



The Impact of Business vs. Consumer Storytelling on Consumer Trust in Digital Brand Communication

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Abstract

Title:

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Keywords: Brand Trust, Consumer Storytelling, Business Storytelling, Digital Communication

Storytelling has become a main marketing tool in digital brand communication, shaping consumer perceptions and fostering strong brand relationships. This thesis examines two types of storytelling: business storytelling, which is created and distributed by brands to convey brand heritage and values, and consumer storytelling, which arises from user-generated content and serves to enhance brand credibility.

This study investigates the effects of these two storytelling types on trust within digital communication environments and assesses whether product visibility (product shown versus product absent) influences these perceptions. Using a 2x2 factorial experimental design, participants were exposed to an Instagram post from a well-known beauty brand featuring either business or consumer storytelling, with product visibility systematically manipulated across conditions.

The results reveal a significant main effect of storytelling type, with consumer storytelling generating higher levels of brand trust compared to business storytelling. Contrary to initial expectations, product visibility did not significantly affect trust, nor did it interact with storytelling type. Exploratory analyses of brand credibility, authenticity, storytelling quality, and purchase intention yielded comparable outcomes, further reinforcing the robustness of the trust-related findings.

These findings establish a foundation for future research to explore these constructs and relationships across diverse industries, product categories, and storytelling types. Overall, this thesis advances understanding of the mechanisms by which storytelling influences trust in digital brand communication strategies.

Sumário

Título:

O Impacto do Storytelling Empresarial vs. Storytelling Gerado pelo Consumidor na Confiança do Consumidor na Comunicação Digital de Marca

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Palavras-chave: Confiança de Marca, Storytelling do Consumidor, Storytelling Empresarial, Comunicação Digital

O storytelling tornou-se uma ferramenta central na comunicação digital de marcas, influenciando as percepções dos consumidores e fortalecendo as relações de marca. Esta dissertação analisa dois tipos de storytelling: o storytelling empresarial, desenvolvido pelas marcas para comunicar valores e herança, e o storytelling do consumidor, originado em conteúdos gerados pelos utilizadores e associado ao reforço da credibilidade da marca.

O estudo examina os efeitos destes dois tipos de storytelling na confiança em contextos de comunicação digital e avalia o papel da visibilidade do produto (produto presente versus ausente). Foi utilizado um desenho experimental fatorial 2x2, no qual os participantes foram expostos a uma publicação no Instagram de uma marca de beleza reconhecida, com o tipo de storytelling e a visibilidade do produto manipulados sistematicamente.

Os resultados indicam um efeito principal significativo do tipo de storytelling, sendo o storytelling gerado pelo consumidor associado a níveis mais elevados de confiança na marca. A visibilidade do produto não apresentou efeitos significativos, nem interagiu com o tipo de storytelling. Análises exploratórias de credibilidade da marca, autenticidade, qualidade do storytelling e intenção de compra apresentaram padrões semelhantes.

De forma geral, a dissertação contribui para a compreensão dos mecanismos através dos quais o storytelling influencia a confiança na comunicação digital de marcas.

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1. Introduction

Due to the challenge of rapidly changing consumer behavior and the growing demand for highly customized immediate offerings, companies face the challenge of building and maintaining brand trust. Marketing content evokes emotional effects that encourage desired consumer decision-making and behavior. These emotions affect purchase decisions, and subsequently, the purchase process is led by cognitive appraisals (Achar et al., 2016). For companies, this means focusing on engagement and building relationships with consumers is necessary to maintain competitiveness and brand attractiveness (van Doorn et al., 2010).

In an increasingly digital era, storytelling has emerged as a primary method for building emotional connections with consumers and strengthening brand trust and loyalty. Business storytelling refers to brand-created narratives through which companies construct their corporate identity, tone of voice, and communicate their origin, missions, visions, and values. According to Lundqvist et al., storytelling in marketing involves the use of a narrative structures to highlight a brand's history and foster emotional connections (Lundqvist et al., 2013). Furthermore, business storytelling is designed to shape the brand perception utilizing consistent messaging and communication (Fog et al., 2010).

In contrast, consumer storytelling refers to brand-related content and experiences that individuals share through user-generated content on social media, product reviews, or testimonials (Smith et al., 2012). This form of storytelling reflects consumers' experiences, perceptions, values, and relationships with brands. User-generated content, a form of consumer storytelling, appears across various social media channels and significantly influences brand perceptions (Smith et al., 2012). User-generated content (UGC) is defined as any post created by users on digital channels (Santos, 2021).

Overall, consumer storytelling focuses on narratives from consumer's perspective regarding brand experiences, while user-generated storytelling specifically refers to consumer-created stories voluntarily published online as user-generated content (UGC). This master's thesis examines on user-generated content within consumer storytelling, emphasizing how consumers share personal brand experiences on social media and other digital channels.

This thesis also investigates the significance of storytelling types in relation to trust outcomes. Additionally, it explores the role of product visibility in shaping consumer trust across different storytelling types via online communication.

Employing a randomized 2x2 experimental design with four Instagram posts, survey participants are exposed to either a business or consumer storytelling stimulus, with or without a visible product placement. All stimuli are sourced from a single beauty industry brand to ensure consistency in brand context and enable comparison between business versus consumer storytelling along with product shown versus product absent conditions.

The study primarily measures trust outcomes across the four stimuli. While trust is the central focus, additional constructs such as brand credibility, authenticity, storytelling quality, engagement, and purchase intention are included to supply greater insight regarding the psychological mechanisms underlying trust perceptions. The effects of these constructs are examined through exploratory analyses.

The findings' aim to enhance company's understanding of how different storytelling types influence brand-consumer relationship outcomes. The thesis also assesses whether consumer storytelling generates higher trust than business storytelling, and whether product visibility leads to different outcomes. Ultimately, the study informs marketers about when to place importance on business-generated storytelling versus consumer-generating storytelling to foster trust.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Storytelling in Marketing and Branding

Ekaterina Walter of the Digital Marketing Institute asserts that brand storytelling extends beyond traditional marketing communication by emphasizing emotional level of the audience-centric narratives that foster meaningful connections between brands and consumers (Hughes, 2025). Additionally, the Digital Marketing Institute (DMI) reports that 92% of consumers prefer advertisements that resemble stories. This preference is attributed to the neurobiological effects of narratives, as storytelling fosters memorable connections with brands and can increase purchase intention. Jennifer Aaker, a behavioral scientist, notes that stories are substantially more memorable than purely factual information (Pearson, 2024).

Storytelling, whether generated by businesses or consumers, creates an emotional connection with a brand and establishes a personal relationship. These factors are essential for building consumer trust, acquisition, and retention (Kemp et al., 2021). According to Kang et al. (2020), storytelling advertisements elicit positive emotional responses and foster engagement, which leads to information sharing and word-of-mouth promotion. These sharing intentions contribute to higher levels of cognitive consumer engagement (Kang et al., 2020). Additionally,

storytelling advertisements are an effective marketing tool for capturing the attention of target audiences (Pulizzi, 2012).

To establish a lasting emotional connection with consumers, brand storytelling should communicate the brand's qualities, history, and vision (Nakhil, 2019). In the context of digitalization and advertising saturation, storytelling is considered one of the most effective narrative tools in advertising. It promotes products and services while also delivering personalized messages to customers (Padgett & Allen, 1997). Unlike standard advertising strategies, storytelling advertisements emphasize sharing brand values through emotional narratives rather than merely presenting products or promotions (Dessart, 2018). Consequently, storytelling advertisements can both persuade consumers and influence subconscious cognitive processes (Escalas, 2004).

2.1.1. Inbound versus Outbound Marketing

Halligan & Shah (2009) define inbound marketing as a consumer-focused strategy that attracts, engages, and retains consumers by providing meaningful, educational content through social media channels and websites, frequently using storytelling (Halligan & Shah, 2009). For example, this may involve a storytelling Instagram post from a brand or user-generated page that highlights the brand's values or identity. Inbound marketing, relies on organic communication disseminating content naturally and engagingly rather than through overt promotional messaging. As a result, it attracts consumers organically without paid promotion (Halligan & Shah, 2009; Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Inbound marketing emphasizes building trust and fostering long-term emotional connections with consumers, while outbound marketing relies on traditional marketing strategies, such as advertisements intended to reach a broad audience (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The primary distinction is that inbound marketing offers a value-driven, more personalized form of engagement. In contrast, outbound marketing seeks to capture consumers' attention through external channels including television advertisements, print media, or promotional emails (Kotler & Keller, 2016). As a result, consumer storytelling is an integral component of inbound marketing strategies.

2.2. Business Storytelling and Consumer Storytelling

Brand stories shape consumers' experiences by encompassing emotions, sensations, and behavioral responses (Brakus et al., 2009). Unlike typical stories, effective brand narratives

follow a structured format that encourages audience engagement. These narratives often include a chronological sequence, plot, history, personas, and causality (Bruner, 1990; Delgadillo and Escalas, 2004; Woodside, 2010; Solja et al., 2018). Effective storytelling enables brands to capture consumer attention and remains memorable. Consequently, consumers can more readily recognize the brand logo, name, and overall image (Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012). Brand storytelling enhances brand awareness, empathy, and recognition, thereby increasing brand value (Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012).

Business storytelling primarily represents the firm's perspective, often neglecting consumers' opinions and lived experiences. In contrast, consumers use storytelling to share their experiences, thereby contributing to user-generated content (Berger, 2014). Since consumer storytelling is created by individuals who have used the product or service, published reviews and evaluations significantly influence other consumers' intentions, opinions, and purchasing behavior (Fog et al., 2005).

Consumers support a brand not only through purchases but also by generating internal narratives based on their experiences (Escalas, 2004). Aaker notes that consumer storytelling differs from firm-origin narratives by incorporating usage associations alongside psychological benefits related to brand value (Aaker, 1991). Consumers are more likely to share stories about their brand experiences when these experiences are exceptional. Additionally, consumer storytelling is often perceived as less biased and more relatable, which increases its resonance with prospective consumers (Lin et al., 2011).

2.3. Product Visibility in Digital Storytelling

Berger and Schwartz argue that increased product visibility accelerates cognitive accessibility and shapes brand-related communication (Berger & Schwartz, 2011). In digital contexts, product visibility influences consumer-created narratives: highly visible products prompt more brand-focused user-generated content, while lower visibility encourages community-focused storytelling. Thus, visibility not only attracts consumer attention but also guides how consumers narrate the brand (Söylemez, 2023).

Prominent visual product placements improve memory, recognition, brand perception, and loyalty. However, they may also activate persuasion knowledge and diminish the brand's emotional appeal (Song, 2023). Song further notes that increased product presence can result in less emotional audience responses, yet it simultaneously reinforces brand loyalty (Song, 2023). Lower visibility, characteristic of user-generated storytelling, tends to enhance

perceived authenticity and trust, which are critical for engagement in digital storytelling (Song, 2023). Younis observes that greater exposure to user-generated content is linked to higher user engagement (Younis, 2025).

Overall, product visibility is a key factor in shaping consumers' brand recognition perceptions, and communication behaviors. High visibility can increase brand awareness and loyalty but may reduce perceived authenticity. In contrast, lower visibility can foster trust and engagement by supporting relatable and authentic narratives.

2.4. Digital Brand Communication

According to Global WebIndex, higher rates of digital communication is primarily driven by more time spent online. Statista (2025) notes that the global average time spent on social media is approximately 2 hours and 21 minutes daily, or 141 minutes (Chaffey, 2025; Statista, 2025). As a result, brands increasingly use digital communication tools to capture consumer attention and boost engagement. Digital brand communication encompasses the strategies companies use to interact with consumers through digital channels such as websites, social media, and emails. Unlike traditional marketing, which relies on one-way promotional messages, digital brand communication enables two-way engagement (Bruhn et al., 2012).

Digital platforms facilitate the communication of a brand's history, origin, and values while supporting real-time interactivity. Tools such as chatbots, live chat, and review systems enable ongoing brand-consumer interaction, fostering long-term relationships. In the context of digitalization, online brand communication is essential for shaping brand perceptions and building trust, largely because digital tools enable immediate interactions (Gensler et al., 2013; Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Storytelling within digital brand communication serves as both an inbound marketing strategy (Halligan & Shah, 2009) and a tool for enhancing trust, brand awareness, and loyalty (Iglesias et al., 2011; Kemp et al., 2021).

2.4.1. How Digital Brand Communication Shapes Storytelling

Traditional storytelling is characterized as linear, brand-generated, and oriented toward long-term narratives, while digital storytelling is typically short-form, platform-specific, and optimized for social media channels such as Instagram or TikTok (Pera & Viglia, 2016; Kemp et al., 2021). The transition from traditional to digital communication has altered the pace, tone, and visual structure of storytelling. To maintain competitiveness in digital environments,

brands increasingly prioritize short video formats such as reels (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Liang and Wolfe suggest that reels achieve the highest engagement rates, generating more likes, comments, and shares than static images (Liang & Wolfe, 2022). Recent UK data indicate that video content receives up to 48% more views than other post types. In 2024, Instagram updated its algorithm to further prioritize video-based, high-engagement content (Luminite, 2024). Building on this understanding of digital brand communication, following section examines the role of consumer trust in branding and provides a detailed comparison of business and consumer storytelling.

2.5. Consumer Trust in Branding

According to Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpandé, consumer trust can be defined as the willingness of consumers to rely on a brand's credibility to deliver its promises, regardless of competitors or unstable market conditions (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpandé, 1993). Consumers prefer to feel a sense of priority and expect brands to adopt a consumer-first mentality (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002). In this context, agile marketing becomes relevant, as a McKinsey study (2016) revealed that it enables brands to use data and analytics to solve problems in real time and to evaluate results quickly. This supports the reason to focus on delivering personalized storytelling content across digital platforms, enhancing relevance and consumer engagement (Edelman, Heller, & Spittaels, 2016).

As digital brand communication becomes more prevalent, trust assumes greater importance with consumers increasingly relying on symbols such as visuals, tone, and brand content rather than traditional physical interactions (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002). Consumers often anthropomorphize brands, developing human-like personas over time. Trust is established when the brand's persona aligns with consumer expectations. Both business and consumer storytelling facilitate this process by fostering emotional proximity between brands and consumers (Aaker, 1997). First impressions are critical, as they shape all subsequent interactions and perceptions between brands and consumers (Entrepreneur Post, 2023). As Oscar Wilde and Will Rogers underscore the importance of initial brand impressions, early brand perceptions strongly influence how consumers evaluate and relate to brands over time.

Trust in the consumer context can be divided into two layers: short-term and long-term.

Short-term trust is primarily associated with product offers, such as promotions or discounts, while long-term consumer trust reflects a comprehensive belief in the brand's values, promises, integrity, and consistency (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Long-term trust is particularly significant in digital storytelling, as it develops through repeated exposure to coherent, value-driven narratives. Trust is influenced not only by the content brands communicate but also by the manner in which it is conveyed (Kemp, McDowell, & Wang, 2021).

2.5.1. Comparative Insights: Business vs. Consumer Storytelling

Business storytelling, created and shared by the brand, allows complete control over the message's form, tone, and visuals. However, audiences particularly younger, tech-savvy consumers, often perceive this controlled structure as biased or promotional (Iglesias et al., 2011). In contrast, consumer storytelling encompasses reviews and feedback from multiple individuals. Brand stories authored by consumers with direct product experience are generally regarded as more authentic, relatable, and trustworthy (Gensler et al., 2013; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). In digital brand communication, authenticity and trust are particularly important because digital tools can increase consumer scepticism due to risks such as cybercrime and fake online accounts. Schivinski and Dabrowski note that consumer storytelling can influence both brand equity and brand attitude, whereas business-created social media content affects only brand attitude. Since brand equity and brand attitude shape consumers' purchase intentions, consumer storytelling serves as a strong predictor of behavioral outcomes (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

Both business and consumer storytelling can foster positive trust outcomes when aligned with the brand's values and identity. Furthermore, increased consumer trust is associated with higher purchase intentions, greater loyalty, and more frequent voluntary word-of-mouth promotions (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

2.6. PESO Model

The PESO model (Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned media) provides a framework for structuring digital brand communication and for analyzing how various media channels influence consumer perceptions (Bailey, 2024). Paid and owned media refer to brand-controlled communication, such as advertisements or corporate social media posts. In contrast, earned and

shared media are associated with user-generated or peer-distributed content including reviews, recommendations, or shared posts. Research indicates that earned and shared media are perceived as more authentic and credible due to their external, non-corporate origins (Brandpoint, 2023). This distinction is significant when evaluating storytelling types: business storytelling generally corresponds to paid or owned media, whereas consumer storytelling associated with earned or shared media forms (Usman & Wijaya, 2025). Peer-narratives have been shown to positively influence brand awareness and perceived quality, both of which are strongly correlated with purchase intention (Kao, 2022).

Incorporating the PESO model into the theoretical framework supports the expectation that consumer storytelling produces higher trust outcomes compared to business storytelling.

Therefore, the PESO model not only categorizes media types but also elucidates why consumer storytelling is regarded as more influential within digital brand communication contexts.

The subsequent chapters examine how consumers perceive and respond to business versus consumer storytelling when the brand product is either present or absent, with a focus on trust as well as other constructs such as brand credibility, storytelling quality, authenticity, and engagement and purchase intention.

3. Research Questions

Storytelling has become a primary tool in digital brand communication, particularly on social media platforms. Despite its prevalence, there is limited empirical research on how different storytelling types, business-generated versus consumer-generated, influence consumer trust, a key factor in establishing long-term brand-consumer relationships.

The skincare brand Kiehl's was selected to examine how business-generated versus consumer-generated storytelling, with or without visible product presence, affects consumer trust perceptions. Additional constructs, including brand credibility, authenticity, storytelling quality, and engagement, were incorporated due to their relevance in moderating trust outcomes. Employing a single brand across all conditions minimizes potential industry bias.

A 2x2 factorial experimental design is used to analyze the effects of the independent variables on consumer trust.

- **IV1:** Storytelling Type (Business vs. Consumer-generated)
- **IV2:** Product (Absence of Product vs. Showing Product)
- **DV:** Consumer Trust

The following research questions will be explored:

RQ1: How does the type of storytelling (business vs. consumer-generated) affect consumer trust in digital brand communication?

This question investigates the influence of brand-generated and consumer-generated narratives on consumer trust.

H1: Consumer-generated storytelling results in higher consumer trust than business-generated storytelling.

RQ2: How does the presence of the product in the storytelling posts (absent vs. present) influence consumer trust?

H2: Storytelling posts **without** the visible product presence result in higher consumer trust than posts **with** visible product presence.

RQ3: Is there an interaction effect between storytelling type and product presence on consumer trust, such that certain combinations result in higher perceived trust compared to others?

H3: The effect of storytelling type on trust is moderated by product presence, such that consumer-generated storytelling without product presence results in the highest consumer trust.

4. Methodology

4.1. Survey Design

A 2x2 factorial design was employed to examine how two independent variables, storytelling type (business-generated versus consumer-generated) and product visibility (product shown versus product absent), influence consumer trust in digital brand communication.

This resulted in four experimental conditions:

1. Business-generated x Showing Product
2. Consumer-generated x Showing Product
3. Business-generated x Absence of Product
4. Consumer-generated x Absence of Product

To visualize these conditions, the skincare globally recognized skincare brand Kiehl's was chosen to ensure participant familiarity and credibility while reducing potential industry-level variation. This skincare industry was selected due to its reliance on consumer trust for long-term success and competitive advantage. This approach enabled a focused analysis of the effects of storytelling type and product visibility on consumer trust in digital communication. To control for confounding factors in consumer perceptions, Instagram post stimuli were selected from Kiehl's international Instagram account and adapted exclusively for research purposes. Four posts were chosen: one business-generated and one consumer-generated storytelling post, each either displaying or not displaying a Kiehl's product. Each survey respondent was randomly assigned to view one of the four conditions. The content across all posts was standardized in tone, style, design, and structure to ensure comparability between storytelling types.

The 2x2 design was selected to enable a structured comparison of the effects of storytelling types across product visibility levels. This research approach provides practical implications for marketers, but also presents limitations. The use of a real brand introduces the risk of brand-reputation bias, which is further analyzed in the discussion chapter.

4.2. Scale and Measurement

Following the introductory material, the survey assessed participants' perceptions through several questions. Initially, respondents indicated their social media usage frequency using a semantic differential scale, measuring intensity of use from "Never" to "Every day".

After exposure to the stimuli (one of the four Kiehl's Instagram posts), a manipulation check was included to verify whether participants correctly perceived the post's source (brand-

generated versus consumer-generated) and product visibility (product shown versus product absent). This manipulation check ensured that participants accurately understood the stimulus and perceived the storytelling source and product visibility as intended.

Participants were asked to choose between contrasting statements that reflected their perception of the exposed Instagram post:

- “This post seemed like it was created by a brand.” vs. “This post seemed like it was created by a consumer.”
- “The presence of the product in the post helped me trust the brand.” vs. “The absence of the product made the brand more trustworthy.”

These statements were selected to reliably identify participants’ perceptions of the storytelling source and product visibility.

Subsequent questions included several validated scales commonly used in research. Respondents rated their levels of trust, brand credibility, authenticity, storytelling quality, and engagement intention, as these constructs are central to trust in digital storytelling. These items were selected to represent the experimental conditions and support the analysis. Quantitative measurements were collected using 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), a common format for assessing brand perceptions.

The following paragraphs outline the specific items used:

Brand trust was measured using a Likert scale developed by Morgan and Hunt (1994), including items such as "I feel that I can trust the brand," "I believe the brand can be relied upon to assist me and other consumers," and "The brand appears reliable.”

Brand credibility was measured following Newell & Goldsmith (2001), with items such as “This brand delivers what it promises,” “This brand’s product claims are believable,” and “I trust what this brand says about its products.”

Brand authenticity was measured using items such as “This brand is true to its values,” “This brand communicates honestly,” “The message was true to the brand’s character.” adopted from Napoli, Dickinson, Beverland, and Farrelly. For research purposes, the additional item “The authenticity of the brand is influenced by showing or not showing the product” was included.

Perceived storytelling quality was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale adapted from Lundqvist et al. (2013), including items such as “The story was emotionally engaging,” “The story helped me understand the brand better,” and “The storytelling made the post more memorable.” Additionally, the item “The story felt more relatable because it did not focus on the product” was implemented for research purposes.

Engagement and purchase intention were measured using items from Dodds et al. (1991), including “I would consider buying this product from this brand,” “I am likely to purchase this product in the near future,” and “I would recommend this brand to others.”

To test the internal consistency of each scale, Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated. Additionally, demographic data, including geographic location, age, gender, education level, and occupation status, were collected for further analysis. The full survey and stimulus materials are available in Appendix D.

4.3. Data Collection Method

The survey was conducted between the 3rd of November and the 16th of November 2025 using Qualtrics. Data collection was conducted in English and distributed through various social media channels, including Instagram, Snapchat, and WhatsApp. To achieve adequate sample sizes for each group in the 2x2 factorial design, an influencer with 15.500 Instagram followers shared the survey link on her account.

4.4. Sampling

The target population comprised individuals residing in the DACH region. Of the 217 participants who responded the survey, 192 complete responses were retained for analysis, with each participant exposed to one of four Instagram stimuli. It should be noted that the sample may not fully represent the broader population.

The sample included of 32.8% male respondents, 63% female respondents, and 1% identifying as non-binary or third gender.

The age distribution of participants was as follows:

- 14.6 % between 18 and 25
- 78.6 % between 26 and 35
- 2.1 % between 36 and 45

- 2.1 % between 46 and 55
- 2.6 % between 56 and 65

The education levels and occupational statuses of the survey respondents are shown in Appendix A.

A 2x2 factorial design was implemented, with participants randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions. Group sizes ranged from N = 33 to N = 57.

Group	Stimulus Material	Participants (N)
1	Consumer storytelling & Product shown	33
2	Consumer storytelling & Product absent	52
3	Business storytelling & Product shown	57
4	Business storytelling & Product absent	50

Table 1: Manipulation distribution

4.5. Method of Analysis

For the manipulation check of storytelling quality and product visibility, relevant items were aggregated into composite variables. Likewise, items assessing trust, brand credibility, perceived authenticity, storytelling quality, and engagement intention were combined into separate composite variables corresponding to each dependent variable.

Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to assess the consistency and reliability of the scales. A significance level of 5% ($p < 0.05$) was applied throughout the analysis. To address the research questions, data were primarily analyzed using ANOVA to examine the main effects of storytelling type (business versus consumer) and product visibility (absence versus presence) on the dependent variables, as well as their interaction. Additional analyses included descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), reliability analyses (Cronbach's alpha), and a two-way ANOVA with Levene's test.

5. Findings and Results

5.1. Manipulation Checks

To ensure that participants correctly perceived the experimental conditions, two chi-square tests were conducted. The first manipulation check assessed whether participants accurately recognized the correct storytelling type (business-generated vs. consumer-generated). The second check examined if participants correctly identified whether the product was present or absent in the stimulus. These checks were essential for validating the manipulation before testing the hypotheses.

Storytelling Source: Business vs. Consumer

Participants were assigned to view either a business-generated or consumer-generated Instagram post. After exposure, they selected the statement that best reflected their perception of the post's origin: "This post seemed like it was created by a brand," or "This post seemed like it was created by a consumer." The chi-square revealed a highly significant association, $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 120.01, p < 0.001$ (Appendix B1. MC_StorytellingType). These findings indicate strong effects and low rates of misperception.

Consumer storytelling was correctly identified by 95 of 103 respondents (92.2%), while 77 of 89 respondents (86.5%) exposed to business storytelling judged the post as business-generated. These results indicate that the manipulation check for storytelling source was successful, and participants distinguished between business-generated and consumer-generated storytelling. The factorial design functioned as intended.

Product Visibility: Product Shown vs. Product Absent

The second manipulation check assessed whether participants correctly identified the presence or absence of the brand's product in the post. Participants chose between: "*This post also showed the advertised product itself,*" or "*This post had an absence of showing the product.*" The chi-square test revealed a highly significant association between condition and perception, $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 144.88, p < .001$ (Appendix B2. MC_ProductVisibility).

Among respondents exposed to product-visible stimuli, 88 out of 90 (97.8%) correctly perceived the product's presence. Similarly, 91 out of 102 participants (89.2%) in the product-

absent condition accurately identified the product's absence. These results confirm that the manipulation of product visibility was effective, with both conditions clearly distinguishable.

5.2. Reliability of Measurement Scales

Internal consistency was evaluated by calculating Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficients for all multi-item scales: brand trust, brand credibility, perceived authenticity, storytelling quality, engagement and purchase intention.

Brand trust demonstrated acceptable reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.765$, indicating consistent measurement across its three items. The item "*I feel that I can trust this brand*" received the highest mean endorsement ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.75$). The second item "*I believe this brand can be relied upon to assist me and other consumers*" received lower and more variable responses ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.06$), reflecting more differentiated perceptions of the brand's assistance. The third item, "*The brand appears reliable*" ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.08$), showed the highest variability and a mid-range mean. These values support the scale's use in further analysis (Appendix B3. Reliability Trust).

Brand credibility demonstrated good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.814$. Mean scores ranged from $M = 3.05$ to 3.42 , with SDs between 0.96 and 1.07 . The item "*This brand delivers what it promises*" yielded in the highest mean ($M = 3.42$), indicating moderately higher perceived credibility for this aspect. These results reflect a moderate perception of credibility among participants (Appendix B4. Reliability Brand Credibility).

Perceived authenticity demonstrated strong reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of $\alpha = 0.802$. The item "*The authenticity of the brand is influenced by showing or not showing the product*" yielded the highest mean ($M = 3.82$). Item means ranged from $M = 3.01$ to 3.82 , with SDs between 0.91 and 1.10 . The scale effectively captured perceptions of authenticity across conditions (Appendix B5. Reliability Authenticity).

Storytelling quality demonstrated good reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of $\alpha = 0.819$. Item means ranged from $M = 2.93$ to 3.48 , and SDs varied between 1.02 and 1.17 , indicating appropriate variability. The item "*The story felt more relatable because it did not focus on the product*" received the highest endorsement ($M = 3.48$), highlighting sensitivity to product absence and storytelling (Appendix B6. Reliability Storytelling Quality).

Engagement and purchase intention demonstrated strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.824$. Item means ranged from $M = 2.98$ to 3.66 , with SDs between 0.94 and 1.16 . The item "*I would consider buying a product from this brand*" received the highest mean

($M = 3.66$). A composite index was used for analysis (Appendix B7. Reliability Purchase Intention).

5.3. Hypothesis Testing

H1: Consumer-generated storytelling results in higher consumer trust than business-generated storytelling.

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of storytelling type and product visibility on trust.

Levene's test indicated homogeneity of variances ($p = 0.673 > 0.05$). Descriptive statistics revealed that significant differences in trust scores between the storytelling types. Participants exposed to consumer storytelling reported higher trust ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.68$, $N = 85$) compared to those in business storytelling ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.63$, $N = 107$). These findings confirm a substantial difference between storytelling types, supporting H1.

Among all four conditions, the highest trust was observed the in consumer storytelling without product visibility condition ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.68$), followed by consumer storytelling with product visibility ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.69$). Both business storytelling conditions resulted in lower trust: business storytelling with product visibility ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.55$) and business storytelling without product visibility ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.72$) showed similar reductions in trust (Appendix C1. Trust).

A significant main effect of storytelling type was found, $F(1, 188) = 91.33$, $p < 0.001$, supporting H1.

H2: Storytelling posts without the product visible generate higher consumer trust than those with the product, as they are perceived as more authentic and less promotional.

A two-way ANOVA again tested this hypothesis. Levene's test confirmed homogeneity of variances ($p = 0.671 > 0.05$).

Descriptive statistics indicated that trust was slightly higher in the product-absent condition ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.85$, $N = 102$) than in the product-visible condition ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.74$, $N = 90$). The pattern was consistent across conditions: consumer storytelling without the product visibility resulted in the highest trust ($M = 3.80$), while business storytelling without product visibility produced the lowest trust ($M = 2.82$). However, the difference did not reach statistical significance, $F(1, 188) = 0.04$, $p = 0.836 > 0.05$ (Appendix C1).

Therefore, H2 is not supported; the product visibility alone does not significantly affect trust within digital brand communication.

H3: The effect of storytelling type on consumer trust is moderated by product presence, like consumer-generated storytelling without product presence leads to the highest level of consumer trust.

To test the hypothesized interaction between storytelling type and product visibility, a two-way ANOVA was conducted using the same model as described in H1 and H2. H3 posited that consumer storytelling without product visibility would yield the highest levels of trust. Descriptive statistics demonstrated that the consumer storytelling and product-not-visible condition yielded the highest trust levels ($M = 3.80$), while the business storytelling and product-not-visible condition yielded the lowest trust levels ($M = 2.82$). Although this descriptive pattern partially aligns with theoretical expectations, the presence of a statistically meaningful interaction must be assessed by examining the interaction term.

The ANOVA results indicated that the interaction between storytelling type and product visibility was not statistically significant, $F(1, 188) = 0.13, p = 0.579 > 0.05$. This finding suggests that the effect of storytelling type on trust did not differ based on product visibility. The differences observed across the four conditions were primarily driven by the main effect of storytelling type, rather than by an interaction between storytelling type and product visibility.

Therefore, H3 cannot be confirmed, product visibility did not moderate the effect of storytelling type on trust.

5.4. Exploratory Analyses

While trust serves as the primary dependent variable and was central to the hypotheses, additional constructs were incorporated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of storytelling type and product visibility on related consumer perceptions. The constructs examined included brand credibility, perceived authenticity, storytelling quality, engagement and purchase intention. Each variable is conceptually related to trust or is a likely outcome of trust.

These variables were not included in the primary hypotheses but were analyzed as exploratory dependent variables thereby broadening the interpretive scope of the findings. To further clarify trust-related outcomes, separate two-way ANOVAs were conducted for each construct.

5.4.1. Brand Credibility

Descriptive statistics revealed notable differences in credibility ratings across storytelling conditions. Participants exposed to consumer storytelling reported higher brand credibility ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.69$, $N = 85$) compared to those exposed to business storytelling ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 0.66$, $N = 107$). Among the four conditions, consumer storytelling with the product not visible condition had the highest credibility values ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.60$). The next highest was consumer storytelling with the product visible ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.81$). Both business storytelling conditions had lower credibility evaluations (business storytelling with product visible: $M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.68$; business storytelling with product not visible: $M = 2.71$, $SD = 0.64$). Considering product visibility alone, posts without a visible product were perceived as more credible ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.86$) than those with a visible product ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.87$) (Appendix C2). Companies aiming to enhance perceived brand credibility may benefit from social media content that does not display the product.

Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated, $F(3, 188) = 3.99$, $p = 0.009 < 0.05$. A significant result ($p < 0.05$) provides evidence of unequal variances, both the standard ANOVA and parameter estimates with robust standard errors were investigated. The two-way ANOVA revealed a large and statistically significant main effect of storytelling type on brand credibility, $F(1, 188) = 127.45$, $p < 0.001$, implying that consumer storytelling substantially increases perceived credibility relative to business storytelling. The main effect of product visibility did not reach statistical significance, $F(1, 188) = 3.81$, $p = 0.052 > 0.05$, and the interaction effect was also not significant, $F(1, 188) = 0.90$, $p = 0.344 > 0.05$.

The robust standard error estimation confirmed this pattern. Storytelling type remained highly significant ($B = 1.21$, $t = 9.78$, $p < 0.001$). Product visibility ($B = -0.10$, $p = 0.441 > 0.05$) and the interaction ($B = -0.19$, $p = 0.370 > 0.05$) were non-significant (Appendix C2. Brand Credibility). Collectively, these findings suggest that brand credibility is primarily determined by whether the narrative originates from a consumer or the brand, while product visibility and the interaction between the two factors do not exert a reliable influence.

5.4.2. Authenticity

Perceived authenticity was analyzed using the same two-way ANOVA approach. Descriptively, consumer storytelling again resulted in higher authenticity ratings ($M = 3.91$,

SD = 0.63, $N = 85$) compared to business storytelling ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.62$, $N = 107$). The consumer storytelling with product not visible condition yielded the highest authenticity ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.67$), followed closely by the consumer storytelling with product-visible condition ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.56$). Business storytelling conditions produced lower authenticity evaluations (business storytelling with product visible: $M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.59$; business storytelling with product not visible: $M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.67$). Across product visibility, non-visible conditions were evaluated as more authentic ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.81$) than product-visible conditions ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.71$) (Appendix C3. Authenticity).

Levene's test demonstrated a marginal violation of homogeneity, $F(3, 188) = 3.07$, $p = 0.029 < 0.05$, indicating some heterogeneity of variance. The ANOVA revealed a strong main effect of storytelling type, $F(1, 188) = 91.46$, $p < 0.001 < 0.05$, indicating that consumer storytelling was perceived as substantially more authentic. In contrast, the main effect of product visibility was not significant, $F(1, 188) = 0.89$, $p = 0.348 > 0.05$, and the interaction effect was not significant, $F(1, 188) = 0.10$, $p = 0.750 > 0.05$ (Appendix C3. Authenticity). Overall, authenticity mirrored the pattern found for trust: perceptions are strongly shaped by the origin of the story, with product visibility exerting no meaningful influence.

5.4.3. Storytelling Quality

Storytelling quality was subsequently evaluated, using the same analytical techniques.

Descriptively, participants rated consumer storytelling as higher in storytelling quality ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.82$, $N = 85$) than business storytelling ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 0.70$, $N = 107$). At the cell level, the highest storytelling quality occurred in the consumer storytelling / product-not-visible condition ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.68$), followed by the consumer storytelling / product-visible condition ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.97$). Both business storytelling conditions were rated lower (business storytelling / product visible: $M = 2.67$, $SD = 0.66$; business storytelling / product not visible: $M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.73$). Across visibility conditions, non-visible posts were evaluated more positively ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.87$) than product-visible posts ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.90$).

Levene's test indicated a violation of homogeneity of variances, $F(3, 188) = 3.68$, $p = 0.013 < 0.05$, as was also found for brand credibility. The standard ANOVA revealed a strong main effect of storytelling type, $F(1, 188) = 76.84$, $p < 0.001 < 0.05$, and a smaller but statistically significant effect of product visibility, $F(1, 188) = 6.11$, $p = 0.014 < 0.05$. The

interaction between storytelling type and product visibility, however, was non-significant, $F(1, 188) = 0.43, p = 0.51 > 0.05$.

Due to the heterogeneity of variance, parameter estimates with robust standard errors were also examined (last table in Appendix C4). These estimates confirmed the strong main effect of storytelling type ($B = 1.03, t = 7.36, p < 0.001$), while under robust estimation, the effect of product visibility was no longer statistically significant ($B = -0.20, t = -1.46, p = 0.146 > 0.05$). The interaction effect remained non-significant ($B = -0.14, p = 0.547 > 0.05$) (Appendix C4. Storytelling Quality). Collectively, these results indicate that consumer-generated storytelling reliably produces higher perceptions of storytelling quality, whereas interpretations regarding product visibility should be made with caution due to sensitivity to variance heterogeneity.

5.4.4. Engagement and Purchase Intention

Purchase intention, a critical variable for managerial decision-making, was analyzed using a two-way ANOVA. Respondents indicated whether they would consider purchasing from the brand or recommending it to others. Descriptive results revealed that consumer storytelling generated higher engagement and purchase intention ($M = 3.80, SD = 0.86, N = 85$) compared to business storytelling ($M = 2.77, SD = 0.73, N = 107$).

At the cell level, the highest purchase intention was observed in the consumer storytelling with product not-visible condition ($M = 3.83, SD = 0.87$), followed closely by the consumer storytelling with product visible condition ($M = 3.76, SD = 0.84$). Business storytelling conditions yielded lower purchase intentions (business storytelling with product visible: $M = 2.76, SD = 0.74$; business storytelling with product not visible: $M = 2.77, SD = 0.72$). Across visibility levels, posts without a visible product elicited slightly higher purchase intention ($M = 3.31, SD = 0.96$) than those with a visible product ($M = 3.13, SD = 0.91$). These values are presented in Appendix C5. Engagement and Purchase Intention.

Levene's test confirmed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met, $F(3, 188) = 0.67, p = 0.571 > 0.05$. The ANOVA identified a significant main effect of storytelling type, $F(1, 188) = 77.89, p < 0.001$, demonstrating that consumer-generated storytelling substantially increased respondents' willingness to purchase or recommend the brand.

The main effect of product visibility was not significant, $F(1, 188) = 0.15, p = 0.704 > 0.05$, nor was the interaction term, $F(1, 188) = 0.07, p = 0.788 > 0.05$ (Appendix C5. Engagement

and Purchase Intention). Therefore, consistent with findings for trust and brand credibility, purchase intention is primarily influenced by storytelling type rather than product visibility.

Across all exploratory dependent variables, brand credibility, authenticity, storytelling quality, and purchase intention, the results consistently mirrored the pattern observed for trust. Consumer storytelling produced significantly higher evaluations than business storytelling, while product visibility and the interaction term did not yield meaningful effects. Although robust estimation was required for brand credibility and storytelling quality due to variance heterogeneity, the overall significance pattern remained unchanged. Collectively, these exploratory analyses indicate that storytelling type is the most influential factor shaping positive consumer responses in digital brand communication, whereas product visibility has a negligible impact.

6. Discussion

This master's thesis examined the influence of storytelling type, specifically business-generated versus consumer-generated storytelling, on consumer trust in digital brand communication. The study also assessed whether product visibility moderates these effects. In addition to trust, the analysis included constructs, such as brand credibility, authenticity, storytelling quality, and purchase intention, which have been addressed in prior literature. Instagram posts from the skincare brand Kiehl's served as the empirical basis for analyzing whether storytelling type and product visibility affect consumer perceptions.

The following section interprets the empirical results in relation to existing literature on storytelling and trust, with the aim of explaining the mechanisms underlying the observed effects. It further outlines the theoretical and managerial implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

6.1. Interpretation of Findings

***RQ1** How does the type of storytelling (business-generated versus consumer-generated) affect consumer trust in digital brand communication?*

Building on the empirical findings presented in the findings and results chapter, the trust advantage of consumer-generated storytelling can be explained by consumers' stronger perceptions of authenticity and brand credibility associated with peer-created narratives, thereby facilitating emotional engagement and fostering trust. This finding is consistent with research concluding that real consumer stories are viewed as more authentic, trustworthy, credible, and emotionally resonant than brand-generated ones (Gensler et al., 2013; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Younis, 2025). The results further support Escalas' (2004) and Aaker's (1997) theories, which suggest that consumers respond more positively to peer-created stories that are relatable, trustworthy, and based on personal experiences. Berger (2014) notes that consumers rely on others' experiences when evaluating brands, this outcome is consistent with prior research. The alignment between empirical results and theoretical frameworks supports the argument that the storytelling type is a key factor in building trust.

The consistency of this pattern across secondary constructs, including brand credibility, authenticity, storytelling quality, and purchase intention, suggests that storytelling type is a primary psychological mechanism shaping evaluations of digital brand communication. The effect of consumer storytelling may also reflect broader shifts in digital consumer behavior.

Research indicates that contemporary consumers are hesitant to trust controlled brand-generated communication and instead prioritize peer-generated content (Iglesias et al., 2011). Younger, technologically adept generations particularly value authenticity and interpersonal relatability over traditional brand messages, which may explain the trust advantage observed for consumer storytelling in this study (Iglesias et al., 2011; Gensler et al., 2013; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). These factors account for the higher trust scores associated with consumer storytelling. Kang et al. (2020) further note that emotionally infused narratives are effective in generating engagement and trust, supporting the observed advantage of consumer storytelling.

Furthermore, the findings extend Escalas' (2004) narrative-processing theory and Kang et al.'s (2020) argument about emotional resonance. They demonstrate that these mechanisms remain persistent in social media formats such as Instagram posts. The results also align with theories of social impact and word-of-mouth influence (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). In these theories, consumer-generated narratives serve as persuasive social evidence and enhance trust more effectively than controlled brand messaging.

***RQ2:** How does the presence of the product in the storytelling posts (absent vs. present) influence consumer trust?*

In digital storytelling contexts, trust formation appears to be influenced primarily by narrative-related cues, such as authenticity and credibility, rather than by visual product-related elements. Previous studies suggest that product visibility enhances brand recognition, memory, and informativeness (Berger & Schwartz, 2011; Song, 2023). However, the present findings indicate that, within narrative-based digital brand communication on social media, the narrative source exerts a stronger influence than product visibility. Therefore, narrative source appears to influence trust outcomes independently of visual elements.

Consistent with prior literature, this suggests that while product visibility enhances cognitive accessibility, trust formation in digital storytelling relies more strongly on affective and authenticity-based processing, rendering product visibility less decisive for trust judgments.

Previous research indicates that, in storytelling contexts, consumers prioritize authenticity, relatability, and emotional meaning over product features (Söylemez, 2023; Younis, 2025). Consequently, while product visibility is important in traditional advertising, its influence may diminish in peer-generated narratives in digital environments. These results confirm that higher

product visibility enhances cognitive accessibility and affects brand-related communication (Berger & Schwartz, 2011). However, this effect may not extend to peer-generated storytelling, where high visibility can activate persuasion knowledge and reduce the brand's emotional appeal (Song, 2023).

***RQ3:** Is there an interaction effect between storytelling type and product presence on consumer trust, such that certain combinations result in higher perceived trust compared to others?*

The absence of the interaction effect suggests that the psychological advantage of consumer storytelling persists regardless of product visibility. Once a narrative is perceived as consumer-generated, trust evaluations are primarily shaped by authenticity and brand credibility, rendering product visibility largely irrelevant. This finding aligns with literature indicating that, for consumer-generated stories, low product visibility enhances perceived authenticity and trust to the extent that additional visual brand features do not significantly alter evaluations (Söylemez, 2023; Younis, 2025). Theoretically, this indicates that storytelling type operates as a higher-order trust influential factor that reduces the importance of an interaction effect between storytelling type and the value of product visibility.

The absence of a significant interaction effect supports the conclusion that narrative source is the primary determinant of trust in digital environments, rather than product visibility. These results distinguish storytelling effects from other visual communication strategies, such as advertising content, where visual elements typically play a more prominent role (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Liang & Wolfe, 2022).

6.2. Theoretical Implications

This thesis contributes to the literature on storytelling, consumer trust, and digital marketing in several key ways:

First, the findings confirm and extend research on the trust-enhancing effects of consumer storytelling in digital brand communication. Previous studies have shown that user-generated content increases authenticity and credibility (Gensler et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2012). This study demonstrates that consumer storytelling consistently generates higher trust than brand-generated storytelling, regardless of product visibility. This supports Escalas' (2004) narrative theory, which suggests that consumers not only support a brand through purchase but also construct internal narratives based on their experiences (Escalas, 2004).

Second, the study offers empirical insights into the role of product visibility in narrative-based communication. Although existing literature emphasizes visibility as a key driver of recognition, memory, and brand evaluation (Berger & Schwartz, 2011; Song, 2023), the present findings demonstrate that, in narrative-focused formats, consumers prioritize authenticity and credibility over product displays. This suggests digital storytelling may follow different persuasive principles than traditional advertising.

Third, the absence of an interaction between storytelling type and product visibility contributes to storytelling theory by demonstrating that narrative source is a stable determinant of trust. This finding supports Aaker's (1997) claim that emotional proximity influences trust. It highlights the theoretical importance of distinguishing between consumer and brand storytelling, in digital research.

Finally, exploratory analyses demonstrate that the effects of consumer storytelling are consistent across all trust-related outcomes, including brand credibility, authenticity, storytelling quality, and purchase intention. This suggests a broad and reliable influence on consumer evaluation.

6.3. Practical Implications

The results provide insights for brands communicating in digital environments including social media channels such as Instagram. The following guidelines support marketers designing storytelling strategies for digital communication, including considerations for product visibility.

1. Consumer storytelling should be prioritized over business storytelling.

Due to the consistent trust advantage of consumer-generated storytelling, brands are advised to incorporate consumer stories, testimonials, user-generated content (UGC) campaigns, and collaborations into their marketing communication strategies to enhance trust, brand credibility, authenticity, and purchase intention.

2. Emphasizing product visibility is not recommended as an effective strategy for increasing trust.

Since product presence did not significantly influence trust, marketers should focus on narrative authenticity and the source of the story rather than prioritizing product visibility. This approach allows for greater flexibility in content design.

3. Storytelling should be aligned with community-based branding strategies.

The effectiveness of consumer storytelling indicates that brands can accelerate community engagement, foster loyalty, and encourage positive word-of-mouth, influence purchase intentions, and create emotional connections with the brand.

4. Consumer storytelling should be implemented across all stages of the customer journey.

Exploratory analyses indicate advantages for engagement and purchase intention, suggesting that user-generated content (UGC) storytelling can be beneficial at multiple stages of the customer journey, including awareness, consideration, decision, retention or loyalty, and advocacy through peer collaborations.

6.4. Limitations and Future Research

As with all research, several limitations must be considered when interpreting the findings.

First, the focus on a single brand (Kiehl's) limits the generalizability of the findings to other industries or product categories beyond the skincare industry. Future research should replicate trust analyses with brands from multiple industries, considering product types such as luxury versus utilitarian products.

Second, the use of static Instagram images may not reflect current social media trends, where storytelling frequently occurs in dynamic formats such as reels or stories. These formats may elicit different psychological outcomes, including emotional engagement or interaction with the brand. Future research should therefore examine dynamic storytelling formats and their outcomes.

Third, the uneven age distribution of the sample limited the ability to compare generational differences. Although Millennials comprised the majority of the respondents, the number of Baby Boomers was insufficient for valid statistical comparison. A more balanced sample could reveal age-specific trust behaviors.

Fourth, although trust is typically established over time, the data was collected immediately after stimulus exposure. Longitudinal or behavioral studies would provide deeper and more detailed insights into the trust formation process.

Fifth, the study's sample was obtained through convenience sampling, resulting in a predominance of younger participants primarily from the DACH region. Cross-cultural or age-diverse studies could identify relevant differences in storytelling types and trust establishment.

Sixth, the study examined only two types of storytelling. Expanding the scope to include emotional, transmedia, or influencer-driven storytelling may yield additional or different insights.

Finally, future research should investigate additional moderating factors such as narrative tone, influencer credibility, or visual design techniques, which may shape consumer responses to digital storytelling.

7. Conclusion

This thesis investigated the impact of business-generated versus consumer-generated storytelling on trust in digital brand communication and assessed whether product visibility within storytelling posts (product shown versus absent) influences trust. Using a 2x2 factorial design, the study provides empirical evidence that storytelling type decisively shapes consumer trust. Across all analyses, consumer-generated storytelling consistently resulted in higher trust levels than business-generated storytelling. The analysis further confirmed a statistically significant effect of storytelling type (consumer) on trust, whereas product visibility and interaction effect were not significant. These findings indicate that consumers perceive a brand as more trustworthy when narratives originate from individual users rather than from the brand itself, and that product visibility is not an influential factor.

Contrary to expectations, product visibility did not significantly influence trust, indicating that narrative source outweighs visual product cues in digital storytelling contexts. Whether the brand's product appeared in the stimulus or not had no meaningful effect on consumer responses. These results suggest that in digital storytelling, the narrative source is more influential than product visibility. Trust evaluations are primarily shaped by perceived authenticity and the social proximity of the narrator, rendering product visibility a secondary consideration compared to storytelling types.

Consequently, brands should prioritize authentic, humanized, and relatable storytelling rather than relying on business-generated communication or visibility features to increase trust. While the study provides valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. The exclusive use of Kiehl's as the brand stimulus, selected for its strong brand familiarity, may have influenced participants' perceptions and potentially reduced sensitivity to product visibility effects. Additionally, static Instagram images may not fully capture contemporary social media storytelling, which often uses dynamic formats like reels or stories. Future research would benefit from analyzing multiple brands across different industries and incorporating video-based stimulus formats.

Overall, this thesis contributes to marketing and communication literature by highlighting the central role of consumer storytelling in building trust within digital environments. For marketing practitioners, the findings underscore the importance of leveraging user-generated content rather than relying predominantly on brand-created narratives. The results also provide guidance for optimizing digital strategies to align with the expectations and trust preferences

of contemporary consumers. By understanding how different storytelling formats influence trust, marketers can develop more effective communication strategies that foster long-term consumer relationships.

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Appendix A

Demographics

A1. Age

How old are you?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25	28	14.6	14.6	14.6
	26-35	151	78.6	78.6	93.2
	36-45	4	2.1	2.1	95.3
	46-55	4	2.1	2.1	97.4
	56-60 and older	5	2.6	2.6	100.0
	Total	192	100.0	100.0	

A2. Gender

What is your gender?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	63	32.8	32.8	32.8
	Male	127	66.1	66.1	99.0
	Non-binary/Third gender	2	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	192	100.0	100.0	

A3. Education

What is your highest completed education level?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High school or equivalent	22	11.5	11.5	11.5
	Bachelor's degree	88	45.8	45.8	57.3
	Master's degree	73	38.0	38.0	95.3
	Doctor degree	7	3.6	3.6	99.0
	Other	1	0.5	0.5	99.5
	None	1	0.5	0.5	100.0
	Total	192	100.0	100.0	

A4. Occupation

What is your current occupation?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employed	62	32.3	32.3	32.3
	Student	50	26.0	26.0	58.3
	Student & Employed	40	20.8	20.8	79.2
	Unemployed	8	4.2	4.2	83.3
	Self-employed	29	15.1	15.1	98.4
	Retired	2	1.0	1.0	99.5
	Other	1	0.5	0.5	100.0
	Total	192	100.0	100.0	

Appendix B

Manipulation Checks

B1. MC_StorytellingType

Manipulation Check: Business vs. Consumer Storytelling

Count

		Consumer_Business		Total
		Business/Brand	Consumer	
Manipulation Check Left: This post seemed like it was created by the brand. Right: This post seemed like it was created by a consumer.	Consumer Storytelling	8	95	103
	Business Storytelling	77	12	89
Total		85	107	192

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	120.012 ^a	1	<.001		
Continuity Correction ^b	116.842	1	<.001		
Likelihood Ratio	137.002	1	<.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				<.001	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	119.387	1	<.001		
N of Valid Cases	192				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 39.40.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

B2. MC_ProductVisibility

Manipulation Check: Product Shown_Product Absent

Count

		Shown_Absent		Total
		Shown	Absent	
Manipulation Check Left: This post showed also the advertised product itself. Right: This post had an absence of showing the product.	Shown	88	11	99
	Absent	2	91	93
Total		90	102	192

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	144.877 ^a	1	<.001		
Continuity Correction ^b	141.415	1	<.001		
Likelihood Ratio	177.035	1	<.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				<.001	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	144.122	1	<.001		
N of Valid Cases	192				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 43.59.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Reliability

B3. Reliability Trust

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.765	3

TRUST Item Statistics

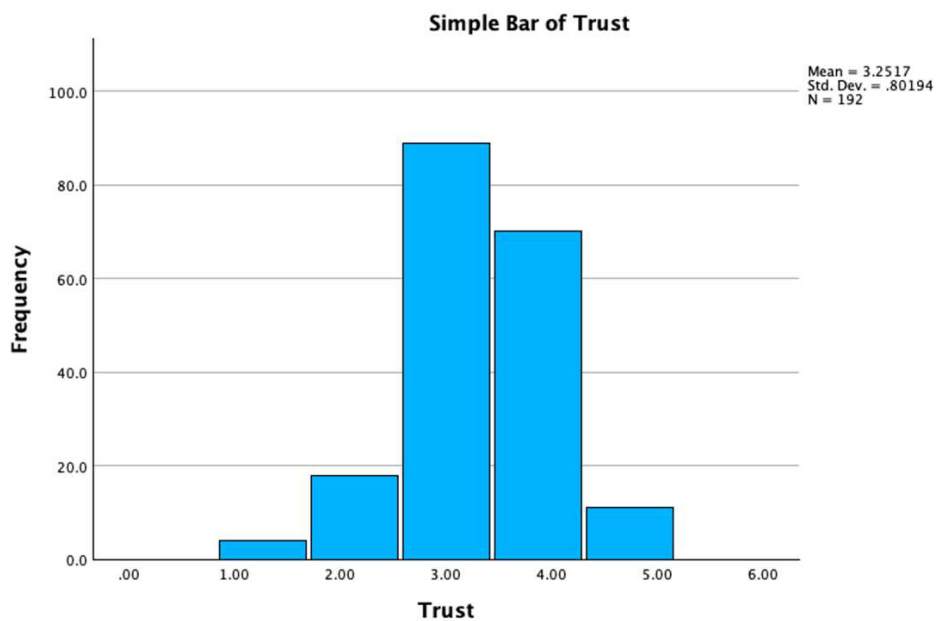
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I feel that I can trust this brand.	3.72	.746	192
I believe this brand can be relied upon to assist me and other consumers.	2.97	1.058	192
The brand appears reliable.	3.06	1.076	192

Trust Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean	Scale Variance	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I feel that I can trust this brand.	6.03	4.156	.353	.904
I believe this brand can be relied upon to assist me and other consumers.	6.79	2.211	.781	.448
The brand appears reliable.	6.69	2.256	.734	.514

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
9.76	5.788	2.406	3



B4. Reliability Brand Credibility

Reliability Statistics		Brand Credibility Item Statistics			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	N	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	This brand delivers what it promises.	3.42	.962	192
		This brand's product claims are believable.	3.05	1.070	192
		I trust what this brand says about its products.	3.05	1.070	192
.814		3			

Brand Credibility Item–Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean	Scale Variance	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
This brand delivers what it promises.	6.09	4.096	.515	.882
This brand's product claims are believable.	6.46	3.056	.755	.646
I trust what this brand says about its products.	6.46	3.088	.743	.660

Scale Statistics			
Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
9.51	7.026	2.651	3

B5. Reliability Authenticity

Reliability Statistics		Authenticity Item Statistics			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	N	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	This brand is true to its values.	3.40	.976	192
		This brand communicates honestly.	3.01	1.068	192
		The message was true to the brand's character.	3.03	1.104	192
		The authenticity of the brand is influenced by showing or not showing the product.	3.82	.906	192
.802		4			

Authenticity Item–Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean	Scale Variance	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
This brand is true to its values.	9.85	6.617	.559	.779
This brand communicates honestly.	10.24	5.408	.770	.670
The message was true to the brand's character.	10.22	5.316	.754	.678
The authenticity of the brand is influenced by showing or not showing the product.	9.43	7.545	.404	.841

Scale Statistics			
Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
13.25	10.377	3.221	4

B6. Reliability Storytelling Quality

Storytelling Item Statistics

		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
The story was emotionally engaging.		3.32	1.134	192
The story helped me understand the brand better.		2.93	1.144	192
The storytelling made the post more memorable.		3.11	1.173	192
The story felt more relatable because it did not focus on the product.		3.48	1.023	192

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.819	4

Storytelling Item–Total Statistics

	Scale Mean	Scale Variance	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
The story was emotionally engaging.	9.52	7.874	.606	.789
The story helped me understand the brand better.	9.91	7.059	.764	.712
The storytelling made the post more memorable.	9.73	7.099	.727	.730
The story felt more relatable because it did not focus on the product.	9.36	9.017	.480	.839

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
12.84	13.016	3.608	4

B7. Reliability Purchase Intention

Engagement and Purchase Intention Item Statistics

		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I would consider buying a product from this brand.		3.66	.942	192
I am likely to purchase this product in the near future.		3.04	1.164	192
I would recommend this brand to others.		2.98	1.155	192

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.824	3

Engagement and Purchase Intention Item–Total Statistics

	Scale Mean	Scale Variance	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I would consider buying a product from this brand.	6.02	4.952	.501	.914
I am likely to purchase this product in the near future.	6.64	3.163	.826	.596
I would recommend this brand to others.	6.69	3.397	.753	.681

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
9.68	7.937	2.817	3

Appendix C

Hypothesis Testing

C1. Trust

Univariate Analysis of Variance

Between-Subjects Factors

	Value	Label	N
Consumer_Business	1.00	Consumer	85
	2.00	Business	107
Visible_NotVisible	1.00	Visible	90
	2.00	Not Visible	102

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: Trust

Consumer_Business	Visible_NotVisible	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Consumer	Visible	3.73	0.69	33
	Not Visible	3.80	0.68	52
	Total	3.77	0.68	85
Business	Visible	2.85	0.55	57
	Not Visible	2.82	0.72	50
	Total	2.84	0.63	107
Total	Visible	3.17	0.74	90
	Not Visible	3.32	0.85	102
	Total	3.25	0.80	192

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances^{a,b}

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Trust	Based on Mean	0.518	3	188	0.671
	Based on Median	0.416	3	188	0.742
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	0.416	3	179.274	0.742
	Based on trimmed mean	0.514	3	188	0.673

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

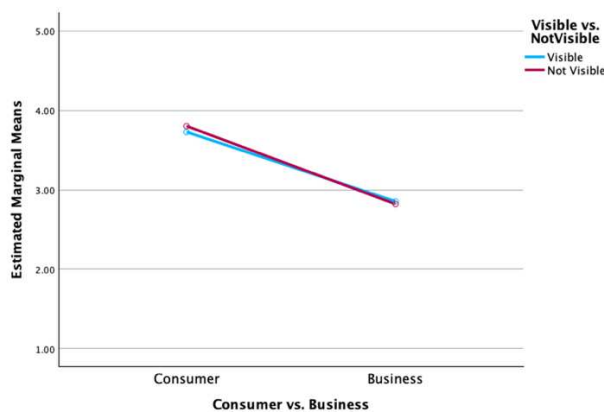
- a. Dependent variable: Trust
- b. Design: Intercept + Consumer_Business + Visible_NotVisible + Consumer_Business * Visible_NotVisible

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Trust

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	41.512 ^a	3	13.837	31.990	<0.001
Intercept	2001.687	1	2001.687	4627.587	<0.001
Consumer_Business	39.506	1	39.506	91.332	<0.001
Visible_NotVisible	0.019	1	0.019	0.043	0.836
Consumer_Business * Visible_NotVisible	0.133	1	0.133	0.309	0.579
Error	81.320	188	0.433		
Total	2153.000	192			
Corrected Total	122.833	191			

a. R Squared = .338 (Adjusted R Squared = .327)



C2. Brand Credibility

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: BrandCredibility

Consumer_Business	Visible_NotVisible	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Consumer	Visible	3.64	0.80	33
	Not Visible	3.92	0.60	52
	Total	3.81	0.69	85
Business	Visible	2.61	0.68	57
	Not Visible	2.71	0.64	50
	Total	2.66	0.66	107
Total	Visible	2.99	0.87	90
	Not Visible	3.33	0.86	102
	Total	3.17	0.88	192

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances^{a,b}

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
BrandCredibility	Based on Mean	3.988	3	188	0.009
	Based on Median	3.731	3	188	0.012
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	3.731	3	176.578	0.012
	Based on trimmed mean	4.543	3	188	0.004

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Dependent variable: BrandCredibility

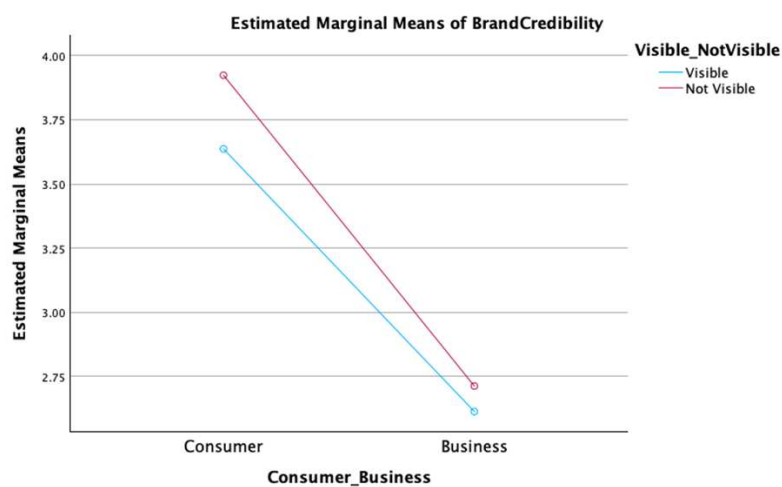
b. Design: Intercept + Consumer_Business + Visible_NotVisible + Consumer_Business * Visible_NotVisible

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: BrandCredibility

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	64.714 ^a	3	21.571	48.052	<0.001
Intercept	1907.146	1	1907.146	4248.387	<0.001
Consumer_Business	57.215	1	57.215	127.453	<0.001
Visible_NotVisible	1.711	1	1.711	3.812	0.052
Consumer_Business * Visible_NotVisible	0.403	1	0.403	0.899	0.344
Error	84.395	188	0.449		
Total	2078.667	192			
Corrected Total	149.109	191			

a. R Squared = 0.434 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.425)



Parameter Estimates with Robust Standard Errors

Dependent Variable: BrandCredibility

Parameter	B	Robust Std. Error ^a	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Intercept	2.713	0.091	29.728	<0.001	2.533	2.893
[Consumer_Business=1.00]	1.210	0.124	9.779	<0.001	0.966	1.454
[Consumer_Business=2.00]	0 ^b	.	.	.	.	.
[Visible_NotVisible=1.00]	-0.099	0.129	-0.772	0.441	-0.353	0.154
[Visible_NotVisible=2.00]	0 ^b	.	.	.	.	.
[Consumer_Business=1.00] * [Visible_NotVisible=1.00]	-0.187	0.209	-0.898	0.370	-0.599	0.224
[Consumer_Business=1.00] * [Visible_NotVisible=2.00]	0 ^b	.	.	.	.	.
[Consumer_Business=2.00] * [Visible_NotVisible=1.00]	0 ^b	.	.	.	.	.
[Consumer_Business=2.00] * [Visible_NotVisible=2.00]	0 ^b	.	.	.	.	.

a. HC3 method

b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

C3. Authenticity

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: Authenticity

Consumer_Business	Visible_NotVisible	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Consumer	Visible	3.84	0.56	33
	Not Visible	3.96	0.67	52
	Total	3.91	0.63	85
Business	Visible	2.98	0.59	57
	Not Visible	3.04	0.67	50
	Total	3.01	0.62	107
Total	Visible	3.30	0.71	90
	Not Visible	3.51	0.81	102
	Total	3.41	0.77	192

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances^{a,b}

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Authenticity	Based on Mean	3.068	3	188	0.029
	Based on Median	2.193	3	188	0.090
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.193	3	172.146	0.091
	Based on trimmed mean	3.508	3	188	0.016

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Dependent variable: Authenticity

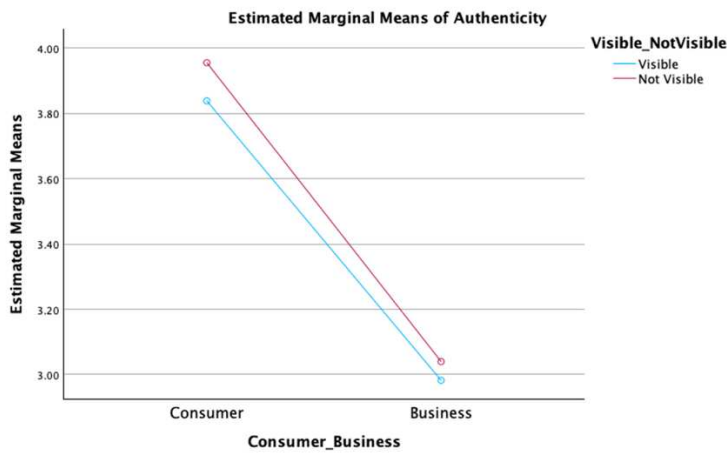
b. Design: Intercept + Consumer_Business + Visible_NotVisible + Consumer_Business * Visible_NotVisible

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Authenticity

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	38.772 ^a	3	12.924	32.813	<0.001
Intercept	2192.077	1	2192.077	5565.533	<0.001
Consumer_Business	36.021	1	36.021	91.455	<0.001
Visible_NotVisible	0.349	1	0.349	0.886	0.348
Consumer_Business * Visible_NotVisible	0.040	1	0.040	0.102	0.750
Error	74.047	188	0.394		
Total	2342.778	192			
Corrected Total	112.819	191			

a. R Squared = 0.344 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.333)



C4. Storytelling Quality

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: Storytelling

Consumer_Business	Visible_NotVisible	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Consumer	Visible	3.56	0.97	33
	Not Visible	3.90	0.68	52
	Total	3.77	0.82	85
Business	Visible	2.67	0.66	57
	Not Visible	2.87	0.73	50
	Total	2.76	0.70	107
Total	Visible	3.00	0.90	90
	Not Visible	3.40	0.87	102
	Total	3.21	0.90	192

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances^{a,b}

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Storytelling	Based on Mean	3.678	3	188	0.013
	Based on Median	3.294	3	188	0.022
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	3.294	3	159.092	0.022
	Based on trimmed mean	4.305	3	188	0.006

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Dependent variable: Storytelling

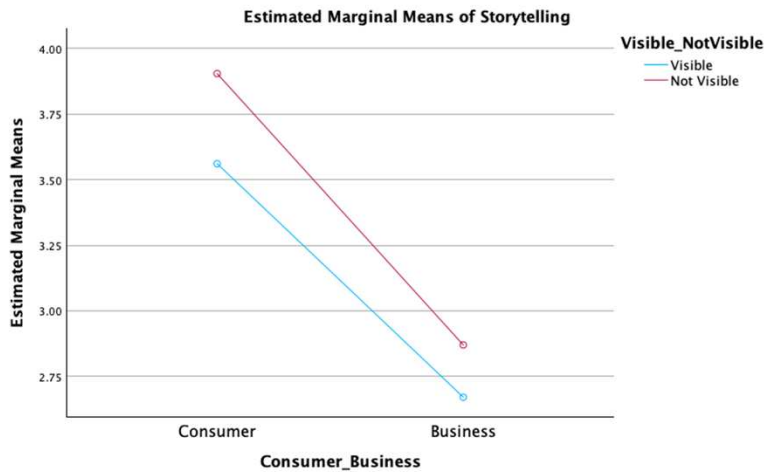
b. Design: Intercept + Consumer_Business + Visible_NotVisible + Consumer_Business * Visible_NotVisible

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Storytelling

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	51.427 ^a	3	17.142	31.004	<0.001
Intercept	1942.440	1	1942.440	3513.099	<0.001
Consumer_Business	42.485	1	42.485	76.838	<0.001
Visible_NotVisible	3.376	1	3.376	6.106	0.014
Consumer_Business * Visible_NotVisible	0.239	1	0.239	0.432	0.512
Error	103.948	188	0.553		
Total	2133.313	192			
Corrected Total	155.375	191			

a. R Squared = 0.331 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.320)



Parameter Estimates with Robust Standard Errors

Dependent Variable: Storytelling

Parameter	B	Robust Std. Error ^a	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Intercept	2.870	0.104	27.630	<0.001	2.665	3.075
[Consumer_Business=1.00]	1.034	0.140	7.359	<0.001	0.757	1.311
[Consumer_Business=2.00]	0 ^b	.	.	.	.	.
[Visible_NotVisible=1.00]	-0.199	0.136	-1.458	0.146	-0.468	0.070
[Visible_NotVisible=2.00]	0 ^b	.	.	.	.	.
[Consumer_Business=1.00] * [Visible_NotVisible=1.00]	-0.144	0.239	-0.604	0.547	-0.616	0.327
[Consumer_Business=1.00] * [Visible_NotVisible=2.00]	0 ^b	.	.	.	.	.
[Consumer_Business=2.00] * [Visible_NotVisible=1.00]	0 ^b	.	.	.	.	.
[Consumer_Business=2.00] * [Visible_NotVisible=2.00]	0 ^b	.	.	.	.	.

a. HC3 method

b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

C5. Engagement and Purchase Intention

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: PurchaseIntention

Consumer_Business	Visible_NotVisible	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Consumer	Visible	3.76	0.84	33
	Not Visible	3.83	0.87	52
	Total	3.80	0.86	85
Business	Visible	2.76	0.74	57
	Not Visible	2.77	0.72	50
	Total	2.77	0.73	107
Total	Visible	3.13	0.91	90
	Not Visible	3.31	0.96	102
	Total	3.23	0.94	192

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances^{a,b}

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
PurchaseIntention	Based on Mean	0.671	3	188	0.571
	Based on Median	0.278	3	188	0.841
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	0.278	3	176.414	0.841
	Based on trimmed mean	0.515	3	188	0.672

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Dependent variable: PurchaseIntention

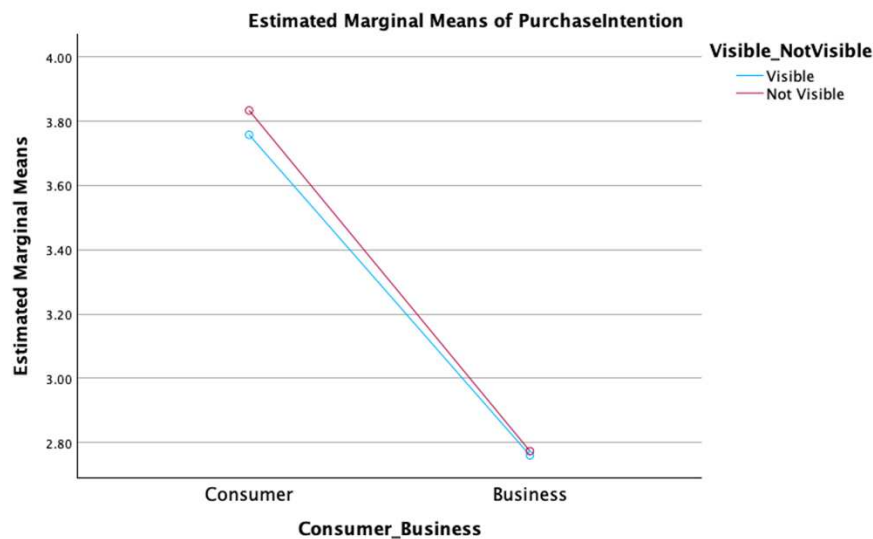
b. Design: Intercept + Consumer_Business + Visible_NotVisible + Consumer_Business * Visible_NotVisible

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: PurchaseIntention

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	51.116 ^a	3	17.039	27.302	<0.001
Intercept	1978.141	1	1978.141	3169.719	<0.001
Consumer_Business	48.608	1	48.608	77.888	<0.001
Visible_NotVisible	0.091	1	0.091	0.145	0.704
Consumer_Business * Visible_NotVisible	0.045	1	0.045	0.072	0.788
Error	117.326	188	0.624		
Total	2166.222	192			
Corrected Total	168.442	191			

a. R Squared = 0.303 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.292)



Appendix D

Questionnaire

Introduction

Dear Participant,

Thank you for contributing to this research project as part of my Master's Thesis.

This study aims to investigate how different types of brand storytelling, whether created by the brand or shared by consumers, impact consumer trust in digital brand communication. Please be assured that your responses are completely anonymous and confidential. All data will be used solely for academic research purposes.

The survey is designed to take approximately 3-5 minutes to complete.

Thank you again for your time and valuable contribution!

Section 1 Social Media Usage

Before we're getting started..

How often are you actively browsing on social media?"

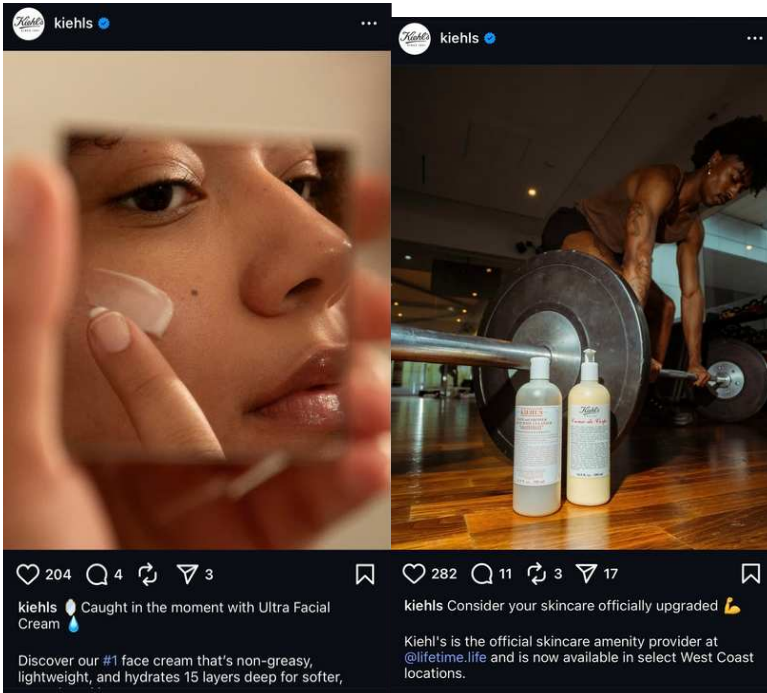
- Every day
- 4-6 times a week
- 1-3 times a week
- Less than once a week
- Never

You will now see an Instagram post of Kiehl's Cosmetics.

The post was either created by the brand itself or shared by a consumer, and it either shows or does not show a Kiehl's product.

Please take a moment to review the post before continuing.

After viewing the post, you'll be asked a few questions about your impressions.



After having seen the Instagram post, how do you feel about the brand?

Section 2: Manipulation Check

The following statements refer to the Instagram post you just saw.

Please indicate whether you think the left or right statement is correct.

I am familiar with this brand.		I am familiar with this brand.
This post seemed like it was created by a brand.		This post seemed like it was created by a consumer.
This post showed also the advertised product itself.		This post had an absence of showing the product.

The presence of the product in the post helped me trust the brand.			The absence of the product in the image made the brand more trustworthy.
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Section 3: Brand Trust

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel that I can trust this brand.					
I believe this brand can be relied upon to assist me and other consumers.					
The brand appears reliable.					

Section 4: Brand Credibility

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand delivers what it promises.					
This brand's product claims are believable.					
I trust what this brand says about its products.					

Section 5: Perceived Authenticity

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand is true to its values.					
This brand communicates honestly.					
The message was true to the brand's character.					
The authenticity of the brand is influenced by showing or not showing the product.					

Section 6: Perceived Storytelling Quality

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
The story was emotionally engaging.					
The story helped me understand the brand better.					
The storytelling made the post more memorable.					
The story felt more relatable because it did not focus on the product.					

Section 7: Engagement and Purchase Intention

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I would consider buying a product from this brand.					
I am likely to purchase this product in the near future.					
I would recommend this brand to others.					

Section 8 - Demographic Questions:

In this section you are kindly asked to provide your demographic details. Your information will be treated as confidential and is only used for statistical reasons.

8. Where do you come from?

- Germany
- Austria
- Portugal
- Other country inside the EU
- Outside EU

9. How old are you?

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 65-older

10. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

11. What is your highest completed education level?

- High school or equivalent
- Professional Degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctor degree
- Other
- None
- Prefer not to answer

12. What is your current occupation?

- Employed
- Student
- Student & Employed
- Unemployed
- Self-employed
- Retired
- Other

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded.