptions across different digital platforms.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of Key Findings

This research reveals that interactive storytelling on digital platforms has a significant impact on perception, brand *authenticity* And *transparency* among Gen Z. These findings suggest that an interactive approach—which allows consumers to not only be listeners, but also actively participate in brand narratives—can strengthen perceptions of brand authenticity and openness. Quantitative analysis shows a significant positive effect of interactive storytelling on consumer perceptions, while qualitative analysis illustrates how interactions with brands can shape consumer trust, especially on platforms that allow two-way participation. This is in line with Gen Z's preferences, who tend to be more skeptical of brands that lack transparency and seek authentic experiences in their digital interactions.

Overall, this study answers the research question, "What is the impact of interactive storytelling on consumer perception of brand authenticity and transparency in digital platforms?" by showing that interactive forms of engagement in storytelling can increase perceptions of authenticity and openness among Gen Z consumers. This confirms that the use of interactive features in digital marketing is an effective strategy to attract the attention of Gen Z and increase their trust in brands.

5.2. Research Contribution

This article contributes to the digital marketing literature by providing an empirical analysis of the role of interactive storytelling in building perceptions of brand authenticity and transparency. By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, this research offers a new perspective on the influence of interactive storytelling in digital marketing specifically targeting

Gen Z. This study not only enriches the theoretical understanding of *brand authenticity* And *transparency*, but also provides empirical evidence that can be used as a reference in developing more effective digital marketing strategies.

In the context of existing literature, this research fills the gap related to the lack of studies that explore interactive storytelling and its effects on Gen Z consumers. Thus, it is hoped that this article can become the basis for further research that discusses the dynamics of consumer perception in the digital context, especially in terms of how Direct interactions via digital platforms can influence overall consumer engagement.

5.3. Final Recommendations

As a final recommendation for marketers who want to optimize interactive storytelling strategies, this research suggests utilizing digital features that allow direct interaction with consumers. To improve perception, brand *authenticity* And *transparency*, marketers are advised to adopt a storytelling approach that involves consumers in the brand narrative. This form of engagement can take the form of interactive sessions such as *live Q&A*, user-generated content (*user-generated content*), and a look at behind-the-scenes content (*behind-the-scenes content*) which gives a feel of openness and authenticity.

Marketers are also expected to consistently create personal and transparent experiences for consumers, as well as taking into account the characteristics of the digital platforms used. Recognizing that Gen Z values brands that demonstrate openness and authenticity, interactive storytelling must be designed to not only convey commercial messages, but also build genuine and sustainable relationships with consumers. The results of this research indicate that this approach can strengthen brand loyalty, expand marketing reach, and ultimately create deeper and more meaningful relationships with Gen Z consumers.

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