

The Effect of Brand Storytelling on Consumers' Purchase Intention of Thai Local Products

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of brand storytelling on consumers' purchase intention toward Thai local products, focusing on how narrative quality, emotional engagement, and perceived authenticity shape consumer decision-making. Grounded in narrative transportation theory and meaning transfer theory, the research proposes that compelling brand stories enhance consumers' psychological immersion, strengthen their emotional connection with local brands, and elevate perceptions of cultural value. A quantitative survey was conducted with Thai consumers who purchase local products, and structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the proposed relationships. The results reveal that brand storytelling significantly increases narrative transportation, which in turn enhances brand attitude and trust—key mediators that influence purchase intention. Authenticity cues embedded in the stories, such as cultural heritage and craftsmanship, were also found to strengthen consumers' intentions to buy local products. These findings contribute to the branding and consumer behavior literature by demonstrating that storytelling is a crucial communication tool that can differentiate Thai local products in an increasingly competitive market. Practical recommendations for local entrepreneurs and policymakers are discussed, along with suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Brand storytelling, Brand authenticity, Purchase intention, Thai local products

1. Introduction

1.1 Principles and Rationale

In recent years, brand storytelling has emerged as a powerful strategic tool for enhancing consumer engagement and influencing purchase decisions. Storytelling allows brands to communicate meanings, values, and emotions in ways that transcend traditional product-focused advertising (Escalas, 2004). Through narrative structures, brands can build emotional resonance and facilitate deeper cognitive processing, thereby strengthening consumer-brand relationships and shaping purchase intention (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004; Woodside, 2010). As global markets become more saturated and competitive, storytelling has become a critical differentiator that helps products stand out by connecting with consumers on cultural, social, and personal levels.

In the context of Thailand, the rise of local products—ranging from handicrafts and community-based goods to traditional foods and herbal products—has created opportunities for cultural branding and narrative-driven marketing. Thai local products often embody unique cultural heritage, traditional craftsmanship, and community identity. However, despite their cultural richness, many local producers struggle to effectively communicate their value proposition to modern consumers, particularly younger segments who prioritize authenticity, experience, and emotional connection (Pitakmongkol, 2021). Storytelling offers a mechanism for transforming the implicit cultural meaning of local products into compelling brand narratives that enhance their perceived value.

Prior research indicates that well-crafted brand stories can enhance perceived authenticity, trust, and brand attachment, all of which positively influence purchase intentions (Chiu et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2019). Narrative transportation theory suggests that consumers who become immersed in a brand story are more likely to exhibit favorable attitudes and behaviors toward the brand (Green & Brock, 2000). Moreover, meaning transfer theory highlights how cultural meanings embedded in stories can move from producers to products and ultimately to consumers, shaping their preferences and purchase decisions (McCracken, 1986). These theoretical perspectives underscore the potential of storytelling to elevate the appeal and market competitiveness of Thai local products.

Despite growing recognition of storytelling as a strategic marketing tool, empirical research focusing specifically on Thai local products remains limited. Existing studies emphasize branding challenges among small-scale producers, including weak communication strategies, limited technological adoption, and difficulties in differentiating products in domestic and global markets (Chaipraditkul & Lertwannawit, 2020). There is a pressing need to understand how brand storytelling influences consumers' purchase intentions in the Thai context, where cultural identity and local pride intersect with modern consumption patterns (Techarattanased, 2025).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of brand storytelling on consumers' purchase intention of Thai local products, focusing on how narrative elements enhance emotional connection, perceived authenticity, and brand trust. The findings will contribute to theoretical development in narrative marketing and provide practical insights for local entrepreneurs, marketers, and policymakers seeking to strengthen the competitiveness of Thai local products in the digital and global marketplace.

1.2 Research Objective

1. To examine the influence of brand storytelling on consumers' purchase intention toward Thai local products.
2. To investigate the effect of key dimensions of brand storytelling—such as authenticity, emotional engagement, narrative coherence, and cultural meaning—on consumers' attitudes toward Thai local products.

3. To provide managerial recommendations for local product producers, community enterprises, and marketers on how to effectively use storytelling to enhance consumer engagement and purchasing decisions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Brand storytelling: concept and theoretical foundations

Brand storytelling involves strategically using narratives to convey a brand's history, values, and meaning in ways that engage consumers both emotionally and cognitively (Woodside, 2010). Unlike conventional advertising, narratives present a coherent sequence of events or messages that encourage deeper processing and consumer identification (Escalas, 2004). Two prominent theoretical perspectives explain storytelling effects. Narrative transportation theory suggests that immersion in a story reduces counter-arguing and increases persuasion, enhancing brand attitudes and behavioral intentions (Green & Brock, 2000). Meaning transfer theory posits that cultural meanings embedded in narratives are transferred to products and then to consumers, influencing symbolic value and purchase decisions.

2.2 Storytelling, consumer psychology, and purchase intention

Empirical research indicates that well-crafted brand stories increase perceived authenticity, trust, and emotional attachment—constructs that are strong antecedents of purchase intention (Lundqvist et al., 2013; Liu, Wang, & Wang, 2019). For example, storytelling that highlights origin, craftsmanship, or producer narratives tends to enhance perceptions of authenticity, which in turn raises willingness to pay and purchase likelihood (Napoli et al., 2014). Emotional engagement arising from narrative transportation also strengthens attitudes toward the brand and can mediate the relationship between storytelling and behavioral intentions (Chiu et al., 2022).

2.3 Dimensions of effective brand storytelling

Recent studies decompose storytelling into core dimensions—authenticity (origin and provenance cues), emotional engagement (empathy and affective arousal), narrative coherence (clarity and plot), and cultural meaning (heritage, symbolism)—each of which contributes differentially to consumer outcomes (Lundqvist et al., 2013; Chiu et al., 2022). Authenticity signals are particularly salient for products marketed on heritage or locality claims, because consumers use such cues to assess genuineness (Napoli et al., 2014). Narrative coherence and relevance influence the depth of cognitive processing, while emotional elements determine motivational intensity—both pathways feed into attitude formation and purchase intention.

2.4 Role of mediators and moderators: attitude, authenticity, and consumer characteristics

Research consistently finds that consumer attitude toward the brand often mediates the storytelling affect purchase intention relationship: narratives shape attitudes (via beliefs and feelings), and attitudes then predict behavioral intentions (Escalas, 2004; Woodside, 2010).

Perceived authenticity frequently plays a dual role both as a proximal outcome of storytelling and as a moderator that amplifies the effect of storytelling on purchase intention (Napoli et al., 2014). Consumer characteristics (e.g., cultural identity, prior experience, ethnocentrism, age) can also moderate storytelling effectiveness; for instance, culturally congruent narratives are more persuasive for consumers who value heritage and local authenticity (Woodside, 2010).

2.5 Storytelling and local products: implications for Thai context

Local products—such as handicrafts, traditional foods, and community-made goods—are especially well suited to storytelling because they carry rich origin stories, artisanal techniques, and social meanings (Borghini et al., 2010). In Thailand, government and community branding initiatives (e.g., OTOP) encourage local producers to leverage heritage and origin narratives to differentiate products in domestic and international markets (Chaipraditkul & Lertwannawit, 2020). However, Thai studies also point to practical challenges: many small producers lack marketing skills, digital storytelling capacity, and effective channels to communicate narratives to contemporary consumers (Pitakmongkol, 2021; Suwunniponth, 2022). This gap suggests significant potential for storytelling to raise perceived value—and thus purchase intention—if stories are professionally crafted and distributed.

2.6 Empirical gaps and contribution of the present study

While international evidence supports the persuasive power of brand storytelling, empirical research specifically examining Thai local products is limited. Existing Thai literature documents branding constraints and the promise of narrative marketing but provides few rigorous tests of storytelling mechanisms in relation to purchase intention. The present study addresses this gap by testing multiple storytelling dimensions; examining attitude and perceived authenticity as mediators; and exploring moderating effects of consumer characteristics relevant to Thailand. By integrating narrative theory with empirical measurement in a Thai local-product setting, the study aims to deliver both theoretical refinement and managerial guidance for community enterprises and policymakers.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey to investigate how brand storytelling influences consumers' purchase intention toward Thai local products. Quantitative survey research is appropriate for examining relationships among latent constructs, testing theoretical models, and generalizing results to a broader population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study adopts Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess both the measurement and structural models because it is suitable for complex models with multiple constructs, predictive-oriented analysis, and non-normal data (Hair et al., 2021).

3.1 Population and Sample

The population comprises consumers who have purchased or expressed interest in Thai local products such as OTOP goods, traditional crafts, and local specialty foods. A non-probability purposive sampling technique is applied, focusing on consumers who are familiar with or have prior exposure to Thai local products.

The minimum sample size is determined using SEM guidelines, where at least 10 times the maximum number of structural paths directed at any latent variable is required (Hair et al., 2021). With approximately 4-5 predictors linked to purchase intention, a minimum of 150-200 responses are acceptable; however, to enhance statistical power and model robustness, a target sample size of 300 respondents is set.

3.2 Research Instrument

Data were collected via a structured questionnaire with four sections: screening questions, brand storytelling constructs (authenticity, emotional engagement, narrative coherence, cultural meaning), mediators and consumer responses (perceived authenticity, attitude), and purchase intention. Responses used a 5-point Likert scale. Content validity was confirmed through expert review, and reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR \geq 0.70) (Hair et al., 2021).

3.3 Data Collection

Data are collected through online surveys distributed via social media channels, community product groups, and lifestyle consumer forums. Online data collection is effective for accessing diverse consumers and reducing time and cost. Respondents are informed about the research purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary participation before completing the questionnaire.

3.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean, SD, frequency) are used to summarize demographic characteristics. The structural model (inner model) assessment focuses on evaluating the hypothesized relationships among latent variables and determining the model's predictive capability. Key components of this evaluation include examining path coefficients (β) and their significance levels using bootstrapping procedures, which indicate the strength and direction of the relationships within the model.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Profile

A total of 300 valid responses were analyzed after data screening and removal of incomplete surveys. Missing data were minimal (< 3%) and handled using mean substitution. Descriptive statistics indicated that most respondents were female (62%), aged 21-40 years (71%), and had purchased Thai local products at least twice in the past three months.

4.2 Structural Model Assessment (Inner Model)

The structural model (inner model) was assessed to evaluate the hypothesized causal relationships among brand storytelling, perceived authenticity, attitude, and purchase intention. Multicollinearity was examined using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). All VIF values ranged from 1.20 to 2.85, which are well below the recommended threshold of 5, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern and that the latent constructs were sufficiently distinct. Regarding model fit, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was 0.061, indicating good model fit. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) was 0.91, exceeding the recommended criterion of 0.90. The endogenous constructs demonstrated moderate-to-strong explanatory power: Perceived authenticity: $R^2 = 0.56$ Attitude: $R^2 = 0.62$ Purchase intention: $R^2 = 0.58$ These R^2 values indicate that the model explains a substantial portion of consumer purchase intention, consistent with behavioral intention research.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

The samples were conducted to assess the significance of path coefficients as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Structural Model Path Coefficients (PLS-SEM Results)

Hypothesized Path	β	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis results
Brand storytelling → Perceived authenticity	0.75	15.82	< .001	Supported
Brand storytelling → Attitude	0.48	9.23	< .001	Supported
Perceived authenticity → Attitude	0.36	7.18	< .001	Supported
Attitude → Purchase intention	0.52	10.05	< .001	Supported
Perceived authenticity → Purchase intention	0.31	6.44	< .001	Supported

The structural model findings show that all hypothesized relationships are strong and statistically significant. Brand storytelling strongly enhances perceived authenticity ($\beta = 0.75$, $p < .001$) and positively shapes consumer attitudes ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < .001$), demonstrating the persuasive power of narrative communication. Perceived authenticity also plays a key mediating role by improving both attitudes ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < .001$) and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < .001$). Moreover, consumer attitude emerges as the strongest predictor of purchase intention ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < .001$), aligning with established behavioral theories. Overall, the results confirm that brand storytelling increases purchase intention for Thai local products both directly and indirectly through authenticity and attitude.

5. Conclusion

This study examined how brand storytelling influences consumers' purchase intention toward Thai local products. The findings highlight that compelling brand stories—those that

evoke emotions, convey authenticity, and reflect cultural identity—significantly enhance consumers' cognitive and affective responses, ultimately increasing their intention to purchase. Consistent with narrative transportation theory, Thai consumers are more likely to engage with brands that immerse them in meaningful narratives and reduce counter-arguing, thereby strengthening persuasion (Green & Brock, 2000). Moreover, storytelling facilitates meaning transfer from cultural symbols and local heritage to the product itself, reinforcing perceptions of uniqueness, quality, and emotional connection (McCracken, 1986).

The results further indicate that brand authenticity and cultural resonance play a crucial mediating role. Thai local products that communicate genuine origins, craftsmanship, and community identity through storytelling can differentiate themselves in a competitive market. This supports prior research showing that authenticity-based narratives significantly enhance brand trust and purchase decisions (Escalas, 2004; Chiu et al., 2020). Additionally, emotionally rich and value-driven stories significantly improve brand attitude formation, which directly predicts behavioral intention (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004).

From a managerial perspective, the study underscores the importance of narrative-based marketing strategies for Thai SMEs and local product brands. Entrepreneurs should prioritize developing coherent, culturally grounded stories that highlight product origin, community values, and human experiences behind the brand. Such strategic storytelling not only drives consumer intention but also fosters long-term brand differentiation and loyalty in both domestic and global markets.

Overall, the study contributes to the branding and consumer behavior literature by demonstrating that storytelling is not merely an aesthetic communication tool but a strategic mechanism that shapes meaning, emotion, and intention. Future research may explore digital storytelling, cross-cultural responses, or AI-driven story personalization to extend these insights.

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