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# **The impact of heritage, contemporary, and vision stories on Brand Equity**

*- Iconic Brands in the Age of Storytelling -*

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## ABSTRACT

*(English)*

What makes certain brands iconic? Think of Nike, Mercedes-Benz, and Apple – beyond their products, they represent stories weaved into our collective consciousness. Their ability to tell compelling stories is inseparable from their success. In the Age of Storytelling, iconic brands transcend traditional promotional strategies to captivate the hearts and minds of consumers across generations and cultures. Despite their universal appeal, limited research has investigated the driving factors influencing consumers' preferences for these brands. This paper delves into the phenomenon of iconic brands and how narratives about the past, present, and future impact brand equity. Through a comprehensive review of literature and a quantitative study, it examines the value of such stories in shaping consumer perceptions. The results reveal that iconic brands' stories have a significant positive impact on brand love and perceived quality through the mediating role of brand personality dimensions: competence, excitement, and sincerity. In particular, authenticity and empathy towards the characters are crucial elements of a compelling story. While all three types of stories – heritage, contemporary, and vision – contribute to brand equity, there are nuances in their impact. The heritage story was particularly effective in building perceptions of competence, potentially due to its association with tradition and expertise. The contemporary story performed well in terms of authenticity and excelled in fostering sincerity. This story also resonates more deeply with audiences and has a broader impact on society. The vision story demonstrated a strong influence on all three brand personality dimensions, especially sincerity, suggesting its potential to engage consumers. However, it also led to some greenwashing claims. Finally, it is observed that competence is highly correlated with perceived quality, while sincerity is more closely linked to brand love.

**Keywords:** past, present, future, storytelling, iconic brands, brand equity, brand personality

*(Italian)*

Cosa rende iconici alcuni marchi? Marchi come Nike, Mercedes-Benz e Apple sono più di semplici prodotti: sono storie che fanno parte della nostra immaginazione collettiva. La loro capacità di raccontare storie avvincenti è inseparabile dal loro successo. Nell'era dello storytelling, i marchi iconici vanno oltre le strategie promozionali tradizionali per catturare i cuori e le menti dei consumatori attraverso generazioni e culture. Sebbene il loro fascino sia universale, poche ricerche hanno indagato i fattori determinanti che influenzano le preferenze dei consumatori per questi marchi. Questa tesi si addentra nel fenomeno dei marchi iconici e l'impatto delle narrazioni passate, presenti e future sul valore del marchio. Attraverso un'analisi approfondita della letteratura esistente e uno studio quantitativo, esamina il valore di tali storie nel plasmare le percezioni dei consumatori. I risultati rivelano che le storie dei marchi iconici hanno un impatto significativamente positivo sull'amore per il marchio e sulla qualità percepita, attraverso il ruolo mediatore delle dimensioni della personalità del marchio: competenza, entusiasmo e sincerità. In particolare, l'autenticità e l'empatia verso i personaggi sono elementi cruciali di una narrazione avvincente. Mentre tutti e tre i tipi di storie – heritage, contemporaneità e visione – contribuiscono al valore del marchio, ci sono sfumature nel loro impatto. La storia del heritage era particolarmente efficace nel costruire percezioni di competenza, potenzialmente grazie alla sua associazione con la tradizione. La narrazione contemporanea ha dimostrato una buona autenticità e ha eccelso nel promuovere la sincerità. Questa storia ha anche una risonanza più profonda con il pubblico e un impatto più ampio sulla società. La storia della visione ha dimostrato una forte influenza su tutte e tre le dimensioni della personalità del marchio, in particolare la sincerità, suggerendo il suo potenziale per coinvolgere i consumatori. Tuttavia, ciò ha portato anche a delle accuse di greenwashing. Si osserva infine che la competenza è altamente correlata alla qualità percepita, mentre la sincerità è più strettamente legata all'amore per il marchio.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Context of research

The topic of storytelling has been extensively studied in the past across various contexts and disciplines. For instance, researchers have explored its impact on education, where it enhances the language learning journey for learners of all types (Lucarevschi, 2016; Smith P., 2012; Boris, 2017). Within the healthcare industry, a story has the potential to improve patients' well-being, or even save lives (Quaid, Thao, & Denham, 2010). While stories are able to strengthen bonds and forge connections among people, they have the power to deepen the relationship between brands and their audiences (Kemp, Poter III, Anaza, & Min, 2021).

Given the dynamic landscape in which organizations operate, storytelling emerges as an essential strategic tool for brands to differentiate from the competition. Indeed, each brand is a unique story that may become profoundly meaningful to consumers (Twitchell, 2004). Moreover, the prevalence of information overload, in today's society, poses a challenge for brands seeking attention. Therefore, mastering the art of storytelling becomes crucial not only for differentiation, but also for sustaining consumer engagement and enhancing the brand's perceived worth (Teraiya, Namboodiri, & Jayswal, 2023). When used in advertisements, stories tend to persuade a lot more than facts and figures (Aacker & Aacker, 2016). For this reason, companies are increasingly integrating narrative elements into their marketing strategies for various objectives, such as communicating social values (Ciancia, 2020), or promoting sustainable practices (Standaert & Dessart, 2023).

In particular, brands that excel in storytelling may transform into iconic brands: the greatest creators of the greatest myths (Holt, 2003). They are the most suitable examples for illustrating effective storytelling practices for several reasons. One common attribute that iconic brands hold is that they have successfully achieved widespread recognition, such that their stories have

become embedded in the general understanding of individuals (Eisingerich, et al., 2009). Those brands are able to create narratives that deeply resonate with audiences, fostering strong relationships and leading to the formation of a community that is committed to actively sharing the brand story (Harvey, 2023). Iconic brands are experts in storytelling. Nonetheless, it requires decades for any brand to attain the same level of iconicity and establish a form of affection (Holt, 2003). In an attempt to get closer to and reach iconic status, brand managers should focus on continually growing the value of the brand (i.e. brand equity). This is because brand equity holds greater meaning than consumer behaviours, as it can ultimately influence purchase decisions significantly (Wardhana, 2021; Kuswanto, Ramly, & Widokart, 2023).

Last but not least, iconic brands reveal that storytelling usually involves the telling of multiple stories that work together to create one unique narrative that has a greater purpose (Holt D. B., 2004). Among others, brands depict stories that span across time, encapsulating their historical roots, present endeavours, and future aspirations (Smith & Wintrob, 2013). According to Keller (2023), brand managers must answer three questions to build captivating stories: “how did we get here”, “who are we now”, and “where are we going?” He argues that considering the past, present, and future will have favourable outcomes such as stronger customer loyalty. This explains why iconic brands draw on their past to inform their present, create relevance in the current marketplace, and develop aspirational stories for the future.

While the benefits of leveraging the past have been empirically tested, brands run the risk of losing their relevance in the present and for the future. As per Kaye & Jacobson (1999), temporally-oriented stories carry the power to educate, inspire, motivate, and infuse purpose within an organization. The present study suggests that heritage, the connection to the past, contemporary, the telling of the present, and vision stories, when brands point to the future, can be meaningful for external stakeholders as well, particularly consumers. While literature about

storytelling is abundant, only a limited number of articles have discussed iconic brands despite their tremendous influence. Notably, the proposed theories have also rarely been subjected to empirical testing. The main contribution lies in providing valuable insights into iconic storytelling: what makes iconic brands so successful? Why do people love them so much? It aspires to contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which temporally-oriented stories captivate and create meaning for audiences.

## 1.2. Research motivations

From a managerial perspective, the thesis provides information to inspire brand managers in designing engaging stories. It highlights the importance of integrating heritage, contemporary, and vision stories within a brand's narrative framework in order to create long-term value and connect with consumers on a personal level. Not only does it target companies that have difficulties in delivering successful stories, but any brand manager may be interested in understanding how storytelling impacts consumers' perceptions which would explain their preference for iconic brands. Upon completion, some recommendations are provided for brands that aspire to become as iconic as some of the most renowned brands, enabling them to gain competitive advantage in a crowded market.

The findings can bring value from a theoretical point of view as well because it advances the extensive research conducted on storytelling by focusing on iconic brands. Firstly, these brands are interesting for getting insights into their universal appeal. Secondly, real-world examples of iconic brands' successful storytelling strategies can be used to support existing theories. While there is numerous research on the effectiveness of storytelling, studies on iconic brands remain scarce. Specifically, no study has been found on the topic of iconic brands that investigates the impact of heritage, contemporary, and vision stories. Therefore, combining literature review with a quantitative study offers a unique way to address this gap in the literature.



### 1.3. Problem statement

The emphasis is on comprehending the benefits that iconic brands gain in leveraging the past, present, and future in video storytelling advertisements. The research problem is stated as follows: *how do heritage, contemporary, and vision stories impact brand equity?* This can be further broken down into several key research questions:

- (1) What are the driving factors of iconic brands' success in a storytelling context?
- (2) What role do temporally-oriented stories play in shaping brand personality perceptions?
- (3) To what extent do brand personality dimensions mediate the relationship between a heritage, contemporary, or a vision story, and perceived quality / brand love?
- (4) To what extent does brand personality contribute to the development of brand love?

### 1.4. The Approach

This research paper is structured around six chapters. The first part introduces the context, contributions, and motivations of the thesis, followed by a clear definition of the research questions. The second chapter covers the literature review, discussing the challenges brands may face in remaining relevant across multiple generations and cultures, as well as defining the term "iconic brand". Based on the literature, an analytical model is developed. The third chapter provides a thorough explanation of the research design and methodology employed. The fourth chapter analyses the results of the study, whereas the fifth chapter delves into a discussion of these findings. The final chapter concludes the thesis, addressing its limitations and offering suggestions for future research. All supporting materials and references are provided in the appendix and bibliography.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The objective of the literature review is to gather relevant information from secondary sources in order to gain an initial understanding of the topic under study. Concretely, the concepts of storytelling, iconic brands, heritage, contemporary, vision stories, and brand equity will be defined and examined from the perspectives of different authors along with their respective findings. The references include research articles, webpages, and books.

### 2.1. Iconic brands

Although countless brands have achieved success, only a few can claim the status of being truly iconic. According to Holt (2003), an iconic brand is a master at storytelling. It is a brand that has managed to perform a myth, a special kind of story, and establish itself in history to become emblematic of broader cultural significance. Such brands are crucial in society and, therefore, are highly valued by consumers. Torelli, Chiu, and Keh (2010) agree on the cultural aspect: based on their study, iconic brands are those that symbolize the values and aspirations of a particular cultural group. Furthermore, Yu and Briss (2018) add that iconic brands evoke feelings, benefit from a strong recognition, and embody a unique personality that reinforce a memorable brand name. Indeed, a study has found that iconic brands are often the first to come to mind when individuals think about a category of products or services (Hollis, 2007). As a matter of fact, there is no single definition that determines whether a brand is iconic. Nevertheless, brands like Apple, Coca-Cola, or Nike, show that iconic brands are undeniably dominant on a global scale and share a number of common characteristics (Torelli, 2013).

#### *Longevity*

First of all, iconic brands have a long-standing historical root, which helps them stand the test of time (Norris, Swayne, Taylor, & Taylor, 2020; Birss & Yu, 2018). These brands are considered timeless and transcend generations to the extent of becoming embedded in our lives

(Okoeguale, 2024). For example, Nike has existed since its establishment in 1964 and has remained a leader in the apparel and footwear industry for four generations now. However, it is important to note that longevity is not about being the first in the market. In other words, it does not guarantee brands to have more chances to transform into icons, as it takes little time for competitive alternatives to emerge and do better (Nicholson, 2023). Besides the mere years of existence, longevity implies that companies are able to stay in power and maintain brand value over a long period of time, ultimately cultivating a loyal customer base (Hudson, 2014). While iconic brands occasionally adapt to an evolving environment, they remain largely consistent and true to their core values even in the face of challenges (Papirfly, 2021; Bishop, 2011). As such, one benefit of being iconic lies in the fact that managers can build on what they already have (Birss & Yu, 2018). Moreover, longevity increases the likelihood that a brand will be perceived as authentic and be trusted by the public (Moulard, Raggio, & Folse, 2016).

### ***Identity (myth)***

From a visual point of view, iconic brands are immediately recognizable by their logo, colours, or even shape, that are all design elements contributing to their unique identity (Eisingerich, et al., 2009). Taking the example of Kellogg's, the logo itself, being a redesigned version of William Kellogg's original signature, is able to tell the story of the brand's origin and serves as a symbol of the brand's legacy today (Kreafolk, 2023). As a result, iconic designs have the power to set brands apart and make them become instantly memorable. Nevertheless, beyond the visual dimension, iconic brands have their own personality traits which provide their brand community with a deeper meaning about who they are themselves (Norris, Swayne, Taylor, & Taylor, 2020; Torelli, 2010). This means that consumers form their identities based on brands because they are a set of beliefs, ideas, and values (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Holt, 2006). To illustrate, Dove is often seen as embodying sincerity, authenticity, and diversity to attract women who are looking for genuine personal care products. In this regard, Holt (2006) defines

an identity myth as a story that addresses cultural contradictions. He considers it as a prerequisite to becoming an icon. In other words, iconic brands' products serve as avenues through which consumers can articulate their desires and reduce social anxieties.

### ***Cultural branding***

Unlike other famous brands, iconic brands hold greater significance from a cultural perspective. Those have the power to shape and spread cultural ideals and values that create connections in society (Muñiz & Schau, 2005). As an example, Coca-Cola did not create the legend of Santa Claus, but it played a role in shaping his modern image through frequent appearances in its holiday marketing campaigns (Weatherford, 2019). With this strategy, the brand effectively positions itself as a symbol of happiness, sharing cultural values such as the importance of being together. Holt (2004) argues that cultural branding is a powerful strategy for brands looking to capitalize on emerging cultural opportunities and elevate their presence in the market. In fact, iconic brands often tell stories about their era, align with cultural movements, but also address general societal issues and become real contributors. Cultural branding can offer iconic brands a sense of resilience (Hollis, 2007). This cultural scope serves as a foundation for successful brands, enabling them to remain attractive and adapt over time. Finally, Hollis (2007) notes that iconic brands leverage universal needs to transcend generational and cultural boundaries: Lego triggers creativity, Coca-Cola brings happiness, Mercedes fulfils desires for prestige.

### ***Brand resonance***

It is now clear that iconic brands have been admired for decades, eventually for their capacity to embody ideals. As reported by Holt (2003), iconic brands strive to capture a cultural share and compete alongside other popular cultural products to craft narratives that become integrated into our routines. Particularly, these brands distinguish themselves by offering meaning above all, which drives consumers' emotional attachment in ways that other brands cannot replicate (Chauhan, 2023; Fournier, 1998). However, some research argues that a process of de-

iconisation is possible (Testa, Cova, & Cantone, 2017). Nutella serves as a prime example of how an iconic brand can be impacted by societal trends related to well-being and rising concerns about palm oil (Cova & D'Antone, 2016). Since the phenomenon of becoming an iconic brand is dynamic, it is crucial for brands to understand the benefits of storytelling and the importance of constantly adapting their narratives, without overlooking the past and their core values.

## 2.2. The power of storytelling

Storytelling is valued for being one of the oldest forms of communication, as it is fundamental to human culture since inception (Widrich, 2012; Jenkins, 2023). Besides being conveyors of facts, stories generate meaning and provide a way to interpret impartial information (Simmons, 2019). This is possible because stories facilitate comprehension of complex ideas by defining causal relationships and the chronological order of events, aspects often lacking in bullet points or lists (Shaw, Brown, & Bromiley, 1998). While stories are universal means for sharing experiences, storytelling has the ability to captivate individuals, engaging their emotions, shaping their perceptions and fostering empathy (Johnson, 2012; Hibbin, 2016; Nyagadza, Kadembo, & Makasi, 2020; Weick, 1995).

Considering that stories are an integral part of society, brands can also benefit from storytelling in advertising through narrative transportation, when consumers are deeply absorbed into a story (Dessart, 2018). Indeed, branded content designed with a story plot, characters, and verisimilitude were proved to have an impact on consumer engagement from a cognitive, emotional and behavioural point of view (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). What is more, narrative transportation tends to be reinforced within a commercial context, resulting in better recall and positive attitudes towards the brand (Houghton, 2021; Van Laer, Feiereisen, & Visconti, 2019). Additionally, video advertisements framed as stories are more likely to be watched compared to those with a straight-sell strategy (Coker, Flight, & Baima, 2017). Through narrative

transportation, consumers evoke positive emotions to such an extent that it can spark their interest in sharing knowledge (Kang, Hong, & Hubbard, 2020).

As soon as individuals become inspired and persuaded, stories are remembered and have the capacity to spread through word-of-mouth (Simmons, 2019). Overall, individuals exhibit higher intention to promote the brand portrayed in a storytelling advertisement, which is relevant in creating brand advocates (Coker, Flight, & Baima, 2017). Storytelling leverages on a pull strategy and remains one of the most potent tools for convincing others, as it can change ideas and inspire action (Peterson & Boris, 2018). As stated by McKee (2003), a brand should refrain from claiming its own goodness, but rather allow consumers to draw their conclusions in order to prevent potential distrust. Similarly, Roll (2020) argues that “humans are naturally sceptical of sales pitches and being instructed or told to do things, but we let down our guard for stories because they are less intrusive”. To be clear, the moral of a story leave a lasting impact.

Storytelling is essential for brands striving to establish themselves as the preferred choice. Although alternative promotion tools exist, they are usually solely effective in a short-term (Roll, 2020). Conversely, storytelling has a far-reaching effect in forging emotional bonds between a brand and its audience. One reason is that individuals can seamlessly integrate brand stories into their own experiences when they resonate with them (Widrich, 2012). According to Simmons (2019), people prioritize their interpretation of a message and value a story harder if they can make it part of their reality. Stories can further foster a sense of belonging that facilitates consumer-brand relationships (Crespo, Ferreira, & Cardoso, 2022). Yet, an experimental study on the impact of storytelling demonstrates that perceptions vary among people and that different aspects of a story may appeal to different individuals (Lundqvist, Lilijander, Gummerus, & Van Riel, 2013). This raises questions about how iconic brands are able to create stories that appeal to consumers worldwide, but also across generations.

Despite the multiple features of iconic brands, storytelling persists as one of the most important components explaining consumers' preference for iconic brands (Liu, Yang, & Ye, 2023; Luong & Ou, 2012). When examining ad campaigns from these brands, it becomes clear that their storytelling capabilities stand out. Rather than focusing on the products, these advertisements often emphasize feelings, values and everything the brand stands for. As a result, consumers are captivated and drawn to a myth they aspire to be part of. Another key factor in creating iconic brands is their ability to evolve and adapt their narratives in response to emerging sociocultural trends. Hollis (2007) suggests that iconic brands have a distinctive story that stays true to their original values while being reinterpreted in the context of modern culture. Timing is everything in marketing. As Wintrob (2013) introduced the concept of story anthologies, he identifies three story types related to time: heritage story, contemporary story, and vision story. Each story has a special role and helps brands in creating enduring experiences.

### 2.3. Heritage stories

According to Urde, Greyser, and Balmer (2007), heritage for brands include various elements: core values, craftsmanship, traditions, people, but also tangible things like classic products or physical locations. Regardless of its definition, the term heritage should be separated from history. The aim of history is to accumulate knowledge of the past, while heritage makes use of that knowledge to bring relevance to the present (Cassia, 1999).

#### ***Heritage brand***

As stated above, heritage should not be exclusively attached to past events. The history of a brand is everything that a brand has done or been in the past. These are facts that involve all achievements and mistakes (Keller, 2023). Although consumers may remember a different reality of what happened over time, history is a relatively objective concept (Rindell & Iglesias, 2014) that is not valuable unless it is made relevant. On the other hand, the existing literature

about brand heritage denotes a heritage brand as a brand that leverages on its deep-rooted history to bring value to consumers in the present and for the future (Balmer, 2011). It is noted that luxury brands are often associated with heritage brands since consumers are, most of the time, aware of their origin (Wuestefeld, Hennigs, Schmidt, & Wiedmann, 2012). Furthermore, brand heritage can be defined as part of the identity of a brand, involving track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols, and the belief that its history is important (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007). These elements appear to be similar with those unveiled for iconic brands. However, some authors add that iconic brands are different in the sense that myths are not as important for heritage brands (Wiedmann, Hennigs, Schmidt, & Wuestefeld, 2011).

### *The origins*

Heritage storytelling is a process that goes beyond the simple history of a brand: every brand has a history, but not every brand uses it as heritage. More precisely, heritage stories encompass any aspect from history that continues to define or influence the present times. Typically, these describe the conditions and context around which a brand was born (Smith & Wintrob, 2013). In fact, companies often leverage a brand's past roots while empowering founders, early challenges, and successes. Overall, heritage stories are about core values and everything that shaped the brand's early beginning (Pfannes, Meyer, Orth, & Rose, 2021). For example, Heinz is a renowned brand that has maintained a timeless appeal with its iconic packaging design. In a video advertisement, individuals worldwide were challenged to draw a ketchup. Nearly everyone sketched a recognizable Heinz bottle, demonstrating its rich heritage and dominance within this product category (see Appendix 1). Indeed, classic designs are powerful because there is a feeling of comfort in consistency. However, anything that is part of the legacy of a brand can also be considered heritage and be used in a narrative (Keller, 2023).



### *The founder's story*

In this regard, founders' stories can help to build a stronger brand (Aacker & Aacker, 2016). Adidas is among the companies that went back to their past in order to connect with their core values through the story of Adi Dassler talking to athletes about their needs (see Appendix 1). Founders are a great source for reminding about the core values of a brand. For example, Apple has created a myth around its founder Steve Jobs to the extent that consumers feel profoundly attached to the brand, associating him with success (Luong & Ou, 2012). For the analyst at Needham & Company, Charles R. Wolf, "Apple is Steve Jobs and Steve Jobs is Apple" (Nocera, 2008). Another heritage story is the "Be Legacy" campaign, featuring characters who made pivotal decisions for Stella Artois throughout history (see Appendix 1).

### *Consequences of heritage*

Heritage stories play a key role in the value-creation process for both consumers and brands. From educating and informing about an expertise to shaping an entire identity, heritage stories serve as means to enhance brand equity while increasing overall credibility and authenticity (Urde, 2003). Indeed, genuine stories are one of the key drivers for successful organizations because it ultimately consolidates positive brand associations (Lundqvist, Lilijander, Gummerus, & Van Riel, 2013). In particular, Sacco & Conz (2023) identified three strategies for heritage communication: heritage brings authenticity, reaffirms market leadership, and bridges the gap between tradition and innovation through continuity.

In fact, a study demonstrates that heritage brands stand out as preferred choices because they inspire trust, reliability and are considered less risky in times of uncertainty (Leigh, Peters, & Shelton, 2006). To put it another way, heritage provides existential anchors, a sense of continuity and security. As per Pizzi & Scarpi (2019), incorporating the year of establishment of a brand on the logo is an efficient way to show heritage. Based on their study with 24 brands,

heritage leads to positive attitudes toward the brand and, the longer the history of a brand, the better are perceptions about this heritage. Indeed, longevity plays a crucial role in the concept of brand heritage (Hudson, 2014).

Lastly, nostalgia is an affective aspect that describes a longing for the past and represents one consequence of communicating about heritage (Pecot & De Barnier, 2017). Stories about the past can generate nostalgia on the side of a brand. Then again, it can generate nostalgia due to personal memories of one's own experience (Pecot, Valette-Florence, & De Barnier, 2019). This feeling of nostalgia has the potential of developing a strong consumer attachment to the brand, ultimately enhancing the brand's long-term attractiveness.

All in all, authors frequently highlight that heritage plays a role in creating the brand's identity and positively increases the perceived value for consumers (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007; Wuestefeld, Hennigs, Schmidt, & Wiedmann, 2012). Nevertheless, Boccardi, Ciappei, Zollo, and Laudano (2016) claim that heritage marketing's risk lies in focusing too much on the past, which can hinder the ability of brands to evolve. This challenge can be addressed by continuously creating innovative narratives that resonate with contemporary audiences.

#### 2.4. Contemporary stories

In today's dynamic business landscape, consumer preferences, cultural influences, and trends are constantly shifting. This explains the importance for a brand to align its story with the progression of time so as to maintain relevance (Smith & Wintrob, 2013). Due to the increasing involvement of consumers in the development of brands, it is essential for them to form meaningful connections with (post)modern consumers. On this matter, contemporary stories may be employed to anecdote about the current state of a company, expressing their current values and personality in shaping how a brand thinks, feels and acts (Keller, 2023). These stories are about an ongoing journey and include all campaigns that position the brand on

contemporary issues, but also those that promote new products. To succeed in their era, brands must actively participate in constructing the cultural identity within society (Csaba & Bengtsson, 2006). Finally, contemporary narratives may either build on heritage or explore new avenues to make sense of the present world (Smith & Wintrob, 2013).

### ***Celebrity endorsement***

Companies often link their brands to things, people, places in an attempt to enhance their brand equity (Keller, 2003). In particular, celebrity endorsement is commonly used in advertising to promote products because they have great influential power and are able to transfer brands some valuable attributes such as trustworthiness, likeability, attractiveness, familiarity, and expertise (Ohanian, 1990). The benefit of celebrity endorsement lies in the cultural meaning attached to them: images, symbols, values provide brands with better results (Mccracken, 1989). Nonetheless, it should be noted that celebrity endorsement can appear harmful sometimes, when the values of the brand do not match with the characteristics of the celebrity (Till & Busler, 2000; Kamins, 1990). Indeed, Hafiz (2015) argues that Pepsi overused celebrity endorsement and should have diversified and addressed other relevant issues in society. An example of contemporary story is the story of Shaquem Griffin, shared by Gillette, from childhood until he became a successful football player. This story emphasized perseverance, dedication and the challenges that he went through, due to his amputated arm, to accomplish his dream (see Appendix 1). It does not promote Gillette's products but rather share important values.

### ***Brand personality***

Contemporary stories provide an opportunity for positioning a brand with an attractive brand personality that is able to bring current values to life. Brand personality is denoted as the persona of a brand or the human characteristics of a brand (Maehle, Otnes, & Supphellen, 2011). Similarly to what was understood from iconic brands, brand personality is part of the brand's identity and consumers can use it for self-expression purposes (Phau & Lau, 2000). Every brand

needs a strong personality for consumers to relate and rely on them. With the aim of becoming iconic, a brand must focus on creating a suitable and strong personality by using storytelling to communicate compelling myths to consumers (Luong & Ou, 2012; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). This means that storytelling represents a means for demonstrating certain personality traits. Once again, these traits can be communicated through celebrity endorsement. For example, Nike empowers individuals to break their limits, as they get inspired to be like Michael Jordan. As such, brands hold a societal role in helping communities make sense of their environment, a function that is evident in iconic brands.

### ***Brand Relevance***

In times of change, brands should consider delivering stories that are in line with the current context. To achieve this, iconic brands position themselves at the heart of the matter through contemporary stories. On one hand, brands can engage in activist causes, as consumers are increasingly asking brands to take a stand and get involved in socio-political issues. The authors Andersen & Johansen (2023) argue that managers should acknowledge controversies as essential to the brand's development and that they should take time to understand how consumers get involved in these causes. By constantly immersing the brand into these environmental, political, or social conversations and aligning them with their own values (Torelli, Monga, & Kaikati, 2012), brands are able to strategically maintain cultural resonance, drive change, and gain in brand equity. The reason is that values are perceived as an extension of attitudes, shaping beliefs and actions (Maio & Olson, 1995). When consumers truly believe in the values of a brand, they feel more attached to them, which can help the brand perform better. Hollis (2007) supports that iconic brands can even inspire changes in society's values. To illustrate, Nike released an advertisement when protests against racism in America were happening to invite individuals not to ignore the issue (see Appendix 1). On the other hand, Apple successfully crafted a story showcasing how Apple's tools facilitate a seamless work-

from-home experience while incorporating elements of comedy (see Appendix 1). This alignment with the transition to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic was relevant.

## 2.5. Vision stories

Unlike contemporary stories, vision stories communicate about future aspirations of a brand. In these narratives, brand managers point to the future, embracing their long-term mission, vision, and purpose (Keller, 2023). Vision stories convey the fundamental reasons behind the business existence and how it will make a difference in the world. Therefore, these stories inform audiences about new objectives and have the potential to inspire them about a transformation or a change (James & Minnis, 2004). It is worth noting that vision stories were initially shared with internal stakeholders to motivate teams towards a common objective. However, with the prevalence of social media, brands run the risk that consumers misinterpret a message. In other words, they lose the chance to tell their own version of a story, which forces them to communicate with transparency (Smith & Wintrob, 2013).

### *Aspirational aspect*

Vision stories inherently carry an aspirational aspect. As people form their expectations of a brand, they also show interest in the brand's future direction and long-term aspirations. Vision stories are about the intentions of the company, what a brand wants to achieve or become (Smith & Wintrob, 2013). Given that brand managers have full control, sharing a story about the future is an opportunity for them to show what they want the brand to be. As iconic brands share their vision for the future, they become aspirational and inspire consumers to be ambitious and strive for success as well (Eisingerich, et al., 2009). Therefore, future-focused storytelling encourages individuals to go beyond the simple purchase of a product and provide meaning to current challenges. Storytelling about the future aligns with the idea that people are looking for faith in others, it is a path to creating beliefs and sustaining them (Simmons, 2019).

## ***Mission, Vision***

Vision stories have the potential to shape perceptions for the future and to move people to action. In fact, brands no longer differentiate with features, but with a story around their mission and vision. In today's world, brands must stand for something in order to appear relevant to consumers. In this case, storytelling is used to communicate about a brand's future goals and to show how they are working towards it (Keller, 2023). Eventually, those stories can appear as an invitation for consumers to be part of the change. One common theme in vision stories is sustainability and social responsibility. Brands can communicate about their objectives and how they want to do better for the future. In practice, this should be approached carefully, as brands can be accused of greenwashing. However, when brands use a correct approach to sustainability storytelling, they have the potential to transform (Standaert & Dessart, 2023). It is also noted that narratives envisioning the future should be realistic because these expose the brand to public scrutiny and accountability. A vision story is equivalent to promises, and any failure to meet them may lead to distrust (Reilly & Hynan, 2014). Some examples of vision stories include "The Journey of PET", in which Hyundai explains the sustainable future they are working towards. Then, Starbucks promotes its military commitment to hire more veterans and military spouses in the future with testimonial stories. Finally, IKEA introduces what they believe in and who they are, through a commercial that effectively shows its mission to create better everyday lives for people (see Appendix 1).

## **2.6. Customer-based brand equity**

Brand equity can be perceived in two different ways. From a financial point of view, brand equity is measured based on monetary-terms such as market share or profitability. Nevertheless, a company must first create customer value in order to exhibit financial value. For this reason, the focus of this thesis is from the perspective of consumers, wherein brand equity is defined as the value that a brand holds in the minds of consumers. It is an umbrella term for everything

that adds value to a product or service due to the brand (Keller, 1993; Myers, 2003; Aaker, 1991). It is essentially a perception on the worth of a brand rather than an objective factor (Lassar, Mittal, & Sharma, 1995). The authors Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) are the main contributors in this area.

### *Aaker's model of brand equity*

The model developed by Aaker (1991) is one of the most famous ones that describes brand equity as a set of assets and liabilities. There are five dimensions entering into brand equity:

- (1) **Brand awareness** is frequently mentioned as key to brand equity in most models (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Mackay, 2001; Agarwal & Rao, 1996). It is the extent to which consumers are familiar with a brand to the point of being able to identify it under a variety of circumstances (Keller, 2003). Depending on the level or depth of brand awareness, this concept covers brand recognition and brand recall (Kish, Risky, & Kerin, 2001; Aaker, 1991). Additionally, Aaker (1996) includes top-of-mind, brand dominance, brand knowledge and brand opinion.
- (2) **Brand association** encompasses all forms of attributes, images, feelings and thoughts connected to a brand in the memory of consumers. This extends to the overall perception and meaning a brand holds for people (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). When a brand is linked with positive associations, it leads to higher brand equity (James D., 2005).
- (5) **Perceived quality** is the overall evaluation that a consumer gives to a brand in terms of excellence or superiority, it can be based on their experience with a product or service (Zeithaml, 1988; Aaker, 1991). However, it does not depend on objective criteria or on product features (Anselmsson, Johansson, & Persson, 2007). It is common that people base their choice on their perceived quality rather than the actual value (Airey, 2014).

(6) **Brand loyalty** is achieved when consumers consistently choose a particular brand over others despite the available alternatives (Aaker, 1991). It is the attachment or commitment to a brand that can be manifested through repeated purchases (Oliver, 1999). Brand loyalty is important for brand equity, which Suarezserna (2020) defined as the brand value resulting from a strong relationship with consumers. When customers believe in a brand's values, it might increase loyalty and contribute to its sustained growth (Kuswanto, Ramly, & Widokart, 2023).

(7) **Other proprietary assets** like patents, trademarks, and relationships with channels or trading partners, are crucial for safeguarding a brand's uniqueness. They prevent other brands from competing under a similar name or using similar packaging, which could confuse consumers and draw them away from the brand's customer base (Aaker, 1996).

## 2.7. Analytical model

The literature review identified concepts such as longevity, brand personality, cultural values, identity myth, storytelling, authenticity, brand attachment, and relevance as essential for iconic brands. Therefore, an analytical model is developed based on an adapted version of the brand equity model of Aaker (1991) to include aspects peculiar to iconic brands and their success.

### *Theoretical background*

The customer-based brand equity model of Aaker (1991) serves as a lens for examining the impact of brand stories on brand equity. Yoo, Donthu, & Lee (2000) built upon the theory, asserting that marketing activities, in this case storytelling content, play a role in strengthening the brand equity dimensions. Following the perspective of Aaker (1991), these dimensions are interrelated: brand awareness comes before all other dimensions since a brand must explain who they are in order to form any kind of brand associations and relationships. However, he adds that working on brand recognition is not as important for well-established brands as brand



recall and top-of-mind. Atilgan, Akinci, Aksoy, & Kaynak (2009) further supports that global brands focus on earning brand trust rather than brand awareness. Therefore, brand awareness is not considered important in the case of iconic brands. These brands have already achieved such high levels of recognition that their brand identity often precedes them. Similarly, Keller's model of brand equity suggests that a brand can build strong bonds with their customers starting from its identity (Keller, 1993). In this context, brand personality within brand identity is relevant for the research topic, as it is one of the strongest brand associations for brands to reach iconic status (Luong & Ou, 2012).

### **(1) Brand personality**

Considering that iconic brands represent only a small set of all the renowned brands for which consumers have immense admiration, it is clear that a strong brand personality is necessary to achieve a certain level of iconicity. To create a suitable and strong personality, brands may use storytelling to communicate compelling myths to consumers (Luong & Ou, 2012; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). As the authors argue, iconic brands understand that an effective articulation of their brand personality through stories sets them apart. Brand personality is human characteristics that allow consumers to relate to the brand on a personal level, similar to how they would with other people (Aaker J. L., 1997):

- **Sincerity:** brands with sincerity are honest, trustworthy, genuine, down-to-earth, and wholesome. They often prioritize building strong relationships with consumers. Transparency, family, community, and authenticity are important values for them.
- **Excitement:** brands with excitement evoke feelings of enthusiasm, energy, and adventure. They often appeal to consumers seeking novelty and stimulation because they are daring and strive to inspire consumers through bold ideas and experiences.

- **Competence:** brands with competence are perceived as reliable, knowledgeable, capable, intelligent, and successful. They emphasize quality and trustworthiness, as they prioritize excellence to demonstrate expertise in their respective fields.
- **Sophistication:** brands with sophistication are perceived as elegant, glamorous, and refined. They target consumers who appreciate luxury, prestige, and exclusivity. Moreover, these brands often evoke a sense of aspiration and status.
- **Ruggedness:** brands with ruggedness are perceived as tough, outdoorsy, and resilient. They resonate with consumers who value durability, ruggedness, and a spirit of adventure. These brands often evoke feelings of freedom and exploration.

For the purpose of the study, excitement, competence, and sincerity are measured because they most accurately reflect the concepts of brand relevance, brand trust, and authenticity. According to Keller (2023), the past of a brand, in terms of what it has accomplished, leads to perceptions of expertise and competence. In addition, the present may impact likability and trust. Both, past and present, greatly influence overall credibility. He adds that the past, present, and future work together to create value for consumers in a narrative. When a brand adopts an authentic story that consumers find engaging, it is assumed that these stories will present the brand in a favourable light because brand personality is a perception (Freling & Forbes, 2005).

**H1:** Iconic brands' authentic storytelling has a positive influence on the three brand personality dimensions: competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c).

**H2:** The creation of empathy towards the characters within a story positively influences competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c).

## **(2) Perceived quality**

As it was mentioned before, brand trust is a naturally important asset for global brands. In particular, Holt, Quelch, & Taylor (2004) conducted extensive research to support that the majority of people choose a global brand over another due to differences in global qualities,

such as perceived quality. Indeed, iconic brands benefit from a cultural “halo effect” when it is able to convey powerful myths: the value generated positively impacts other facets of the brand such as its quality reputation (Holt, 2004). Additionally, Kukreti & Yadav (2023) demonstrated that brand personality has a direct positive effect on perceived quality of an e-retail brand. In the Chinese sportswear market, Tong & Li (2013) found similar results. Therefore, the three brand personality dimensions are expected to positively influence the perceived quality in the case of iconic brands as well. This effect will be tested through the impact of storytelling on perceived quality, with brand personality as a mediator.

When consumers have to make a choice, heritage brands are usually preferred because they inspire trust and are safe choices (Leigh, Peters, & Shelton, 2006). Therefore, this hypothesis is expected to be particularly true for heritage stories. However, contemporary and vision narratives could also instil trust in perceived quality when brands are able to create positive associations through storytelling. For example, vision stories may increase perceived quality because social and environmental responsibility are signs of reliability and influence consumers’ evaluation of global brands. (Holt, Quelch, & Taylor, 2004; Walsh & Beatty, 2007).

**H3:** The dimensions competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c) mediate the relationship between iconic brands’ authentic storytelling and perceived quality.

### **(3) Brand love**

When brands are presented with an attractive personality, consumers may form a deep connection with them. Brand love is defined as the most potent antecedent of brand loyalty (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021). Hence, it also has an impact on brand equity (Aaker, 1991). In this study, brand love is favoured over brand loyalty because loyalty primarily pertains to a behaviour, which may not always be applicable for some product categories after exposure to a single ad. As it was supported in several studies from the literature, brand personality has a

significant and positive influence on brand love, which then influences other consumer behaviours (Bairrada, Coelho, & Lizanets, 2018; Kukreti & Yadav, 2023). Furthermore, Whelan, Moon, and Erevelles (2024) demonstrates that brand personality is strongly associated with consumers' preference for iconic brands. More precisely, the dimensions of sincerity and excitement were previously tested in the context of online retailers. The results showed that these dimensions have a direct positive impact on brand love (Roy, Khandeparkar, & Motiani, 2016). It is argued that iconic brands, as cultural icons, are also able to evoke brand love through attractive personality traits portrayed in a story.

Finally, it is suggested that perceived quality will positively influence brand love (Junaid & Hussain, 2016), which can thus enhance overall brand equity.

**H4:** The dimensions competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c) mediate the relationship between iconic brands' authentic storytelling and brand love.

**H5:** Perceived quality positively reinforces brand love, and ultimately brand equity.

#### **(4) Identity values**

Brand personality may not fully capture the broader social and cultural essence of iconic brands. The cultural branding theory, developed by Holt (2004), highlights the importance of storytelling in creating an identity myth that addresses cultural tensions and helps to establish an emotional connection with audiences. As noted by Yu and Briss (2018), iconic brands transcend perceptions, thoughts, and feelings to offer deeper meaning as to what people believe about themselves and others. Consequently, people feel more attached to brands that help them in their self-definition. It is proposed that self-expressive brands act as a moderator between brand personality and brand love. In other words, the extent to which consumers love a brand is not just determined by the brand's personality traits alone but is also influenced by how well those dimensions resonate with consumers' self-expression needs.

**H6:** Self-expressive brands moderate the relationship between brand personality and love.

*Analytical model*

The following model will be tested on a heritage, a contemporary, and a vision story.

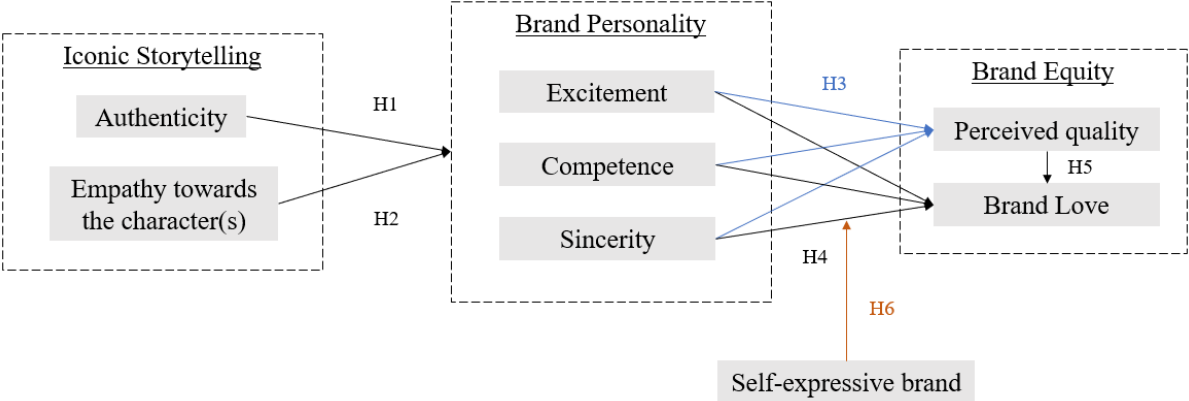


Figure 1. Graphical model

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

### 3.1. Methodology

To better understand the phenomenon of temporally-oriented storytelling designed by iconic brands, and its impact on consumers' responses, a quantitative approach is adopted. This method is appropriate and holds several advantages. First, the hypotheses have been developed after a thorough understanding of the literature review. Therefore, a quantitative approach enables us to test these hypotheses with real-world examples. Secondly, a quantitative approach provides a better picture of the population, as it will reach a larger sample size, allowing for generalization. This is also relevant considering that iconic brands have an audience from various countries and cultures. Finally, it further facilitates the analysis of the results through objective statistics and measurements (Malhotra, Nunan, & Birks, 2017).

#### *Research design*

For this research, a descriptive research design is used to measure the extent to which each story type contributes to brand equity. As such, the objective is to describe consumers' perceptions as well as measure the effect of temporally-oriented stories. The procedure is the following: participants are assigned to only one of the three storytelling ads (i.e. heritage, contemporary, or vision story). After watching the story, all participants answer the same set of questions.

Before all else, it is essential to find appropriate content for the study. A multitude of methods for advertising are at the disposal of brands. While traditional forms like print, broadcast, and outdoor advertising persist, digital advertising provides brands with unprecedented opportunities (Santoso, Wright, Trinh, & Avis, 2020). Specifically, video advertising dominates online content and has gained immense popularity due to its dynamic storytelling capabilities (NogenTech, 2023). In fact, the combination of visuals and audios can communicate far more than static elements and lead to higher engagement (Coker, Flight, & Baima, 2017). For the

purpose of the study, three video advertisements are selected from iconic brands: one based on the past, one of the present, and one about the future.

To make this choice, storytelling videos are evaluated based on how well they represent elements of the past, present, and future. Moreover, the length of the video is kept under 5 minutes in order to maintain participants' engagement and reach a higher level of completion rate. Although there is no universally accepted definition for an iconic brand, the principles laid out in the literature review are taken into account when selecting brands. Mercedes, Nike, and Apple are undeniably iconic brands with strong believers and fans.

### **(1) Connecting to the past - "Bertha Benz: The Journey That Changed Everything"**

In a four-minute-long video, Mercedes-Benz tells the heritage story of Bertha Benz. She made history because she believed in the invention of her husband when horses were the primary means of transport. She decided to embark on a challenging journey to Pforzheim with determination and optimism. Therefore, this story refers to her as the first driver, and emphasizes the revolutionary nature of Carl Benz' automobile during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, it features the first filling station in the world. Bertha Benz plays a significant role in the heritage of Mercedes-Benz because she showed the world the future of mobility and could serve as an inspiration for contemporary pioneers.

### **(2) Connecting to the present - "Emma Raducanu | What are you working on?"**

Nike has released episodes within their "what are you working on" series, featuring several athletes and creatives to tell their personal story. One of the most watched videos was the story of Emma Raducanu, a rising tennis player. She decided to tell her story about perfectionism and how she is learning to let go. Throughout the video, she shares that perfection is not a destination and that it can be hard to jump into the unknown when we feel pressured to be the best at something. Although Nike frequently encourages athletic achievements, this story takes

another approach to performance in times when people care about mental health. A shift in mindset is all it requires: progress over perfection. This contemporary narrative points out key social attributes that individuals may find valuable across various sport activities today.

### **(3) Connecting to the future - “2030 Status”**

As announced in 2020, Apple is committed to be completely carbon-neutral by 2030. The “2030 Status” story tells the journey of the iconic brand towards sustainability and how it fulfils its promise. It has an intriguing start as Apple employees are seen rehearsing. The story unfolds and tension arises when Mother Nature arrives and questions Apple about what it has done for the future. She is seeking updates and expects to be disappointed at first, but she soon comes to appreciate the progress made within the company. Furthermore, the CEO, Tim Cook, reaffirms their objective for 2030, reinforced by their goal of eliminating plastic usage by the end of 2024. This vision story highlights Apple’s commitment to sustainability in a story format that is easily understandable for consumers.

#### ***Pre-test***

In order to confirm that the video advertisements chosen reflect, respectively, a heritage, a contemporary, and a vision story, the first stage involves a small group of individuals selected with convenience sampling. The pre-test participants were exposed to a storytelling advertisement and asked to indicate if the story is associated with the past, present, or future of the brand. Some answers validating the pre-selected content are found in Appendix 2.

### **3.2. Data collection**

To test the hypotheses, an online survey was created using Google Forms. This research instrument is the most suitable given the quantitative stand of this research. The questionnaire is in English, since iconic brands are globally present and the sample will not be constrained to any geographical criterion. The three storytelling videos were divided into three questionnaires



with the same set of questions and were distributed on social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

The structure of the survey is designed to meet all research objectives. To begin with, a short introduction of the topic is displayed to build credibility and encourage respondents to express their honest opinion. This includes reassuring them about the confidentiality and anonymity of responses. The survey starts with general questions about iconic brands. This part includes several metric and non-metric scales, such as a dichotomous scale for “yes/no” responses. Since the definition of an iconic brand varies among individuals, the results from the first questions help clarify the sample's own understanding of iconic brands. In particular, the first question intends to identify the main factors that consumers consider important when defining a brand as iconic. After this first part, the storytelling video is introduced to the respondents. The post-visualization phase is mostly about the topic under study with questions directly related to the variables found in the analytical model: (1) authenticity, (2) empathy towards the characters, (3) brand personality, (4) self-expressive brands (5) perceived quality, and (6) brand love. At the end of the survey, respondents are asked if they own products from the brand, and if they consider buying something in the future. Moreover, some socio-demographics questions are asked to appreciate the profile of respondents. The survey is concluded with an open-ended question for any comments or thoughts respondents would want to add (see Appendix 3).

### ***Sampling***

This study relies on a non-probabilistic sample technique, which means that each individual of the targeted population did not have an equal opportunity to be part of the sample. More precisely, the convenience sampling technique involves selecting individuals that happen to be available, at the right place and time. This method is the most convenient and requires the least amount of time considering the scope of the study (Malhotra, Nunan, Birks, 2017). Furthermore, the problem is centred around iconic brands and perceptions may be collected on

a global scale to form a diversified sample. This means that opinions from different generations and across the world are interesting for the topic under study.

### 3.3. Measures

The elements used to measure the different variables from the model are established scales found in the literature (see Table 1). The questionnaire prompts individuals to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on a five-point Likert scale with 1: strongly disagree, 2: somewhat disagree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 4: somewhat agree and 5: strongly agree.

The storytelling capabilities of iconic brands is measured in terms of authenticity and empathy towards the characters. The scale is adopted from Chiu, H. C., Hsieh, Y. C., & Kuo, Y. C. (2012) with three items capturing authenticity based on factual and perceived authenticity (i.e. “the story is authentic”, “the story seems able to occur in the real world”, and “there is an abundance of facts so that I believe the story is authentic”). Empathy towards the character inherently implies narrative transportation and is measured with three items adopted from the study of Scheidel, Bradlow, & Patti (2006).

The Brand Personality Scale (BPS) has been widely used. Therefore, it is a reliable, valid, and generalizable scale developed by Aacker (1997). Brand personality is a multidimensional construct represented with 42 items in total. However, subjects are only asked about the items related to the scale excitement, competence, and sincerity, as these are present in the analytical model. In total, 11 items measure the perceived brand personality.

What is more, perceived quality will be measured with an adapted version of the three-item scale taken from Dodds, W. B. (2002). It is expected to measure the subjective evaluation given by consumers to the product or service quality, as it was widely used in academic research. For example, this scale was tested across different countries by Agarwal & Teas (2002).

Brand love is measured with 5 items out of the ten items developed by Carroll & Ahuvia (2006). Indeed, the scale was adapted because it was deemed unnecessary to include all items to capture the various nuances of brand love. Moreover, shortening the length of the survey encourages respondents to take part in it.

Finally, “self-expressive brands” was taken from Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) as well. Although it was not named identity myth, this scale mostly represents the concept of brands being used for self-definition. Indeed, the authors specifically explained that brands may help consumers to build their own identity, referencing Holt, a leading author in the topic of iconic brands. The eight items are adapted to measure the extent to which the brand provides identity values.

Variable	Scale	Items	Sources
Iconic Brand Storytelling	Authenticity	The story is authentic The story seems able to occur in the real world There is an abundance of facts so that I believe the story is authentic	Chiu, H. C., Hsieh, Y. C., & Kuo, Y. C. (2012)
	Empathy toward the characters	I could relate to the characters in the advertisement I felt the characters were right there in the advertisement I was experiencing the same thoughts and feelings as the characters	Scheidel, Bradlow, & Patti, 2006)
Brand Personality	Competence	The brand is reliable The brand is intelligent The brand is successful	Aaker, Jennifer. (1997)
	Excitement	The brand is daring The brand is spirited The brand is imaginative The brand is up-to-date	Aaker, Jennifer. (1997)
	Sincerity	The brand is down-to-earth The brand is honest The brand is wholesome The brand is cheerful	Aaker, Jennifer. (1997)
Brand Equity	Perceived Quality	The brand's products would be reliable The brand's products should be of very good quality The brand's products would be very durable	Dodds, W. B. (2002)
	Brand Love	This is a wonderful brand This brand makes me feel good This brand is totally awesome I love this brand! I am very attached to this brand	Adapted from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)
Identity Myth	Self-expressive brands	The brand reflects my personality This brand is an extension of my inner self This brand mirrors the real me This brand adds to the social "role" I play This brand has a positive impact on what others think of me This brand improves the way society views me	Adapted from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)

*Table 1. Scales*

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The questionnaire was distributed on social media over a period of one month, from March 30 to April 26, 2024. A total of 300 responses were collected, downloaded as an Excel file, and then imported into JASP for analysis. The software was used to examine the sample and test the various hypotheses developed in chapter two.

### 4.1. Data Preparation

Prior to analysing the data collected, each response option from the survey was coded. In other words, non-numerical information was categorized and assigned numerical codes directly within the Excel file, using formulas. Specifically, questions with a five-point Likert scale were coded as follows: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, and 5 = strongly agree. Since all items reflected positive statements, there was no need to reverse any coding.

After the data coding phase, missing and inconsistent data were checked. Since most questions required an answer, it was found that each respondent correctly gave an answer to each question, so no treatment for missing data was necessary. However, some answers were either removed completely from the dataset for inconsistencies (e.g. when a participant selected the last option available for every single question), or edited with average scores. As part of the data preparation, new variables were also created, including a respondent ID (see Table 2). Finally, when the Excel document was ready, it was imported into JASP for analysis.

Variable	Value
ID	Identification number attributed to the participant
IV1_AUT	Average of all the responses to the questions from the authenticity scale

IV2_EMP	Average of all the responses to the questions from the empathy scale
MD1_COM	Average of all the responses to the questions from the competence scale
MD2_EXC	Average of all the responses to the questions from the excitement scale
MD3_SIN	Average of all the responses to the questions from the sincerity scale
DP1_QUA	Average of all the responses to the questions from the perceived quality scale
DP2_LOV	Average of all the responses to the questions from the brand love scale
MO_EXP	Average of all the responses to the questions from the self-expressive scale

*Table 2. New variables*

#### 4.2. The Sample

As explained previously, the dataset was cleaned, and some participants were removed completely because of their inconsistent answers. The final sample consists of 240 participants. The sample analysis is conducted using the entire dataset because, when interpreting the results for the different stories, it was found that the sample was uniformly distributed and exhibited the same characteristics, with only slight differences in numbers across the stories.

The descriptive analysis reveals that the majority of the respondents are female. They represent 75.8% of the sample compared to 23.3% male. One participant preferred not to specify their gender while another identified as a non-binary person. Regarding the age, the results show that 75.4% of the respondents are Gen Z. On the other hand, 21.2% are Millennials born between 1981 and 1996. Then, 3.3% of the sample was born before 1981, representing the older generation. None of the respondents were born after 2012. This is convenient considering that the brands' target audiences are primarily Millennials and Gen Z.

Finally, the sample was diversified in terms of country, including people mainly from Belgium, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Slovakia, Sweden, Poland, Canada, China, Australia, Tunisia, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, the United States, and so on.

Apart from the gender distribution, which could be improved, the survey sample appears to resemble the actual target audience of the selected iconic brands: a global audience ranging from their early twenties to early forties. Although the brands appeal to a broad audience, statistics indicate that Apple has more female than male users (Hodgson, 2023). Furthermore, the videos from both Mercedes and Nike portray a woman. Thus, the sample data is an acceptable representation of the target audience for the specific pre-selected content and brands.

#### ***What makes an iconic brand according to consumers?***

The highest mean score from the first question, 4.492, indicates that respondents believe brand recognition is the most critical factor for an iconic brand. The quality of the product or service comes next, with a mean of 4.408, showing that it is also a highly regarded factor. In contrast, the lower mean scores for “long history / heritage” and “constant innovation” suggest that historical legacy and the innovative strength of a brand, while important, are not the most essential determinants of an iconic brand from the consumers’ point of view. Despite having the lowest mean score across the three storytelling types, brand history has the highest standard deviation (1.083), reflecting varied opinions on its importance. In contrast, brand recognition has the lowest standard deviation (0.882), indicating greater agreement among respondents. Lastly, the story factor ranked higher than the cultural impact with a mean of 4.058. However, the latter also showed more variability in responses (see Appendix 4).

#### ***Which brands do consumers consider iconic?***

When respondents were asked to evaluate the brands in terms of iconicity, Apple received the highest mean score (4.433), followed by Nike (4.308) and then Mercedes (4.229). This suggests

that, on average, respondents rate Apple as the most iconic one among the three brands. Yet, all brands have a mean score above 4, indicating that they are all well recognized as iconic brands. Moreover, Nike has the highest standard deviation (0.913), reflecting more variability in opinions on its iconic status (see Appendix 4). The results also reveal that Nike was ranked below Mercedes in the contemporary story's sample, which had an average score of 4.188.

A descriptive split analysis by year of birth shows that the generation born before 1981 tends to rate the iconicity of the three brands higher than other age categories. It is followed by Gen Z, while Millennials consider them less iconic on average (see Appendix 4). In terms of gender, no significant differences were observed between the ratings from males and females for the brands Mercedes and Apple. The mean score for males regarding Nike's iconic status is slightly higher (4.446) than that assessed by females (4.264).

Regardless of whether a person owns a product from the specified brand or not, the mean score for the three brands remains above 4.000, meaning that people agree they are iconic brands. Furthermore, it is observed that participants who own products from the brands tend to rate them 8% times higher in terms of iconicity, on average, compared to those who do not own any.

### ***Do stories play a role in consumers' decision-making process?***

44.2% of the sample recognizes that brand stories play a role in their decision to buy, while 22.5% do not consider them important. In addition, 33.3% responded with "maybe". As such, most responses were either positive or uncertain. This demonstrates the potential of narratives, whether consumers are conscious about their influence or not.

### **4.3. Preliminary Checks**

It is essential to conduct preliminary checks before testing the hypotheses in the analytical model. Specifically, normality, reliability, and validity are assessed for each story type.



### ***Normality check***

Since all interval data should be normally distributed, the Shapiro-Wilk test is conducted to check for normality. The results show that all items have a p-value below 0.05 ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that the null hypothesis – which states that the data is normally distributed – is rejected for these scales. Nonetheless, a variable can be considered normally distributed if its kurtosis is between the values -7 and +7, while its skewness is between -2 and +2 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). This holds true for all items (see Appendix 5). Therefore, a normal distribution can be assumed for the scales used in this study.

### ***Reliability check***

The reliability of the scales was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha test. The analysis (where h = heritage story, c = contemporary story, and v = vision story) indicates that all scales have acceptable levels of reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the threshold of 0.7 (Cortina, 1993). Specifically, the scales for authenticity ( $\alpha_h = 0.799$ ;  $\alpha_c = 0.710$ ;  $\alpha_v = 0.793$ ), empathy toward the characters ( $\alpha_h = 0.821$ ;  $\alpha_c = 0.814$ ;  $\alpha_v = 0.804$ ), competence ( $\alpha_h = 0.709$ ;  $\alpha_c = 0.735$ ;  $\alpha_v = 0.749$ ), excitement ( $\alpha_h = 0.785$ ;  $\alpha_c = 0.775$ ;  $\alpha_v = 0.848$ ), sincerity ( $\alpha_h = 0.803$ ;  $\alpha_c = 0.851$ ;  $\alpha_v = 0.843$ ), perceived quality ( $\alpha_h = 0.872$ ;  $\alpha_c = 0.835$ ;  $\alpha_v = 0.797$ ), brand love ( $\alpha_h = 0.899$ ;  $\alpha_c = 0.903$ ;  $\alpha_v = 0.939$ ), and self-expressive brands ( $\alpha_h = 0.949$ ;  $\alpha_c = 0.925$ ;  $\alpha_v = 0.949$ ), all display strong internal consistency. Therefore, the scales are deemed reliable.

### ***Validity check***

To ensure that each scale measures what it intends to, the validity of the scales was checked using Pearson's correlation test. The results confirmed the validity of all construct measurements, as each item showed a positive correlation with the total score of its scale (David, 2014). All items within each scale were significantly correlated (see Appendix 6).

#### 4.4. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis of the variables under study provides an overview of participants' opinions after watching the video (see Appendix 7). The authenticity scale scored relatively high, with a mean of 3.908 for the heritage story, indicating that participants found the story to be authentic. This is especially true for the contemporary story, which has a mean of 4.067. However, the vision story is moderately authentic according to the respondents. These positive outcomes were expected because of the genuine nature of the stories, which are based on real-life events. Nike did not even focus on the brand, but shared the story of an athlete's everyday life and mindset, making it look more real. Apple's story, though grounded in facts and featuring Tim Cook, has naturally fictional elements because of its portrayal of mother nature. The mean score, 3.571, remains fairly high. However, there are mixed opinions regarding greenwashing, which some participants believe makes the future-oriented story harder to believe:

*“Apple advertisements generally have good storytelling and are easy to watch, however, that does not mean they are not greenwashing.”*

*“I don't trust any big brands but the facts did make it feel less likely to be greenwashing.”*

Empathy toward the characters, however, was rated slightly lower, with a mean of 3.492, 3.350, and 3.458 for Mercedes, Nike, and Apple's stories, respectively (see Appendix 7). While the narratives were authentic, they evoked moderate levels of identification to the characters. The variance in responses suggests that participants had different levels of emotional connection to the characters, possibly due to individual differences and experiences.

Competence emerged as one of the highest-scoring variables, with a mean of 4.350 for the heritage story, 4.004 for the present-focused story, and 4.073 for the vision story. Excitement also garnered a high mean score across the three stories, ranging from 3.825 to 3.941. On the

other hand, sincerity received a moderately high rating (see Appendix 7). This reflects how iconic brands are highly trusted and how consumers can relate to them as human beings through stories they hear about them. Notably, the heritage story achieved higher scores across all three brand personality dimensions. Moreover, one comment on Mercedes' video acknowledges the effectiveness of storytelling in influencing these perceptions:

*"The video changed my perception of the brand."*

The perceived quality for the iconic brands is high, with a mean of 4.067 for Mercedes, followed by Nike (3.929), and Apple (3.810). Brand love, with mean scores around 3.4, is more average but highly dependent on personal preferences, which cannot be fully observed by a descriptive test. Lastly, self-expressiveness scored the lowest, with a mean of 2.612 for the contemporary story (see Appendix 7). This indicates that participants do not strongly identify with the brand as a means of self-definition within society or for themselves. However, the high standard deviation reflects diverse interpretations and personal connections. One respondent interestingly noted that Nike's use of women in their video advertisements does, in some way, impact culture and society, demonstrating the power of narratives and iconic brand:

*"Nike has done a good job to support and get more supporters in women's sport and women in sporting in general. Their posters for collegiate athletes like Caitlin Clark in the NCAA Basketball tournaments."*

#### 4.5. Hypotheses testing

In this section, the different hypotheses are tested through statistical tests performed in JASP.

##### ***Pearson's correlation matrix***

Before proceeding with further analysis, the correlation matrix presents the relationships between all variables of the model (see Appendix 8). This exploration phase is useful for

observing the link between pairs of variables. In short, a p-value below 0.05 shows a statistically significant correlation, suggesting that the variables are indeed correlated (Baiwir, 2023).

To begin with, the results for the heritage story reveal that all variables are correlated, as the p-value is inferior to 0.05, with the exception of the moderator variable “self-expressive brands” and the independent variable of authenticity ( $p = 0.092$ ). However, the relationship between these two variables is not important in the case of our model. Authenticity is moderately correlated with brand love ( $r = 0.319$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ), whereas it is significantly correlated with all other variables ( $p < .001$ ), such as perceived quality ( $r = 0.533$ ). Overall, most variables are positively correlated. Noteworthy examples include the strong positive correlation between competence and perceived quality ( $r = 0.685$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but also with brand love ( $r = 0.535$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The same goes for the excitement and sincerity dimensions, which are significantly ( $p < .001$ ) and positively correlated with the dimensions of brand equity. Finally, the variable of empathy has a relatively high Pearson’s coefficient with sincerity ( $r = 0.503$ ,  $p < .001$ ), implying a stronger correlation with this personality trait. Both, authenticity and empathy, are significantly correlated with the three brand personality dimensions ( $p < .001$ ).

The results for the contemporary story indicate that the empathy variable is weakly correlated to the excitement variable ( $r = 0.283$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ), while authenticity has a moderate correlation ( $r = 0.356$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). Nevertheless, authenticity is also found to be significantly and positively correlated with brand love ( $r = 0.362$ ) and all other variables ( $p < .001$ ). Similarly to the heritage story’s outcomes, empathy remains significantly correlated with sincerity ( $r = 0.570$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Aside from excitement, the brand personality dimensions maintain a significant correlation with brand love and perceived quality, as observed with the heritage story. The most apparent correlation is between sincerity and brand love ( $r = 0.658$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

For the vision story, the competence dimension is weakly correlated with the self-expressive brands variable ( $r = 0.230$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ). However, all other variables are significantly and positively correlated with each other ( $p < .001$ ). Some similarities to previous observations are noted, such as a strong correlation between competence and perceived quality ( $r = 0.626$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and between empathy and sincerity ( $r = 0.580$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### ***Direct impact - Iconic Brands' stories / Brand Personality***

The first hypothesis (**H1**) aims to assess the impact of perceived authenticity on the three brand personality dimensions: competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c). A simple linear regression is the appropriate statistical tool, given the interval nature of the independent variables. It is important to note that the results of the correlation matrix have already been reported, so the exact values are not repeated here. As a reminder, all variables used in this analysis are positively correlated, and in most cases, the correlations are statistically significant.

#### **▪ Authenticity → Competence**

The results show that there is a positive correlation between authenticity and competence. An increase in authenticity perceptions is responsible for only 17.7% of the change in the competence variable for the heritage story, followed by 19.6% for the present-focused story, and 27.8% for the vision story. What is more, the p-value appears to be below 0.05 ( $p < .001$ ), meaning that the model provides a good estimation of the dependent variable (see Appendix 9).

The results are all statistically significant. Therefore, **H1(a)** is supported.

#### **▪ Authenticity → Excitement**

The same regression test is performed for the other brand personality dimensions. Authenticity is found to be positively correlated to excitement. Indeed, it contributes to 15.9% of the change in the dependent variable for the heritage story, 12.7% for Nike's story, and 25% for Apple's vision story (see Appendix 9). The results are significant ( $p < .001$ ). Thus, **H1(b)** is supported.

#### **▪ Authenticity → Sincerity**

The impact of authenticity on sincerity is as follows: it is responsible for 15.2% of the change in sincerity perceptions for the story of the past, 22.9% for the contemporary story, and finally, 33.2% for the vision story from Apple (see Appendix 9). Authenticity of the story is a good predictor of the dependent variable as well. Then, **H1(c)** is confirmed.

The second hypothesis (**H2**) evaluates the effect of empathy toward the characters on brand personality perceptions: competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c). To procedure is the same. The results show that all of the models are yielding statistically significant estimations of the dependent variable with a p-value below 0.05. In this regard, the heritage story positively influences 22.3% of the variation in competence evaluations. The outcomes of the contemporary story reveal that it accounts for 20% of that change, whereas it rises to 32.2% for the vision story. The results for the excitement dimension are as follows: 17.1% for the heritage story, only 8% for the contemporary story, and 20.7% for the vision story. In the case of sincerity: 25.3%, 32.5%, and 33.7% respectively (see Appendix 9). Since all variables are also positively correlated, **H2(a)**, **H2(b)**, and **H2(c)** are supported.

As an overall interpretation of the results, authenticity has the strongest impact on competence, among the personality traits for the heritage story, while it has more influence on sincerity for the contemporary and vision stories. Furthermore, empathy toward the characters impact sincerity the most for all three storytelling videos.

To further explore these relationships, the combined impact of authenticity and empathy toward the characters is assessed through a multiple linear regression conducted using the stepwise method in JASP. Firstly, it is observed that the impacts on competence (22.3% to 27.8%) and excitement (17.1% to 22.7%) increased when both independent variables were considered into the model for the heritage story. However, JASP only provided a one-variable model for the impact on sincerity, meaning that the two-variable model could not significantly predict the

dependent variable. For the contemporary story, the impact on competence increased from 20% to 26% with the introduction of the two variables. No two-variable model was available for excitement. Finally, the impact on sincerity increased from 32.5% to 37%. For the vision story, it is as follows: 32.2% to 38.8% for competence as the dependent variable, 25% to 29.7% for excitement, and 33.7% to 43.2% for sincerity. Consequently, the combination of the independent variables always gives better results in the case of the vision story.

### ***Mediating role – Brand Personality***

The potential mediating role of brand personality perceptions - competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c) - in the effect that authenticity has on brand perceived quality (**H3**) and brand love (**H4**) is tested. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), four conditions must be met for a variable to have a mediating effect: (1) there is a significant correlation between the independent and dependent variables; (2) between the independent and mediator variables; (3) and between the mediator and dependent variables; (4) when the mediator variable is added in the equation, the significant relationship observed in the first condition is reduced and becomes statistically insignificant. The results from the linear regression tests are reported in Table 3.

The results indicate that authenticity consistently has a significant positive effect on both perceived quality and brand love across the story types. The same goes for its impact on each mediator variable. In addition, the mediating factors, competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c), also demonstrate significant positive impacts on the dependent variables. Notably, these mediators often exhibit stronger effects than authenticity itself, suggesting their crucial role in enhancing consumer perceptions. Since all the relationships were tested, and received a p-value below 0.05, the first three conditions of Baron and Kenny (1986) are met.

When examining the impact of the mediators, the outcomes showed variability. For the heritage story, the introduction of the brand personality traits between the influence of authenticity on

perceived quality reveals that competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c) have a partial mediating impact because the t-value decreased despite the significant relationship that remains. Nevertheless, these variables have a full mediating role between authenticity and brand love, as the p-value appear to have decreased considerably when adding the mediator variables.

Influence	Heritage Story			Contemporary Story			Vision Story		
	Beta $\beta$	p-value	t	Beta $\beta$	p-value	t	Beta $\beta$	p-value	t
AUT → QUA	0.499	< .001	5.566	0.416	< .001	3.490	0.377	< .001	4.012
AUT → LOV	0.341	0.004	2.977	0.470	< .001	3.428	0.573	< .001	4.962
AUT → COM	0.316	< .001	4.094	0.475	< .001	4.363	0.433	< .001	5.473
AUT → EXC	0.343	< .001	3.834	0.428	< .001	3.361	0.524	< .001	5.102
AUT → SIN	0.364	< .001	3.743	0.580	< .001	4.814	0.581	< .001	6.225
COM → QUA	0.852	< .001	8.299	0.625	< .001	6.466	0.695	< .001	7.095
EXC → QUA	0.494	< .001	4.506	0.285	0.006	2.810	0.351	< .001	3.891
SIN → QUA	0.416	< .001	4.025	0.321	0.002	3.227	0.566	< .001	7.109
COM → LOV	0.759	< .001	5.592	0.654	< .001	5.656	0.789	< .001	5.875
EXC → LOV	0.574	< .001	4.609	0.277	0.022	2.345	0.538	< .001	4.856
SIN → LOV	0.559	< .001	4.934	0.705	< .001	7.709	0.724	< .001	7.053
<i>(the values below are those of the independent variable authenticity)</i>									
AUT + COM → QUA	0.279	< .001	3.054	0.149	0.198	1.298	0.106	0.267	1.117
AUT + EXC → QUA	0.391	< .001	4.192	0.337	0.009	2.675	0.258	0.017	2.435
AUT + SIN → QUA	0.410	< .001	4.339	0.299	0.029	2.232	0.071	0.472	0.723
AUT + COM → LOV	0.122	0.280	1.089	0.199	0.151	1.449	0.321	0.012	2.558
AUT + EXC → LOV	0.172	0.143	1.479	0.403	0.007	2.755	0.388	0.003	3.046
AUT + SIN → LOV	0.163	0.157	1.428	0.079	0.533	0.627	0.228	0.071	1.829

AUT = Authenticity; QUA = Perceived Quality; LOV = Brand Love; COM = Competence; EXC = Excitement; SIN = Sincerity

*Table 3. Mediation Results*

Regarding the contemporary story, the competence dimension appears to have a full mediation role between authenticity and both dependent variables. A full mediation is also observed for



sincerity between authenticity and brand love ( $p = 0.533$ ,  $t = 0.627$ ). All other mediating effects are partial. Similarly to Nike's story, the vision story's results indicate that competence and sincerity have a full mediating role on perceived quality ( $p = 0.267$ ,  $t = 1.117$ ) and brand love ( $p = 0.071$ ,  $t = 1.829$ ), respectively. Additionally, the dimension of sincerity is a full mediator between authenticity and perceived quality as well. Other mediation relationships are partial.

A Sobel test was carried out to further validate the results of these mediating effects. For example, the mediating role of sincerity on the relationship between authenticity and brand love was statistically significant (Sobel z-value = 2.98,  $p < 0.05$ ). Indeed, it is considered significant when the test statistic is above 1.96 or below -1.96 (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Therefore, all the mediating influences were confirmed statistically. Overall, these findings show that while the authenticity of a story is a crucial driver of consumer perceptions and attachment to brands, its effectiveness can be amplified when traits such as competence, excitement, or sincerity are integrated into the narrative. **H3(a), H3(b), H3(c)** and **H4(a), H4(b), H4(c)** are supported.

#### ***Direct impact – Perceived Quality / Brand Love***

A linear regression was conducted to determine whether perceived quality has a positive impact on brand love (**H5**). The results confirm the hypothesis (see Appendix 9), as the influence was found to be significant for the heritage story ( $\beta = 0.477$ ,  $p < .001$ ), the contemporary story ( $\beta = 0.502$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and for the vision story ( $\beta = 0.708$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, **H5** is supported.

#### ***Moderating role***

The potential moderating role of self-expressive brands between brand personality and brand love is tested (**H6**). Firstly, in order to minimize the problem of multicollinearity, the variables of competence (a), excitement (b), sincerity (c), and the hypothesized moderator, were standardized within the software JASP. For this, a new column was created with the computed values, using the formula  $zScores(y)$ . Then, three interaction terms were created by multiplying

each standardized variable with the standardized moderator. A simple linear regression was conducted to check the moderating impact of self-expressive brands. The same procedure was performed for the three stories. The results indicate that the interaction of any of the brand personality dimensions and the moderator does not significantly impact brand love. An example of the interaction between competence and the moderator is provided in Appendix 10. Indeed, it was observed that the p-value exceeded 0.05 in all cases. Thus, this means that **H6** is rejected.

### *Summary*

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Results</b>
<b>H1:</b> Iconic brands' authentic storytelling has a positive influence on the three brand personality dimensions: competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c).	Supported
<b>H2:</b> The creation of empathy towards the characters within a story positively influences competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c).	Supported
<b>H3:</b> The dimensions competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c) mediate the relationship between iconic brands' authentic storytelling and perceived quality.	Supported (with partial or full mediating impact)
<b>H4:</b> The dimensions competence (a), excitement (b), and sincerity (c) mediate the relationship between iconic brands' authentic storytelling and brand love.	Supported (with partial or full mediating impact)
<b>H5:</b> Perceived quality positively reinforces brand love, and ultimately brand equity.	Supported
<b>H6:</b> Self-expressive brand moderates the relationship between brand personality and love.	Rejected

*Table 4. Summary of the results*

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

The findings provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to the success of iconic brands. Particularly, the study examined the impact of heritage, contemporary, and vision stories on brand equity, with brand personality serving as a mediating factor.

### ***The Foundations of Iconic Brands***

First of all, the study reveals that brand recognition and the quality of products or services are the most critical factors in defining iconic brands, as perceived by consumers. These results align with the literature, which highlights the global recognition iconic brands enjoy within their product category (Hollis, 2007). Moreover, these brands often set industry standards for quality. As a result, consumers have higher expectations, making it essential for iconic brands to consistently deliver high-quality products to maintain trust and satisfaction. This perception of iconic brands as safe options among other brands explains why consumers value these factors as key to what makes a brand iconic. In contrast, long history and innovation were ranked last in the survey. While many brands have a long history and innovative products, they often fail to achieve iconic status due to fierce competition (Nicholson, 2023). Although longevity is an essential aspect of iconic brands, it alone does not define them. Instead, their timeless appeal sets them apart from non-iconic brands. Furthermore, true iconic brands are not only innovators; storytelling play a significant role in helping iconic brands rise to the top.

### ***The Role of Storytelling in Creating and Sustaining Iconic Brands***

The results support that brand stories play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions, with a substantial portion of respondents acknowledging their importance. While many brands engage in storytelling, iconic brands fully understand the power of a well-crafted narrative. A brand can transform itself into something much more than a product – it can offer meaning, influence culture, and become a symbol (Holt, 2004). The stories of iconic brands create

emotional connections to such an extent that customers feel they are part of something bigger. Whether it is a company's origin story, the values it embodies, or the impact it aims to make, storytelling brings a brand to life in a way that traditional advertising cannot match.

### ***The Strategic Use of Heritage, Contemporary, and Vision Stories***

Two components of iconic brands' stories were analysed through a quantitative survey. The authenticity and empathy towards the characters of the stories were revealed to have a considerable positive impact on brand personality dimensions – competence, excitement, and sincerity – which in turn, influenced perceived quality and consumer emotional attachment to the brands. Herskovitz & Crystal (2010) emphasize the benefits for brands to express their personality through narratives to build stronger emotional ties with their audience. This strategy not only makes the brand more relatable but also reinforces its presence in consumers' mind.

The heritage video "Bertha Benz: The Journey That Changed Everything" served as an exemplary choice for illustrating the past in brand storytelling. Firstly, the findings indicate that the story did have a significant positive impact on perceptions of competence and sincerity, more than on excitement. As Mercedes is often associated with automotive excellence, it is no surprise that consumers evaluate the brand as highly reliable. However, the results provide further evidence that a heritage story can influence these perceptions of brand personality. As such, consumers often associate historical continuity, longevity, and other elements of the past, with a brand's competence as suggested in previous research. Communicating about the past inspires trust, expertise, and competence (Keller, 2023; Leigh, Peters & Shelton, 2006). Heritage storytelling is a powerful tool for brands. As the video recreates historic events, it reinforces Mercedes' rich legacy and positions the brand as a leader in the automotive industry. By sharing the history, values, and origins, brands can create a narrative using their deep-rooted past to build authenticity and credibility. Besides strengthening personality perceptions, this

approach also builds trust and increases overall perceived quality of products among consumers, who often feel more connected to brands with a rich, storied background. For example, one comment described it as “*safe and comfortable*”. Lastly, heritage stories also simply inform and raise awareness, ultimately paving the way for long-term brand love:

*“I wasn’t familiar with the origin of Mercedes. Glad I do now.”*

*“I like the story of Mercedes Benz and it’s my first time watching it.”*

Nike's contemporary story, "Emma Raducanu | What are you working on?", stands out for its authenticity, which positively influences perceptions of sincerity towards the brand, particularly among respondents who own its products. Unlike traditional marketing strategies that center on the brand itself, this storytelling approach focuses on universal values and themes, allowing athletes' narratives to resonate with today's consumers on a personal level. As McCracken (1989) suggested, celebrity endorsements can enhance a brand's appeal considerably. In this regard, contemporary stories are found to be effective in connecting with consumers on a more profound level, thus having a greater impact on brand love. As one participant noted, “*I appreciate how Nike shares real stories of athletes; it motivates me to achieve more.*” This illustrates the impact these stories can have on society, particularly for iconic brands that are expected to engage with current issues. As per Holt (2004), iconic brands act as activists, driving cultural change by leading and inspiring individuals to think differently about themselves. Therefore, contemporary storytelling's advantage lies in building narratives that people can truly resonate with, leading to stronger emotional ties. Indeed, consumers prefer brands that provide them with relevant stories that reflect their beliefs and lifestyles.

The vision story from Apple, "2030 Status", elicited a broader range of opinions compared to the other stories. This variability may come from general scepticism surrounding sustainability

claims. On one hand, Apple's story appears engaging to respondents: *"No, but this Apple commercial was super good."* The use of humor, factual information, and storytelling makes it less likely to be perceived as greenwashing. Standaert and Dessart (2023) discuss how sustainability can be communicated more effectively through aspirational contexts, making it more relatable and enjoyable for audiences – especially for a typically serious topic. This approach can increase authenticity and reduce negative responses. However, perceptions of vision stories highly depend on the past and the present actions of the brand. In other words, consumers might accept or refuse the message of the story based on the credibility of the brand delivering it (Balmer J. M., 2012):

*"When it comes to sustainability and the environment, I find it hard to trust brands as many of them are greenwashing. Apple advertisements generally have good storytelling and are easy to watch however that does not mean they are not greenwashing."*

Similarly to the contemporary story, the vision story had the most impact on the sincerity dimension, which then affected brand equity positively. Vision stories help brands communicate their future goals and values, showing consumers where the company is headed. They create an emotional connection by inspiring people with a vision of a better future, which can build hope and trust. Not only do vision stories strengthen the brand's identity, but they also make it more appealing to those who share its goal, ultimately driving brand love. Through vision stories, brands can demonstrate they are not just following trends but leading the way.

Contrary to existing American theories, the study found that the selected iconic brands did not generate high levels of self-expressive value. Although iconic brands go beyond surface-level attributes, offering deeper meaning, consumers' perceptions in a primary European sample may differ slightly from those in the USA, as Reeslev (2020) demonstrated in the Danish context.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

A major challenge in studying iconic brands is the lack of a universally accepted definition of what constitutes an iconic brand. However, one key attribute often cited is brand recognition. In today's competitive market, maintaining a strong identity throughout the past, present, and future is essential for securing a place in consumers' minds. In this context, iconic brands often lead their product category and offer timeless value to their audiences. To remain relevant, brands should build narratives that evolve over time, while preserving their core values.

Heritage, contemporary, and vision stories play a significant role in shaping and articulating a brand's personality, especially to build credibility. Heritage stories enhance perceptions of competence and expertise, while contemporary stories present the brand in various attractive ways, fostering perceptions of sincerity, excitement, and competence depending on the message. Vision stories are particularly powerful in outlining a brand's aspirations with transparency and sincerity, allowing customers to feel part of the change. Since brand managers have control over these narratives, they can consistently showcase different chapters of the brand's story to maintain relevance, create deeper emotional connections, and attract new customers. According to Smith and Wintrob (2013), brand managers gain tremendous advantages once they understand that a brand can tell a variety of stories. This flexibility not only empowers brands, but also improves the experience for consumers.

Above all, iconic brands' stories have a unique impact on society, sharing ideas that can reshape societal views. However, this also means they are expected to fulfil a larger mission, which brings its own set of challenges. Among these challenges, environmental issues and scandals have become priorities for consumers today (see Appendix 11). As a result, iconic brands continue to work on gaining trust from consumers who see them as powerful entities.

*“This is really cool. I have never heard about this concept. I wonder though, could a new company ever catch up?”*

In reality, it takes a long road to achieve iconic status, and how each brand precisely managed to attain that goal varies. However, crafting narratives about the past, present, and future can be a starting point in building a strong identity and moving closer to becoming an iconic brand.

### ***Managerial implications***

The findings from the study offer several actionable insights for brand managers and executives seeking to enhance brand equity and establish their brands as iconic in a competitive landscape.

First of all, brands must prioritize transparent and authentic communication, especially around sustainability, to build credibility in times of growing consumer scepticism about corporate claims. Authenticity in heritage, contemporary, and vision stories is highly valued by consumers, as it can present brands in a positive light, ultimately driving brand equity.

Secondly, brand managers should focus on storytelling that fosters emotional connections, encouraging customers to see the brand as more than just a product. Using empathy and relatable characters, including celebrity endorsements, can be particularly effective. In fact, individuals who feel personally connected to brands are more likely to see them as iconic.

Thirdly, managers should incorporate elements of brand identity, such as personality traits, within their storytelling in order to resonate with their audiences and facilitate easier brand recognition. This can be achieved by ensuring that narratives authentically reflect the brand’s values and mission, thus strengthening consumer perceived quality and love. Beyond recognition, product quality is a crucial determinant of iconic brands in the eyes of consumers. Therefore, brand managers should leverage their past and traditions to reinforce brands’ competence perceptions, while contemporary and vision stories also help in that case.



Fourthly, marketing practitioners must align brand stories with consumer expectations. As consumers believe iconic brands play a role in transforming their resources to make a positive impact in society, any brand should take the time to understand what truly matters to their audience and actively address societal trends. This is because a successful and culturally relevant story can build a community and resonate with today's consumers.

Finally, heritage, contemporary, and vision stories are not separate constructs. They can be leveraged and interact together across all marketing communications, not only in videos ads. Like iconic brands, companies should build a portfolio of stories. However, consistency is key - the overarching story should be the same and told repeatedly in different ways. For example, Apple has a story of breaking new ground, whereas Nike is about empowerment. While the story may be adapted, it should always stay true to its roots. Finding this balance is essential.

### ***Theoretical implications***

The theoretical implications of this study extend to practical considerations for brand management. It contributes to the existing body of knowledge surrounding iconic brands and their role as storytellers.

To begin with, the findings have considerable implications for understanding the dynamics of iconic brands in contemporary markets. The study reinforces the complex and multifaceted nature of iconic brands, which are not merely defined by longevity or innovative capacity.

Instead, their success hinges on their ability to connect with consumers on an emotional level through well-crafted narratives. The evidence that heritage, contemporary, and vision stories significantly influence brand personality, consumer perceptions, and attachment to brands implies that these stories are not just supplementary narratives but essential components that shape brand personality and foster consumer emotional attachment. The positive impact of

storytelling on brand personality dimensions—such as competence, sincerity, and excitement—demonstrates the need for more nuanced models that incorporate personality as a critical element of brand management.

The research also contributes to the evolution of brand management theories by proposing that iconic brands can successfully leverage a series of stories. This suggests a shift from linear branding strategies to a more dynamic and interconnected approach to storytelling, where heritage, contemporary, and vision narratives coexist and reinforce each other.

### ***Limitations and future research***

Despite its considerable managerial and theoretical implications, this research comes with certain limitations that open avenues for future research.

First, the sampling method represents a limitation for this study. Although the sample obtained was deemed representative of the brands' actual target audience, convenience sampling is typically not considered the best approach for descriptive research (Malhotra, Nunan & Birks, 2017). Since the survey was distributed on social media, the sample was overly represented by Gen Z, and the gender distribution could also be improved. Future research should employ more rigorous sampling techniques, such as quota sampling.

Second, while the quantitative aspect of the study allowed for a large sample size and provided insights from individuals with diverse backgrounds, it often fails to capture the full spectrum of emotions, personal beliefs, and individual experiences due to the lack of interaction between the researcher and respondents (Malhotra, Nunan & Birks, 2017). Future research could deepen the understanding of how brands achieve and sustain iconic status in an increasingly complex marketplace, potentially using qualitative in-depth interviews with brand enthusiasts to explore their connections to these brands.

Third, the study was limited to three brands and three narratives. Yet, there exists a wide array of heritage, contemporary, and visionary stories worth examining. For instance, while the vision story centered on sustainability, results might differ if the messaging focused on another topic. Future research should adopt a different approach in selecting content and brands.

Fourth, the brands were selected from different industries: Mercedes serves as a prime example of heritage, effectively building on its past; Nike excels in contemporary storytelling; and Apple has recently committed to addressing environmental issues. While these brands illustrate the concepts under study well, potential confounding variables were not accounted for. Factors such as prior brand experience, personal preferences, and external marketing influences could skew consumer responses and affect results. Future studies could benefit from selecting a single brand or brands within the same industry for a more focused analysis. Additionally, using experimental designs would allow for direct comparisons.

Fifth, the study utilized a video format, but it would be interesting to explore how different media formats impact brand storytelling and how elements of the past, present, or future are presented beyond videos.

Finally, the study suggested the interconnectedness of heritage, contemporary, and vision stories, highlighting how iconic brands leverage the past, present, and future. Nevertheless, future theoretical frameworks should consider the interplay between these stories in detail and empirically explore how brands can strategically curate their narratives to maintain relevance.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Examples and resources

Brand	Link to resource
<b><i>HERITAGE STORIES</i></b>	
Heinz	“Heinz Draw Ketchup” <a href="https://youtu.be/APoGHH1Ns2M?si=kqywsDiV6e7IN14Q">https://youtu.be/APoGHH1Ns2M?si=kqywsDiV6e7IN14Q</a>
Adidas	“Adolf Dassler History” <a href="https://youtu.be/Iv8CvDZSWKo?si=UXM8NclwkHKhpC-w">https://youtu.be/Iv8CvDZSWKo?si=UXM8NclwkHKhpC-w</a>
Stella Artois	“Be Legacy” <a href="https://youtu.be/QqSSHg-z8rE?si=Y-U0Gpf_FJN5u7c1">https://youtu.be/QqSSHg-z8rE?si=Y-U0Gpf_FJN5u7c1</a>
Mercedes-Benz	“Bertha Benz: The Journey That Changed Everything” <a href="https://youtu.be/vsGrFYD5Nfs?si=AovkU_O2kc8N2nCj">https://youtu.be/vsGrFYD5Nfs?si=AovkU_O2kc8N2nCj</a>
<b><i>CONTEMPORARY STORIES</i></b>	
Gillette	“Your Best Never Comes Easy” <a href="https://youtu.be/AXIO_cP-uxY?si=X4mzcSkZxC_a8NRD">https://youtu.be/AXIO_cP-uxY?si=X4mzcSkZxC_a8NRD</a>
Nike	“For Once, Don’t Do It” <a href="https://youtu.be/drcO2V2m7lw?si=-JnkS0D53UvDBMi8">https://youtu.be/drcO2V2m7lw?si=-JnkS0D53UvDBMi8</a>
Apple	“The whole working-from-home thing” <a href="https://youtu.be/6_pru8U2RmM?si=272id1HakydrdnQQ">https://youtu.be/6_pru8U2RmM?si=272id1HakydrdnQQ</a>
Nike	“Emma Raducanu   What are you working on?” <a href="https://youtu.be/nY2DxSss_lg?si=KW9NHtr-mfy-B8kM">https://youtu.be/nY2DxSss_lg?si=KW9NHtr-mfy-B8kM</a>
<b><i>VISION STORIES</i></b>	
Hyundai	“The Journey of PET   ‘Continue’ to take care of the Planet” <a href="https://youtu.be/VvMJhE4yYAAQ?si=NpWbix0w_V5w5Fyv">https://youtu.be/VvMJhE4yYAAQ?si=NpWbix0w_V5w5Fyv</a>
Starbucks	“Starbucks Military Commitment: Ask Better Questions” <a href="https://youtu.be/x7noWnLKdZQ?si=jYZ15NcvNKXLa7rG">https://youtu.be/x7noWnLKdZQ?si=jYZ15NcvNKXLa7rG</a>
Apple	“2030 Status” <a href="https://youtu.be/QNv9PRDIhes?si=4ZeRrMHlpOlj2D6-">https://youtu.be/QNv9PRDIhes?si=4ZeRrMHlpOlj2D6-</a>
IKEA	“What if?” <a href="https://youtu.be/AsN0SDVpS8M?si=F9e3CN-EfaCXnH9w">https://youtu.be/AsN0SDVpS8M?si=F9e3CN-EfaCXnH9w</a>

## Appendix 2: Pre-test Results

<b>Heritage Story</b>	<i>“It definitely has that heritage vibe. I guess Bertha’s journey is an important part of the brand’s history... it feels like they’re reminding us of where Mercedes came from.”</i>
<b>Contemporary Story</b>	<i>“I think it’s closer to the present because they are telling the story of an athlete of our times. Also, the way the video is made feels very modern, it looks like a point of view video, where we are following her during one day.”</i>
<b>Vision Story</b>	<i>“Maybe it’s both the future and the present? But if I had to pick one... I would say it’s a vision story. It’s the present because Apple is explaining what they’re doing today for the planet. But the title also points to the future, and the message is probably more about what they are doing to become more eco-friendly!”</i>

## Appendix 3: Questionnaire

### Introduction

Dear participant,

As part of my Master Thesis on iconic brands, I invite you to **watch a video** and take a short survey. Your opinion is valuable and will greatly contribute to my research. Keep in mind that there is no right or wrong answer. **All responses are anonymous** and will only be used for the purpose of this study, so feel free to give your honest opinion :)

Thank you for your precious help !

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at [clam@student.uliege.be](mailto:clam@student.uliege.be)

**In your opinion, what makes an iconic brand? \***

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Ability to tell a story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easy to recognize (ex: logo, style)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Long history/heritage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Great products/services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Constant innovation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Impact on culture/society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**To what extent can the following brands claim to be iconic? \***

An iconic brand is a cultural phenomenon that goes beyond what it sells, creating meaningful stories that connect people around the world. It is a brand that has existed through times and achieved widespread recognition.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Mercedes is an iconic brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nike is an iconic brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Apple is an iconic brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Do you consider brand stories important in your decision-making process?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

**Post-visualization**

Please **watch the following story** attentively, you will be asked **a few questions** about it. Note that English, German, and Italian **subtitles** are available in the video settings if needed.



**To what extent do you agree with the following statements? \***

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The story is authentic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The story seems able to occur in the real world	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is an abundance of facts so that I believe the story is authentic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I could relate to the characters in the story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt the characters were right there in the story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was experiencing the same thoughts and feelings as the characters in the story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The brand is reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand is intelligent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand is successful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The brand is daring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand is spirited	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand is imaginative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand is up-to-date	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The brand is down-to-earth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand is honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand is wholesome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand is cheerful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The brand's products would be reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand's products should be of very good quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand's product would be very durable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
This is a wonderful brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand makes me feel good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is totally awesome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I love this brand!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm very attached to this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The brand reflects my personality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is an extension of my inner self	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand mirrors the real me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand adds to the social "role" I play	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand has a positive impact on what others think of me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand improves the way society views me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Profile of the respondent

Do you own anything from Mercedes? \*

- Yes  
 No

Do you consider buying from Mercedes in the future? \*

- Yes, I consider buying from Mercedes in the future  
 Yes, the story made me interested in Mercedes products  
 No, I do not consider buying from Mercedes  
 Maybe, depending on various factors  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Year of birth: \*

- Before 1981  
 Between 1981 and 1996  
 Between 1997 and 2012  
 After 2012

Where do you come from \*

Choose ▼

What is your gender? \*

- Male  
 Female  
 Non-binary  
 Prefer not to say

## Appendix 4: Results sample

### What makes an iconic brand?

Descriptive Statistics ▼

	ICN_STORY	ICN_RGN	ICN_HIS	ICN_PROD	ICN_INN	ICN_CULT
Valid	240	240	240	240	240	240
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	4.058	4.492	3.721	4.408	3.962	4.013
Std. Deviation	0.940	0.882	1.083	0.896	0.930	0.979
Minimum	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Maximum	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000

Descriptive Statistics ▼

	MERCEDES	NIKE	APPLE
Valid	240	240	240
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	4.229	4.308	4.433
Std. Deviation	0.859	0.913	0.875
Minimum	1.000	1.000	1.000
Maximum	5.000	5.000	5.000

*To what extent are these brands iconic?*

- Year of birth (1 = before 1981, 2 = between 1981 and 1996, 3 = between 1996 and 2012)

Descriptive Statistics ▼

	MERCEDES			NIKE			APPLE		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Valid	8	51	181	8	51	181	8	51	181
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	4.625	4.098	4.249	4.875	4.000	4.370	4.875	4.196	4.481
Std. Deviation	0.744	1.005	0.816	0.354	1.039	0.870	0.354	0.980	0.847
Minimum	3.000	1.000	1.000	4.000	1.000	1.000	4.000	1.000	1.000
Maximum	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000

**Appendix 5:** Normality check (skewness / kurtosis)

	Item	Heritage Story		Contemporary Story		Vision Story	
		Skewness	Kurtosis	Skewness	Kurtosis	Skewness	Kurtosis
Authenticity	AUT1	-0.848	0.501	-0.689	0.559	-1.120	1.479
	AUT2	-0.824	0.201	-0.908	0.713	-0.471	-0.708
	AUT3	-0.632	0.456	-0.805	0.895	-0.484	-0.062
Empathy towards characters	EMP1	-0.474	-0.328	-0.544	-0.579	-0.381	-0.584
	EMP2	-0.624	0.656	-0.694	0.151	-0.857	1.142
	EMP3	-0.234	-0.566	-0.102	-0.638	-0.331	-0.667
Competence	COM1	-0.998	1.814	-0.851	0.445	-0.797	0.165
	COM2	-1.276	2.822	-0.483	-0.235	-1.282	2.469
	COM3	-1.503	1.329	-1.343	1.667	-1.856	5.037
Excitement	EXC1	-0.294	-0.214	-0.995	0.939	-0.637	-0.358
	EXC2	-0.601	0.482	-0.630	0.210	-0.803	0.258
	EXC3	-0.983	0.795	-0.843	0.538	-1.138	1.084
	EXC4	-0.896	0.824	-1.070	0.945	-1.326	1.958
Sincerity	SIN1	-0.645	0.236	-0.554	0.225	-0.033	-1.106
	SIN2	-0.549	0.519	-0.235	-0.686	-0.015	-0.946
	SIN3	-0.814	1.317	-0.497	-0.105	-0.030	-0.834
	SIN4	-0.319	0.405	-0.883	1.135	-0.378	-0.366
Perceived Quality	QUA1	-1.011	2.469	-0.754	0.708	-0.957	1.088
	QUA2	-1.109	2.317	-0.843	0.966	-0.870	1.025
	QUA3	-0.808	0.775	-0.547	-0.330	-0.544	-0.411
Brand Love	LOV1	-0.441	0.635	-0.696	0.320	-0.738	0.684
	LOV2	-0.633	0.722	-0.465	-0.318	-0.674	0.132
	LOV3	-0.537	0.123	-0.404	-0.347	-0.509	-0.121
	LOV4	-0.248	-0.298	-0.291	-0.552	-0.425	-0.416
	LOV5	0.186	-0.824	0.010	-0.869	-0.474	-0.839
Self-expressive brands	EXP1	0.081	-0.765	-0.282	-0.839	-0.241	-0.859
	EXP2	0.257	-0.754	-0.037	-0.896	0.250	-0.751
	EXP3	0.260	-0.743	-0.004	-1.226	0.337	-0.673
	EXP4	0.165	-0.811	0.066	-1.007	-0.432	-0.985
	EXP5	-0.249	-0.836	-0.132	-1.300	-0.417	-1.142
	EXP6	-0.300	-0.956	-0.113	-1.099	-0.297	-1.131

**Appendix 6:** Validity check (Pearson’s correlation of items)

	Item	Heritage Story		Contemporary Story		Vision Story	
		Pearson's r	p-value	Pearson's r	p-value	Pearson's r	p-value
Authenticity	AUT1	0.829***	< .001	0.756***	< .001	0.820***	< .001
	AUT2	0.861***	< .001	0.774***	< .001	0.827***	< .001
	AUT3	0.851***	< .001	0.839***	< .001	0.887***	< .001
Empathy towards characters	EMP1	0.870***	< .001	0.896***	< .001	0.837***	< .001
	EMP2	0.791***	< .001	0.789***	< .001	0.856***	< .001
	EMP3	0.913***	< .001	0.833***	< .001	0.855***	< .001
Competence	COM1	0.886***	< .001	0.794***	< .001	0.819***	< .001
	COM2	0.839***	< .001	0.841***	< .001	0.888***	< .001
	COM3	0.639***	< .001	0.791***	< .001	0.740***	< .001
Excitement	EXC1	0.762***	< .001	0.772***	< .001	0.821***	< .001
	EXC2	0.796***	< .001	0.779***	< .001	0.862***	< .001
	EXC3	0.818***	< .001	0.816***	< .001	0.871***	< .001
	EXC4	0.747***	< .001	0.711***	< .001	0.758***	< .001
Sincerity	SIN1	0.828***	< .001	0.808***	< .001	0.814***	< .001
	SIN2	0.811***	< .001	0.840***	< .001	0.896***	< .001
	SIN3	0.821***	< .001	0.871***	< .001	0.847***	< .001
	SIN4	0.717***	< .001	0.803***	< .001	0.736***	< .001
Perceived Quality	QUA1	0.861***	< .001	0.852***	< .001	0.832***	< .001
	QUA2	0.924***	< .001	0.858***	< .001	0.835***	< .001
	QUA3	0.895***	< .001	0.889***	< .001	0.870***	< .001
Brand Love	LOV1	0.803***	< .001	0.782***	< .001	0.843***	< .001
	LOV2	0.883***	< .001	0.829***	< .001	0.888***	< .001
	LOV3	0.867***	< .001	0.913***	< .001	0.939***	< .001
	LOV4	0.911***	< .001	0.917***	< .001	0.939***	< .001
	LOV5	0.800***	< .001	0.789***	< .001	0.892***	< .001
Self-expressive brands	EXP1	0.926***	< .001	0.804***	< .001	0.887***	< .001
	EXP2	0.910***	< .001	0.859***	< .001	0.906***	< .001
	EXP3	0.870***	< .001	0.888***	< .001	0.891***	< .001
	EXP4	0.921***	< .001	0.902***	< .001	0.894***	< .001
	EXP5	0.866***	< .001	0.857***	< .001	0.885***	< .001
	EXP6	0.867***	< .001	0.825***	< .001	0.897***	< .001

## Appendix 7: Descriptive statistics

### Heritage story

Descriptive Statistics

	IV1_AUT	IV2_EMP	MD1_COM	MD2_EXC	MD3_SIN	DP1_QUA	DP2_LOV	MO_EXP
Valid	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.908	3.492	4.350	3.941	3.528	4.067	3.489	2.840
Std. Deviation	0.772	0.871	0.581	0.665	0.719	0.722	0.825	1.081
Minimum	1.333	1.000	2.000	1.500	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Maximum	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000

### Contemporary story

Descriptive Statistics

	IV1_AUT	IV2_EMP	MD1_COM	MD2_EXC	MD3_SIN	DP1_QUA	DP2_LOV	MO_EXP
Valid	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	4.067	3.350	4.004	3.834	3.497	3.929	3.210	2.612
Std. Deviation	0.648	0.878	0.695	0.780	0.786	0.734	0.842	0.935
Minimum	2.000	1.000	2.000	1.000	1.000	2.000	1.000	1.000
Maximum	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	4.167

### Vision story

Descriptive Statistics

	IV1_AUT	IV2_EMP	MD1_COM	MD2_EXC	MD3_SIN	DP1_QUA	DP2_LOV	MO_EXP
Valid	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.571	3.458	4.073	3.825	3.366	3.810	3.448	2.984
Std. Deviation	0.857	0.805	0.704	0.899	0.865	0.781	1.003	1.107
Minimum	1.000	1.000	1.667	1.000	1.500	1.667	1.000	1.000
Maximum	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000

## Appendix 8: Pearson's correlation matrix

### Heritage story

Pearson's Correlations ▼

Variable		IV1_AUT	IV2_EMP	MD1_COM	MD2_EXC	MD3_SIN	DP1_QUA	DP2_LOV	MO_EXP
1. IV1_AUT	Pearson's r	—							
	p-value	—							
2. IV2_EMP	Pearson's r	0.450***	—						
	p-value	< .001	—						
3. MD1_COM	Pearson's r	0.421***	0.473***	—					
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—					
4. MD2_EXC	Pearson's r	0.398***	0.413***	0.538***	—				
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—				
5. MD3_SIN	Pearson's r	0.390***	0.503***	0.405***	0.364***	—			
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—			
6. DP1_QUA	Pearson's r	0.533***	0.316**	0.685***	0.454***	0.415***	—		
	p-value	< .001	0.004	< .001	< .001	< .001	—		
7. DP2_LOV	Pearson's r	0.319**	0.443***	0.535***	0.463***	0.488***	0.418***	—	
	p-value	0.004	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—	
8. MO_EXP	Pearson's r	0.189	0.386***	0.316**	0.282*	0.454***	0.298**	0.699***	—
	p-value	0.092	< .001	0.004	0.011	< .001	0.007	< .001	—

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

### Contemporary story

Pearson's Correlations

Variable		IV1_AUT	IV2_EMP	MD1_COM	MD2_EXC	MD3_SIN	DP1_QUA	DP2_LOV	MO_EXP
1. IV1_AUT	Pearson's r	—							
	p-value	—							
2. IV2_EMP	Pearson's r	0.524***	—						
	p-value	< .001	—						
3. MD1_COM	Pearson's r	0.443***	0.447***	—					
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—					
4. MD2_EXC	Pearson's r	0.356**	0.283*	0.583***	—				
	p-value	0.001	0.011	< .001	—				
5. MD3_SIN	Pearson's r	0.479***	0.570***	0.527***	0.342**	—			
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.002	—			
6. DP1_QUA	Pearson's r	0.368***	0.362***	0.591***	0.303**	0.343**	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.006	0.002	—		
7. DP2_LOV	Pearson's r	0.362***	0.524***	0.539***	0.257*	0.658***	0.438***	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.022	< .001	< .001	—	
8. MO_EXP	Pearson's r	-0.010	0.323**	0.188	0.121	0.468***	0.260*	0.587***	—
	p-value	0.928	0.003	0.096	0.284	< .001	0.020	< .001	—

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

### Vision story

Pearson's Correlations ▼

Variable		IV1_AUT	IV2_EMP	MD1_COM	MD2_EXC	MD3_SIN	DP1_QUA	DP2_LOV	MO_EXP
1. IV1_AUT	Pearson's r	—							
	p-value	—							
2. IV2_EMP	Pearson's r	0.550***	—						
	p-value	< .001	—						
3. MD1_COM	Pearson's r	0.527***	0.567***	—					
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—					
4. MD2_EXC	Pearson's r	0.500***	0.455***	0.585***	—				
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—				
5. MD3_SIN	Pearson's r	0.576***	0.580***	0.512***	0.369***	—			
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—			
6. DP1_QUA	Pearson's r	0.414***	0.514***	0.626***	0.403***	0.627***	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—		
7. DP2_LOV	Pearson's r	0.490***	0.530***	0.554***	0.482***	0.624***	0.551***	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—	
8. MO_EXP	Pearson's r	0.485***	0.541***	0.421***	0.230*	0.682***	0.493***	0.663***	—
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.040	< .001	< .001	< .001	—

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

## Appendix 9: direct impact – linear regression

### Empathy toward the characters → Sincerity

Model Summary - MD3_SIN				
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.719
H <sub>1</sub>	0.503	0.253	0.243	0.626

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	10.329	1	10.329	26.377	< .001
	Residual	30.545	78	0.392		
	Total	40.874	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.528	0.080		43.871	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	2.079	0.291		7.154	< .001
	IV2_EMP	0.415	0.081	0.503	5.136	< .001

Heritage Story

Model Summary - MD3_SIN				
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.786
H <sub>1</sub>	0.570	0.325	0.317	0.650

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	15.878	1	15.878	37.605	< .001
	Residual	32.934	78	0.422		
	Total	48.812	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.497	0.088		39.790	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	1.786	0.288		6.194	< .001
	IV2_EMP	0.511	0.083	0.570	6.132	< .001

Contemporary Story

Model Summary - MD3_SIN				
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.865
H <sub>1</sub>	0.580	0.337	0.328	0.709

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	19.911	1	19.911	39.612	< .001
	Residual	39.207	78	0.503		
	Total	59.118	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.366	0.097		34.799	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	1.209	0.352		3.437	< .001
	IV2_EMP	0.624	0.099	0.580	6.294	< .001

Vision Story

*Empathy toward the characters → Excitement*

Model Summary - MD2_EXC					
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE	
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.665	
H <sub>1</sub>	0.413	0.171	0.160	0.609	

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	5.966	1	5.966	16.080	< .001
	Residual	28.940	78	0.371		
Total		34.905	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.941	0.074		53.025	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	2.840	0.283		10.037	< .001
	IV2_EMP	0.315	0.079	0.413	4.010	< .001

Heritage Story

Model Summary - MD2_EXC					
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE	
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.780	
H <sub>1</sub>	0.283	0.080	0.068	0.753	

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	3.848	1	3.848	6.780	0.011
	Residual	44.270	78	0.568		
Total		48.118	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.834	0.087		43.944	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	2.992	0.334		8.951	< .001
	IV2_EMP	0.251	0.097	0.283	2.604	0.011

Contemporary Story

Model Summary - MD2_EXC					
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE	
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.899	
H <sub>1</sub>	0.455	0.207	0.197	0.805	

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	13.205	1	13.205	20.357	< .001
	Residual	50.595	78	0.649		
Total		63.800	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.825	0.100		38.070	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	2.069	0.400		5.177	< .001
	IV2_EMP	0.508	0.113	0.455	4.512	< .001

Vision Story

*Empathy toward the characters → Competence*

Model Summary - MD1_COM					
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE	
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.581	
H <sub>1</sub>	0.473	0.223	0.214	0.515	

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	5.954	1	5.954	22.446	< .001
	Residual	20.690	78	0.265		
Total		26.644	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	4.350	0.065		66.995	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	3.250	0.239		13.587	< .001
	IV2_EMP	0.315	0.066	0.473	4.738	< .001

Heritage Story

Model Summary - MD1_COM					
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE	
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.695	
H <sub>1</sub>	0.447	0.200	0.190	0.625	

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	7.630	1	7.630	19.525	< .001
	Residual	30.480	78	0.391		
Total		38.110	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	4.004	0.078		51.565	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	2.818	0.277		10.160	< .001
	IV2_EMP	0.354	0.080	0.447	4.419	< .001

Contemporary Story

Model Summary - MD1_COM					
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE	
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.704	
H <sub>1</sub>	0.567	0.322	0.313	0.583	

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	12.599	1	12.599	37.020	< .001
	Residual	26.546	78	0.340		
Total		39.145	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	4.073	0.079		51.756	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	2.358	0.289		8.146	< .001
	IV2_EMP	0.496	0.082	0.567	6.084	< .001

Vision Story



*Authenticity → Sincerity*

Model Summary - MD3_SIN					
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE	
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.719	
H <sub>1</sub>	0.390	0.152	0.141	0.667	

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	6.224	1	6.224	14.011	< .001
	Residual	34.650	78	0.444		
	Total	40.874	79			

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.528	0.080		43.871	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	2.107	0.387		5.449	< .001
	IV1_AUT	0.364	0.097	0.390	3.743	< .001

Heritage Story

Model Summary - MD3_SIN					
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE	
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.786	
H <sub>1</sub>	0.479	0.229	0.219	0.695	

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	11.181	1	11.181	23.175	< .001
	Residual	37.631	78	0.482		
	Total	48.812	79			

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.497	0.088		39.790	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	1.137	0.496		2.291	0.025
	IV1_AUT	0.580	0.121	0.479	4.814	< .001

Contemporary Story

Model Summary - MD3_SIN					
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE	
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.865	
H <sub>1</sub>	0.576	0.332	0.323	0.712	

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	19.624	1	19.624	38.757	< .001
	Residual	39.494	78	0.506		
	Total	59.118	79			

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.366	0.097		34.799	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	1.289	0.343		3.760	< .001
	IV1_AUT	0.581	0.093	0.576	6.225	< .001

Vision Story

*Authenticity → Excitement*

Model Summary - MD2\_EXC

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.665
H <sub>1</sub>	0.398	0.159	0.148	0.614

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	5.536	1	5.536	14.701	< .001
	Residual	29.370	78	0.377		
	Total	34.905	79			

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.941	0.074		53.025	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	2.601	0.356		7.304	< .001
	IV1_AUT	0.343	0.089	0.398	3.834	< .001

Heritage Story

Model Summary - MD2\_EXC

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.780
H <sub>1</sub>	0.356	0.127	0.115	0.734

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	6.088	1	6.088	11.298	0.001
	Residual	42.030	78	0.539		
	Total	48.118	79			

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.834	0.087		43.944	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	2.093	0.525		3.990	< .001
	IV1_AUT	0.428	0.127	0.356	3.361	0.001

Contemporary Story

Model Summary - MD2\_EXC

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.899
H <sub>1</sub>	0.500	0.250	0.241	0.783

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	15.963	1	15.963	26.029	< .001
	Residual	47.837	78	0.613		
	Total	63.800	79			

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.825	0.100		38.070	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	1.952	0.377		5.173	< .001
	IV1_AUT	0.524	0.103	0.500	5.102	< .001

Vision Story

*Authenticity → Competence*

Model Summary - MD1\_COM

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.581
H <sub>1</sub>	0.421	0.177	0.166	0.530

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	4.713	1	4.713	16.762	< .001
	Residual	21.931	78	0.281		
	Total	26.644	79			

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	4.350	0.065		66.995	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	3.114	0.308		10.119	< .001
	IV1_AUT	0.316	0.077	0.421	4.094	< .001

Heritage Story

Model Summary - MD1\_COM

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.695
H <sub>1</sub>	0.443	0.196	0.186	0.627

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	7.477	1	7.477	19.039	< .001
	Residual	30.633	78	0.393		
	Total	38.110	79			

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	4.004	0.078		51.565	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	2.074	0.448		4.632	< .001
	IV1_AUT	0.475	0.109	0.443	4.363	< .001

Contemporary Story

Model Summary - MD1\_COM

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.704
H <sub>1</sub>	0.527	0.278	0.268	0.602

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	10.863	1	10.863	29.959	< .001
	Residual	28.283	78	0.363		
	Total	39.145	79			

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	4.073	0.079		51.756	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	2.528	0.290		8.714	< .001
	IV1_AUT	0.433	0.079	0.527	5.473	< .001

Vision Story

*Perceived Quality → Brand Love*

Model Summary - DP2_LOV				
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.825
H <sub>1</sub>	0.418	0.175	0.164	0.754

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	9.393	1	9.393	16.533	< .001
	Residual	44.313	78	0.568		
	Total	53.705	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.489	0.092		37.848	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	1.547	0.485		3.191	0.002
	DP1_QUA	0.477	0.117	0.418	4.066	< .001

Heritage Story

Model Summary - DP2_LOV				
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.842
H <sub>1</sub>	0.438	0.192	0.181	0.762

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	10.741	1	10.741	18.481	< .001
	Residual	45.331	78	0.581		
	Total	56.072	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.210	0.094		34.079	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	1.237	0.467		2.650	0.010
	DP1_QUA	0.502	0.117	0.438	4.299	< .001

Contemporary Story

Model Summary - DP2_LOV				
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.003
H <sub>1</sub>	0.551	0.304	0.295	0.842

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	24.181	1	24.181	34.084	< .001
	Residual	55.337	78	0.709		
	Total	79.518	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.448	0.112		30.738	< .001
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	0.750	0.472		1.591	0.116
	DP1_QUA	0.708	0.121	0.551	5.838	< .001

Vision Story

## **Appendix 10:** Heritage story, moderator impact

Model Summary - DP2_LOV				
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.825
H <sub>1</sub>	0.776	0.602	0.587	0.530

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	32.356	3	10.785	38.394	< .001
	Residual	21.349	76	0.281		
	Total	53.705	79			

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Coefficients								
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p	Collinearity Statistics	
							Tolerance	VIF
H <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	3.489	0.092		37.848	< .001		
H <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	3.475	0.061		56.558	< .001		
	zEXP	0.483	0.063	0.586	7.677	< .001	0.898	1.114
	zCOM	0.311	0.069	0.377	4.525	< .001	0.755	1.325
	Int_COM	0.043	0.052	0.066	0.831	0.409	0.833	1.201

Collinearity Diagnostics							
Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions			
				(Intercept)	zEXP	zCOM	Int_COM
H <sub>1</sub>	1	1.581	1.000	0.036	0.104	0.193	0.175
	2	1.110	1.193	0.466	0.211	0.047	0.080
	3	0.818	1.390	0.339	0.498	0.075	0.160
	4	0.492	1.793	0.159	0.187	0.686	0.585

*Note.* The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

## **Appendix 11:** Comments on iconic brands' challenges

### *Mercedes' story*

Yes the brand is very popular and all, but with all the climate and energy problems happening in the world and also the poverty ones, this brand is still a luxury for the majority and the energy waste is still a problem even with electric or hybrid models. But the story is still nice for those who have doubts with their dreams or projects because of the world's view.

### *Nike's story*

As someone who is considering sustainability of the brands, no matter how good of a good storyteller they are, they don't gain respect and trust as long as they don't follow ethics

Storytelling is important but I think that scandals a brand goes through can highly influence its image and story. I personally, don't like the brand Nike, so it depends on someone's preference and it is subjective too

### *Apple's story*

I like how this ad by apple is directly addressing criticisms while tackling modern problems such as sustainability. I still do not trust apple and the systems of power that create and perpetuate the success of iconic brands, but I also respect the success and tenacity. It may even gain my attention by making me question if their values align with mine more than I previously knew. I think the ted lasso joke was a good pull to show that apple is just like regular people. And I would highly note the quip around the building of forests in africa, they recognise the knowledge of the public on current climate topics such as the awareness of corporate green washing and the current discussion on creating forests that are sustainable and have measurable results by expressing doubt as the consumer might. In a circular way, this can connect in the consumers mind that apple is serious about the greater good, regardless of the consumers needing to actually understand all the moving parts required to going carbon neutral. The exaggerated ending is also notable, it acts almost like these goals are HUGE and we should be impressed. Apple is famous (iconic?) for not allowing villains in movies to use apple products, I find it interesting that mother nature was used as an antagonist because if you think about it she is symbolically "good". In that lens, I just see a company talking big. Having the protagonist and antagonist with the same goal weakens the honesty argument of the represented "discussion", after all it is just an ad. And they did spend a long time talking about themselves in the ad. Almost as long as I spent to write this, hope you enjoyed the read ;)

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