Exploring internal stakeholders' emotional attachment & corporate brand perceptions through corporate storytelling for branding

Brighton Nyagadza, Ernest M. Kadembo & Africa Makasi |

Published online: 11 Sep 2020.

Submit your article to this journal 🗗

Article views: 898

View related articles 🗗

View Crossmark data 🗗

Citing articles: 3 View citing articles 🗗

cogent
business &
management

MARKETING | ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring internal stakeholders' emotional attachment & corporate brand perceptions through corporate storytelling for branding

Brighton Nyagadza[1,2]*, Ernest M. Kadembo[3] and Africa Makasi[4]

Abstract: The goal of this article was to explore internal stakeholders' emotional attachment and corporate brand perceptions through corporate storytelling for branding. Due to the nature of the research questions, the research was purely qualitative in nature. A total of fifty four (54) in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted from 2019 to 2020. These constituted the bedrock of qualitative data analysis for the study. An interpretivist research paradigm, anchored on subjectivist ontology, were both applied as research philosophy pillars. This was done by the researchers in order to get deeper understanding of corporate stories for branding in the six (6) selected listed company. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents from three (3) levels of authority, thus operational, tactical and strategic level. The mutual connection on variables of corporate stories for branding and Impression Management theory elements depicted that these are related to internal stakeholder's corporate brand perceptions. The research results showed

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Brighton Nyagadza is a Doctor of Philosophy (Marketing Management) finalist (Midlands State University, Zimbabwe) and Digital Marketing Lecturer (Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Zimbabwe). He holds an Executive Certificate in Export Marketing & International Trade (University of Zimbabwe), Post Graduate Diploma In Education (Zimbabwe Open University), Professional Diploma in Marketing (Driving Innovation) (The Chartered Institute of Marketing, United Kingdom), Bachelor of Commerce (Marketing), (Zimbabwe Open University) and Master of Commerce (Marketing Strategy) (Midlands State University, Zimbabwe). His key interests revolves on corporate storytelling, marketing metrics and digital marketing.

Ernest M. Kadembo is a Professor of Business at Richmond, the American University in London, United Kingdom. He has a Doctor of Philosophy in Story Branding from The Business School, University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom.

Africa Makasi is a Senior Lecturer at the Namibia University of Science and Technology, Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business, Namibia. He is a holder of Doctor of Philosophy in Marketing from University of KwaZulu Natal South Africa.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The article explored the internal stakeholders' emotional attachment & corporate brand perception through corporate storytelling for branding, within selected listed companies. Corporate storytelling for branding is anchored on corporate associations, corporate personality, corporate activities and corporate values. The research study has shown that these elements directly influence internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. It contributes to theory and practices through unrolling ways that drive internal stakeholders' positive corporate brand perceptions. In many companies, corporate stories of branding emerge in different formats such as images, narratives, audios or videos (both online and offline). The authors argue that internal stakeholders are important audience of the corporate stories for branding since they are the foundational custodians of the corporate brand. Their perceptions towards the corporate brand as a result of corporate stories for branding have a bearing on how companies tend to survive and protect the corporate image.

Brighton Nyagadza

cogent · oa

that there is a positive nexus between corporate stories for branding with emotional attachment and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. Recommendations include that corporate management need to consciously involve internal stakeholders in developing corporate stories for branding, as it is crucial in carving positive corporate brand perceptions and emotional attachment. The research contributes to the theory and practice by shaping listed corporates to be able to maximise effectiveness of their corporate strategies, meant to improve internal corporate reputation and motivation of internal stakeholders.

Subjects: Work & Organizational Psychology; Organizational Communication; Strategic Management; Marketing

Keywords: emotional attachment; listed companies; corporate storytelling for branding; internal stakeholders; perceptions; Zimbabwe
JEL Classification: M3; M31

"The world is set of stories which must be chosen among to live the good life in a process of continual recreation" (Fisher, 1985)

1. Introduction

Corporate storytelling for branding has assisted a variety of organisations in efficiently attaining of communicative goals (Mendonca, 2015; Nyagadza et al., 2019; Smith & Keyton, 2001). Kadembo (2016, p. 18), suggests that branding is an important marketing tool that helps in giving the product a unique identity for purposes of differentiating it from other similar products that perform the same or similar functions. Choudhury (2001, p. 1) referenced by Kadembo (2016, p. 15), defines a corporate brand as any distinctive feature on a product or service, which differentiate itself from others in the market. Aggregate satisfaction in a corporate product or service defines a corporate brand. Kadembo (2016, p. 15), contends that a brand refers to the maximisation in totality of quality of performance, the packaged pricing, the strategies of distribution used as well as reputation attached. A bold connection exists in corporate storytelling and branding since the former tends to shape the latter. This results in the incubation of the concept called corporate storytelling for branding. Internal stakeholders are important audience of the corporate stories for branding since they are the primary custodians of the corporate brand. Their perceptions towards the corporate brand as a result of corporate stories for branding have a bearing on how companies tend to survive the competition in both private and public sectors. This is so because the feelings of internal stakeholders reinforce adoption of the corporate cultures and values, and ultimately the corporate reputation. The article explored the internal stakeholders' emotional attachment and corporate brand perception through corporate storytelling for branding, within selected Zimbabwean listed companies. Therefore, the study sought to answer the following qualitative methodological questions which were used to guide the research study; what kind of perception do you have about your organisation's corporate brand as an internal stakeholder? To what extent are you emotionally attached to the corporate brand? Target of the interviews was internal stakeholders (employees from lower, middle to upper level of authority). Further to this, the article presented important research results which depict that there is a missing link on conception and customary action on emotional attachment and corporate brand perceptions through corporate storytelling for branding by organisations. These are of help to Zimbabwean, regional, international and global business and marketing practitioners, academic researchers and corporate storytelling strategists in understanding the connection between emotional attachment and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. Having the knowledge would assist them in crafting corporate strategies from corporate storytelling for branding and impression management. Corporates need to design effective corporate stories for branding so as to influence the internal stakeholders positively. Findings from the critical synthesis of literature and/or review pave a way for empirically

testing the research propositions. All these exhibit the power of both online and offline media channels, such as the social media and main stream corporate platforms, to which corporate stories for branding are shared.

2. Research context

It is of utmost importance to know that, in agreement with Kadembo (2016, p. 20), corporate storytelling for branding paves way for the organisations to differentiate themselves with a unique identity. If the corporate stories for branding are positive or negative, questions are thrown to investigate their effects on the internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. The current situation in the selected Zimbabwean-listed companies (found in sampled telecommunications, construction, retail, banking, consumer fast-moving goods and manufacturing sectors) shows that the employee's attitude towards corporate brands has an effect to the corporate performance and brand identity. Some sectors have indicated growing spirit of demotivation of its employees with increases in negative perceptions of the corporate stories for branding shared within their respective organisations. This entirely has affected their emotional attachment to the corporate brand. The function and role of the internal stakeholders, especially the employees has changed, as they are now being taken as the corporate brand ambassadors of the organisation. Internal stakeholders, interactivity with both internal and external environments depicts that these have a direct impact on the perceptions driven towards the corporate brand itself. Their values and behaviours need to be in sync with their perceptions and emotional attachment to the corporate brand. However, the corporate media polarisation in the selected listed companies as a result of informal internal stakeholder journalism, has perverted the real conveyance taste of true corporate stories for branding! The internal stakeholders of the selected listed companies have developed differentiated perceptions of the corporate stories for branding shared amongst them within their organisations. This influences the way the organisation performs and identifies itself against other competitors in the business fraternity. The current state of the Zimbabwean corporate media fraternity has an impact on how listed companies are doing their best to maintain corporate identity and image for corporate success. Related prior researches showed that there are insufficient predictors of corporate brand emotional attachment (Park et al., 2009; Oliver, 1999; Patwardhan & Balasubramanian, 2011; So et al., 2013; Thompson et al., 2006; Yongjae et al., 2018). Employees as primary stakeholders are keener to hear corporate stories for branding related to accomplishments, self-promotional, benefits and emotion bearing ones. Corporate stories related to vision and mission statement are less appealing in the companies, as they tend to be directly linked to the corporate strategy as a whole. However, evidence in the listed corporates shows that corporate activities, as part of corporate stories for branding elements, has proven to be more likeable than other elements (Spear & Roper, 2013). Managers within these corporates are making efforts to communicate and build these corporate stories for branding, since they involve a two-way communication mode, through various media platforms such as corporate websites, official social media sites like the WhatsApp (though assumed to be a bit informal in nature), YouTube, twitter, team briefings and official annual meetings. Some of the methods are the effective and the less effective. Feedback is provided, but the sentiments from the internal stakeholders (mainly the employees), indicates that there is limitation in the effectiveness of the conveyance of the communiques. There are gaps that exist in previous studies indicating that employees' corporate brand emotional attachment is important for internal corporate branding. On the other hand, the nature and type of emotional corporate brand attachment is depicted in the corporate brand relationships, brand love, love marks, brand communities, brand commitment, and other areas such as passion, intimacy are linked to many other research (Aaker, 1997; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Fournier, 1998; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010; Kim et al., 2008; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Pawle & Cooper, 2006; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Warrington & Shim, 2000; Woodside, 2010; Yongjae et al., 2018). Therefore, it is against this background that prompted the researchers to carry a research study exploring internal stakeholders' emotional attachment and corporate brand perceptions through corporate storytelling for branding.

3. Research problem

From the background and the preliminary literature review, it has been ascertained that internal stakeholders are vital advocates and recipients of corporate stories for branding (Abratt & Keyn, 2012). Corporate brand perceptions can be shaped through the use of corporate storytelling for branding as it embraces internal and external communication issues, through conventional and digital platforms (Dowling, 2006; Nyagadza et al., 2019). A well-crafted corporate story for branding needs to bear the qualities which push a corporate reputation and suggests that the major reputation platforms are necessary initial points (Spear & Roper, 2013; Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). Corporate stories for branding results in making interested parties see the corporates as more genuine, different, truthful, transforming and lovable, then it will polish up the corporate reputation (Dowling, 2006; Spear & Roper, 2013). Authors argue that this is also necessary in the designing of overall corporate strategies. Corporate storytelling for branding has become fast-rising area of interest in the study of brands (Nyagadza et al., 2019; Spear & Roper, 2013). With expertise of working with corporate brands, the authors have found that corporate brands tell stories which go beyond just selling the corporate brand. They found that corporate storytelling for branding is a key element in harmonising corporate strategy with its internal stakeholders. The main problem the study aimed to address, was the need to look into internal stakeholders' perceptions of the corporate storytelling for branding and emotional attachment to the corporate brand. Usually, in organisations, there are many instances when pervasive and retrogressive corporate activities are experienced and are not reported in corporate stories for branding. The same case is found in some of corporate brand associations, which tend to affect internal stakeholders' perceptions.

4. Brief literature review

Corporate storytelling for branding is the storyline which depicts the corporate courageous purpose and links a stakeholder's internal state of the mind with its corporate brand (Nyagadza et al., 2019). It is an original, fascinating and causing a desire to know more garrulous story, which enhances the brand that it represents. A corporate story for branding that can represent the organization well can also be known as a signature brand story. In companies, corporate stories of branding emerge in different formats such as images, narratives, audios or videos (both online and offline). These tend to influence perceptions of the internal stakeholders of the corporate brand. Once corporate stories for branding are important in the architecture of what the corporate is known for, ultimately it is necessary to understand their relation to internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions as well as retention to the organisation (Janssen et al., 2012; Spear & Roper, 2013; Vingirayi et al., 2019).

4.1. Corporate storytelling for branding

Furthermore, Spear and Roper (2013) and Hermansson (2008) found that, "corporate storytelling for branding is part of human communication". A variety of authors have written more on how corporate storytelling for branding in line with how it results in emotional arousal in the organisations. These include but not limited to S. Morgan and Dennehy (1997), McLellan (2006), Herskovitz and Crystal (2010), Woodside (2010), and Spear and Roper (2013). Currently, there are high prompts in academic research on corporate storytelling for branding (Spear & Roper, 2013). However, there is still limited research conducted on how corporates actually convey corporate stories for branding (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Mossberg, 2008; Romaniuk & Gaillard, 2007; Smith & Keyton, 2001; Spear & Roper, 2013), and how these affect internal stakeholders' corporate brand perception. Globally, Apple is rated as the top storyteller for branding, followed by Cadbury and McDonald's (Marketing Week, 2018). In Zimbabwe, there are currently 66 listed corporates but little is known about the effect of corporate stories for branding (according to Spear & Roper, 2013), on the corporate brand perceptions of internal stakeholders.

4.2. Emotional attachment

As internal stakeholders' become more connected to a corporate story for branding, they are in close ranks with the corporate brand due to the presence of the attracting element-yielding joy, freedom from apprehension and contentment. Thus, it is believed that internal stakeholders who have a higher level of psychological loyalty towards the corporate brand would be connected to it for a prolonged period of time. The researchers agree that corporate brand perception is the way stakeholders evaluate or see an organisation in its entirety and give a position against other brands. The concept of perception is a psychological matter that is related to mental processes and imaging upon assessing a variable (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005; Smith & Wheeler, 2002). Internal stakeholders perceive a corporate brand positively if the related brand stories such as corporate associations, corporate values, corporate personalities, and corporate culture are intertwined to the sum of a whole. Corporate brand perception is a resultant effect of combined information and related emotions about the brand. Furthermore, corporate brand relationship and brand meaning ideally tend to shape the level of influence towards stakeholders (internal and external) (Escalas & Stern, 2003). Emotions evoke perceptions, because these are issues related to mental processes (Nyagadza et al., 2019). However, if there is inconsistency in terms of how rational and emotional aspects influence the audience, negative perceptions tend to mount against the corporate brand.

4.3. Corporate brand perceptions

Internal stakeholders perceive positively a corporate brand if the related brand stories such as corporate associations, corporate values, corporate personalities, and corporate culture are intertwined to the sum of a whole (Nyagadza et al., 2018; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005; Smith & Wheeler, 2002). Corporate brand perception is a product of combined information and related emotions about the brand. The more the internal stakeholders' are attached to a corporate story for branding, they are likely to result in proximity or close ranks to the corporate brand due to the existence of emotions (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Nyagadza et al., 2019). With this knowledge already tapped, a gap exists on whether there is an association between corporate storytelling for branding and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. Therefore, it is argued that the more connection to the corporate storytelling for branding then there is more probability of internal stakeholders' attachment to the corporate brand. The current study seeks to close the gap by evaluating the link on internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions and corporate storytelling for branding. The researchers believe that there is a strong link between emotional attachments to the corporate story for branding. Once internal stakeholders are emotionally attached to a corporate story for branding, this leads to positive perception towards the corporate brand. The reverse is also true.

5. Theoretical framework

This paper integrated corporate storytelling for branding constructs, which make it functional to produce a theoretical framework and understanding of the internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions, as well as emotional attachment to the corporate brand. The theoretical framework that best explained the relationship between corporate storytelling for branding and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions was Impression Management (IM) theory. Much of the literature on corporate storytelling for branding lacked theoretical frameworks, such as Mucundorfeanu (2018), Cornelissen et al. (2012), De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003, p. 818), and Melewar (2003, p. 195) according to Spear and Roper (2013). Therefore, this section considered previous theoretical frameworks used in prior research so as to identify, the best one for this article, in sync with its trajectory. The following table 1 is the summary of previous theoretical frameworks used to evaluate corporate storytelling for branding, together with the methodologies used.

cogent ·· business & management

Table 1. Theoretical approaches used in prior research relating to corporate storytelling for branding and corporate branding			
Theory	**Area**	**Author**	**Methodology**
Impression management theory	Corporate reputation	Spear and Roper (2013)	Empirical and content analysis.
Impression management theory	Corporate communication	Connolly-Aher and Broadway (2007)	Empirical and content analysis.
Impression management theory	Consulting	McFall (2017).	Empirical and quantitative.
Impression management theory	Marketing Communications	Young et al., (1994).	Empirical and content analysis.
Impression management theory	Marketing Communications	Wu and Shang (2012).	Empirical and content analysis.
Narrative theory	Corporate Stories	Woodside (2007)	Conceptual
Narrative theory	Metaphor in conversations	Doyle and Sims (2002)	Empirical and content analysis.
Narrative theory	Narrative processing	Escalas (2004)	Empirical and content analysis.
Narrative theory	Storytelling	Kadembo (2012) Nyagadza et al. (2019)	Conceptual.
Narrative theory	Storytelling	Daugaard and Johansen (2014).	Empirical and content analysis.
Stakeholder theory	Corporate identity	Spear and Roper (2013)	Empirical and content analysis.
Stakeholder theory	Corporate identity	Balmer Fukukawa, and Gray (2003, p. 10)	Conceptual
Stakeholder theory	Corporate reputation	Spear and Roper (2013)	Empirical and content analysis.
Stakeholder theory	Corporate reputation	Dickinson-Delaporte et al. (2010, p. 1871)	Empirical and quantitative.
Stakeholder theory	Corporate reputation	Mahon (2002, p. 423)	Empirical and quantitative.
Consumer storytelling theory	Storytelling	Woodside (2008)	Conceptual
Consumer storytelling theory	Storytelling and Sense making in organizations	Weick and Browning (1986).	Empirical and quantitative.
Consumer storytelling theory	Storytelling	Wertime (2002)	Conceptual
Drama theory	Cognitive and affective responses	Wells (1988).	Empirical and quantitative.
Signalling theory	A communication review	Connelly et al. (2011)	Theoretical review.

Source: Researchers' own conception (derived from literature and theoretical review) (2020).

The core of each theory include the following; Stakeholder theory advocates organisations have a mandate which obliges them to look into the interests of major players that are influenced by their activities (Daugaard & Johansen, 2014; Nyagadza et al., 2019). On the other hand, Narrative theory depicts the cradle to the formation of corporate storytelling for branding behaviour which leads to the uptake of corporate story for branding descriptors as well as content (Woodside, 2010). The central proposition is that stakeholders utilise sellable goods as indicative brands which show some related myths in line with their beliefs (Holt & Cornelissen, 2013; Wertime, 2002; Woodside, 2008). The Drama theory advances that the dramatic performances are as a result of the consumers' activities involvement, which are dovetailed from passive and active tendencies (Woodside et al., 2008, p.105). Impression Management theory propounds that socializations are viewed as dramaturgical in nature and humans as stakeholders to certain things usually end up

conducting performances in front of selected audiences (Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Goffman, 1959; Nyagadza et al., 2019; Spear & Roper, 2013). Lastly, the Signalling theory mainly focuses on issues relating to a strategic balance of information between concerned stakeholders, whether internal or external (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 2002).

5.1. Using impression management as the theoretical framework

The Impression Management is relevant for this research study as it allows the readers to connect the major components of corporate stories for branding. Many Impression Management strategies and tactics have been utilised for human interactions and are also meant for functional use in corporates (Carter, 2006; Nyagadza et al., 2019; Spear & Roper, 2013). Researchers agree that corporate stories for branding elements and Impression Management have a strong relationship with how internal stakeholders perceive the corporate brand. The link is projected based on the theoretical literature made by authorities who confirm the link that exists between IM and Corporate storytelling for branding, according to Goffman (1959), Johns and Pittman (1982), Tetlock and Manstead, (1985)Gardner and Martinko (1988), Schlenker and Weigold (1992), Elsbach et al. (1998), Carter (2006), Brennan et al. (2009), Spear and Roper (2013), McFall (2017), Thompson-Whiteside et al. (2018), and Nyagadza et al. (2019). The respective links are explored further with a view to demonstrate their impact on corporate story for branding. Scale of Impression Management behavioural elements include self-promotion, exemplification, acclamation, intimidation, and ingratiation. These behavioural strategies were unfolded by Spear and Roper (2013).

6. Materials and methods

A total of fifty-four (54) in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted in 2019 to 2020 and these constituted the bedrock of qualitative data analysis for the study. An interpretivist research paradigm, anchored on subjectivist ontology was applied as research philosophy pillars. This was done by the researchers in order to get some deeper understanding of corporate stories for branding in the six selected listed companies, in line with perceptual influences. The respondents were given codes starting from R1 to R54, in sequential order of interviews conducted throughout the research period. The development of the interview guide was informed by a more comprehensive approach to literature review (Polit & Beck., 2004, p. 489). The guide to interview was scrutinized by experts in the qualitative research so as to enhance content validity and reliability according to Surujlal and Dhurup (2011, p. 26). Thereafter, a pilot test was conducted on the interview guide using ten participants to enhance the integrity of the data as well as to ascertain the proper flow of questions (Surujlal, 2011, p.121; Muposhi, 2015, p.183; Nyagadza, 2020). The integrity of the methodology of study utilized to produce desired results for this research was highly dependent on the reliability and validity of qualitative study applied (Granehiem & Lundman, 2004, p. 109). Purposive sampling was used to enhance the richness of the data in an attempt to answer the research questions as far as possible (Russell & Gregory, 2003, p. 36). In every qualitative study, the researcher(s) plays an integral role of bringing in research credibility and integrity. By virtue of receiving adequate training in research methodology, the researchers conducted all the interviews, since they had phenomenal knowledge of the concepts that were under inquiry. Researchers' reflexivity was employed so as to enhance trustworthiness of the inquiry, by disclosing all personal beliefs and values that underpin the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 121). This is the reason why the researchers were physically available during the study, and they made sure that they do not include any preconceptions about the subject under inquiry. Consistency of responses was analysed by the researchers so as to maintain the much required credibility (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008) and evaluated the responses using forms of questioning (Long & Johnson, 2000, p. 31). Prolonged engagement in the conduct of the interviews, averaging between 30 and 60 min was done so as to produce thick data that is revealing to the study phenomenon (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p.30–31; Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 242).

In a bid to increase the credibility of the study, the researchers requested seven respondents who were readily available to evaluate the interview transcripts as a way of testing the truthfulness of the

views reflected. In order to safeguard the skipping of important information, the data were analysed following an iterative format, in addition to member validation (Morse et al., 2002, p. 17). Peer debriefing was done as an additional method of emphasising credibility of the study (Morrow, 2005, p. 257; Muposhi, 2015, p. 185; Nyagadza, 2019). The process of debriefing was done by the authors, and took an analyst triangulation where an audit trail was done to check for adequacy of the research process (Myrdal, 1970, p. 43, Patton, 1999, p. 1193). The researchers made sure that there is meticulous evidence regarding the interviewing process in form of recorded transcripts of the interviews and the interviewer's notes for retest reliability (Mays & Pope, 1995, p.110; Surujlal & Dhurup, 2011, p. 127) and themes corroboration (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 170). Thematic analysis and axial coding was used to analyse the interview responses. Qualitative analysis was employed to collect and analyse the literature. The words such as corporate storytelling for branding and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions were used to guide the search process. The most cited literature was from Spear and Roper (2013) and So et al. (2013). To look for authorship in the research area, the authors carried out investigations in journals that have the strong reputation in the area of corporate storytelling for branding: *Journal of Marketing Research, European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Business Communication, Journal of Marketing* and others. The literature search was conducted in May 2019 and was not restricted to certain years. Articles that were not related to the study area were deleted from the selection because the focus of the current paper is on corporate storytelling for branding. All non-empirical articles were also excluded.

The sex-disaggregated composition of respondents' statistics comprised 40% females and 60% males. Mean age range for the operations level of authority was dominating at $25 \leq 34$ years, followed by $35 \leq 44$ years for the tactical level and strategic level being at $45 \leq 54$ years. This distribution of age and gender statistics could be as a result of education levels as well as the history and experience of service within the selected listed companies. The sector to which each of the listed companies belong to play a major role in the results presented in the table 2, as appointments and work contracts (either permanent, fixed or backup) tend to differ across the board. On average the strategic level employees hold at least a master's degree and for the tactical ones, most of them had undergraduate qualifications ranging from a college diploma, professional diploma and a university degree, which was almost the same with the operational customer service level.

7. Results
The following is an analysis of the results from interviews, documentary analysis and observations, in sequential ordering.

8. Interviews
The current study depicted that emotional attachment is an issue related to high connective-bond towards a corporate brand by the internal stakeholders. What triggers a connective-bond to the corporate brand, is the perception aggravated on the shared corporate stories for branding amongst the audience, which tend to be the internal stakeholders. If internal stakeholders face a stressful working environment and organisational politics, this normally results in negative perceptions and impressions to the corporate brand. Corporate values, corporate activities, corporate personalities and corporate associations have an impact on how internal stakeholders perceive the corporate brand and the level of emotional attachment. However, upon making a deep scrutiny on the interview results the researchers noted that negative responses were more on the part of less experienced internal stakeholders in terms of corporate history. Again, female respondents looked more passive in their responses than their male counterparts. The issue related to the authority level had an impact on the response tone ushered by the respondents.

The excerpts under this section present different answers given by respondents to the interview questions; "what perception do you have on your organisation's corporate brand as an internal stakeholder? To what extent are you emotionally attached to the corporate brand?"

cogent · business & management

Table 2. Selected listed companies composition of the sample and demographics

Selected Listed Company Code & Industrial Sector	Level of Authority	Respondent Code	Gender	Age Range	Education Level
C1 (Banking Sector)	Level 1—Operational Employees	R1	Female	$25 \leq 34$	Undergraduate
		R2	Male	$35 \leq 44$	Undergraduate
		R3	Female	$25 \leq 34$	Undergraduate
	Level 2—Tactical Employees	R4	Female	$35 \leq 44$	Undergraduate
		R5	Female	$35 \leq 44$	Postgraduate
		R6	Male	$25 \leq 34$	Undergraduate
	Level 3—Strategic Employees	R7	Male	$45 \leq 54$	Postgraduate
		R8	Female	$45 \leq 54$	Postgraduate
		R9	Male	$45 \leq 54$	Postgraduate
C2 (Manufacturing)	Level 1—Operational Employees	R10	Female	$25 \leq 34$	Undergraduate
		R11	Male	$25 \leq 34$	Postgraduate
		R12	Female	$25 \leq 34$	Postgraduate
	Level 2—Tactical Employees	R13	Female	$35 \leq 44$	Undergraduate
		R14	Male	$25 \leq 34$	Undergraduate
		R15	Female	$45 \leq 54$	Undergraduate
	Level 3—Strategic Employees	R16	Female	$35 \leq 44$	Postgraduate
		R17	Male	$45 \leq 54$	Postgraduate
		R18	Female	$35 \leq 44$	Postgraduate

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Selected Listed Company Code & Industrial Sector	Level of Authority	Respondent Code	Gender	Age Range	Education Level
C3 (Retail Sector)	Level 1—Operational Employees	R19	Female	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
		R20	Male	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
		R21	Female	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
	Level 2—Tactical Employees	R22	Male	45 ≤ 54	Postgraduate
		R23	Female	35 ≤ 44	Postgraduate
		R24	Male	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
	Level 3—Strategic Employees	R25	Female	45 ≤ 54	Postgraduate
		R26	Male	35 ≤ 44	Postgraduate
		R27	Female	35 ≤ 44	Postgraduate
C4 (Banking)	Level 1—Operational Employees	R28	Female	25 ≤ 34	Postgraduate
		R29	Male	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
		R30	Female	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
	Level 2—Tactical Employees	R31	Female	45 ≤ 54	Postgraduate
		R32	Male	35 ≤ 44	Undergraduate
		R33	Female	35 ≤ 44	Postgraduate
	Level 3—Strategic Employees	R34	Male	45 ≤ 54	Postgraduate
		R35	Female	35 ≤ 44	Postgraduate
		R36	Male	45 ≤ 54	Undergraduate

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Selected Listed Company Code & Industrial Sector	Level of Authority	Respondent Code	Gender	Age Range	Education Level
C5 (Telecoms Sector)	Level 1—Operational Employees	R37	Female	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
		R38	Male	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
		R39	Female	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
	Level 2—Tactical Employees	R40	Male	25 ≤ 34	Postgraduate
		R41	Female	35 ≤ 44	Postgraduate
		R42	Female	45 ≤ 54	Undergraduate
	Level 3—Strategic Employees	R43	Male	35 ≤ 44	Postgraduate
		R44	Male	35 ≤ 44	Postgraduate
		R45	Female	45 ≤ 54	Postgraduate
C6 (Construction)	Level 1—Operational Employees	R46	Female	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
		R47	Male	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
		R48	Male	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
	Level 2—Tactical Employees	R49	Female	25 ≤ 34	Undergraduate
		R50	Male	35 ≤ 44	Undergraduate
		R51	Female	45 ≤ 54	Postgraduate
	Level 3—Strategic Employees	R52	Female	45 ≤ 54	Postgraduate
		R53	Male	35 ≤ 44	Undergraduate
		R54	Male	45 ≤ 54	Postgraduate

Source: Interview data (2019 to 2020).

Due to the responses elicited from the interviews, the researchers saw that emotional attachment to the corporate brand is directly linked to investment of attention, thus the desire to leave self-interest so as to allow a connection to the corporate brand. Emotional attachment tend to differ and vary in the depth or strength. Deeper emotional attachments to the corporate brand as noted in the research process like the response of R39, depicted a bold feeling of connection, affection, love and compassion. This can be confirmed with the views of other researchers who have made some inquiries related to emotional attachment. These include Thomson et al. (2005, p. 78), Aron and Westbay (1996), Bowlby (1979), Brennan et al. (1998), Feeney and Noller (1996), Fehr and Russell (1991), Sternberg (1997).

Respondent R15;
"The corporate brand of our organisation was built by our predecessors. It has a strong position in the market and it is very difficult to destroy it as it is [laughs]. I think it will continue to survive in the market … although sometimes it is affected by some bad reputation … .In terms of emotional attachment, I can simply say I am emotionally attached to it."

The response of R15 depicts total loyalty and positive emotional attachment to the corporate brand. This shows the more the internal stakeholders are connected emotionally to the corporate brand the higher the proximity they have to the corporate brand. Adopting the Impression Management as the theoretical framework for this study, has led to the scientific testing of the theory in ascertaining the relationship between corporate storytelling for branding and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. The exploration of the Impression Management strategies can indicate the potential for corporate stories for branding to shape the audience form of the corporate brand (Nyagadza et al., 2019, p. 48).

Respondent R3;
"I think our corporate brand it's a lie [frowns], it's a wolf in sheep clothing."

Respondent R3 depicted an element of negative perception towards the corporate brand. Causes of this drive can be as a result of negative emotional attachment that was also found in R1, R8, R16, R21 R36, R51 responses. In some sources, this can be viewed as cognitive dissonance. Under Impression Management, the authors saw this kind of emotional attachment as signifying a conflicting tendency, concretely intended and symmetrically conscious in form. The conflict element can be used as part of supplication behaviour in Impression Management, as this element identifies the problems the company has faced, but also how these have been overcome (Spear & Roper, 2013; Dowling, 2006; Melewar, 2003; Woodside et al., 2008; Nyagadza et al., 2019, p. 47). At times individual internal stakeholders tend to showcase some expectations towards a supported impression that is desired.

Respondent R27
"The corporate brand is good and has been well accepted but the challenge is, it has been left unsupported. It is lacking promotion financially and the products levels are not maintained."

Respondent R39;
"We have a strong corporate brand which stands out among other corporates, which makes it competitive. I am emotionally attached to it to the extent of defending it if there are negative things being said about it."

The tone of respondents R27 and R39, showed signs of pride in the corporate brand. Pride can also be seen as self-promotion behaviour, whereas fear could be portrayed as part of supplication behaviour. However, to be precise, in tandem with the provisions of Impression Management theory, it is argued that the responses of R27 and R39, can be as a result of masking an unpleasant or unacceptable situation that can be taking place within the organisation. This is in cognisance of the works of Goffman (1959), who made a conceptualization of the front and back stage models of Impression Management. Further to this,

the emotional expression of Impressions here shows that the internal stakeholders' perceptions during the interview, might have been incongruent with their personalised truthful expressive impressions.

Corporate brand storytelling has an emotion element in them since emotion is a key element, such as pride expressed before (Keller, 2009; Chiu et al., 2012; Spear & Roper, 2013; Nyagadza et al., 2019, p. 48; Musingarimi et al., 2020). Conflict element is part of defensive strategy in Impression Management theory. This strategy includes the company reacting to a given problem that might have occurred, as Spear and Roper (2013) and Nyagadza et al. (2019, p. 47) contend. This can influence internal stakeholders' perceptions by assisting the corporate brand in gaining legitimacy and reducing negative characteristics attributed to it (Spear & Roper, 2013). This was also evident in the responses by R15, R20, R31, R34, R40 and R50. The selected listed companies can use the activities element to demonstrate strategy development as it depicts the activities taken by the organisation, in line with Bolino et al. (2008) and Spear and Roper (2013). This can yield positive perceptions towards the corporate brand!

As internal stakeholders become more connected to a corporate story for branding, they are in close ranks with the corporate brand due to the presence of the attracting element-yielding joy, corporate freedom from apprehension and contentment (Jones & Leverenz, 2017). Thus, it is believed that internal stakeholders who have a higher level of psychological loyalty towards the corporate brand would connect to it for a prolonged period of time. With this, corporate brand perception is the way internal stakeholders evaluate or see an organisation in its entirety and gives a position against other brands. The concept of perception is a psychological matter that is related to mental processes and imaging upon assessing a variable (Nyagadza, 2020; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005; Smith & Wheeler, 2002). Internal stakeholders perceive positively a corporate brand if the related brand stories such as corporate associations, corporate values, corporate personalities, and corporate culture are intertwined to the sum of a whole. The researchers see that corporate brand perception is an outcome of combined information and related emotions about the brand, according to the researchers.

Corporate brand relationship and brand meaning ideally tend to shape the level of influence towards stakeholders (internal and external). Emotions evoke perceptions, because these are directly related to psychologica processes. However, if there is inconsistency in terms of how rational and emotional aspects influence the audience, negative perceptions tend to mount against the corporate brand. This can influence internal stakeholders' perceptions by assisting the corporate brand in gaining legitimacy and reducing negative characteristics attributed to it (Spear & Roper, 2013, Ogden & Clarke, 2005; Nyagadza et al., 2019, p. 47). With the above analysis and evaluation, the researchers suggest that Impression Management theory clearly shows a great relationship to corporate storytelling for branding. Emotional attachment is directly linked to the latter. The emphasis is that internal stakeholders can dramatize, have expressive control maintenance, misrepresentation, mystification, reality and contrivance all as a result of their perceptions and emotional attachment to the corporate brand.

9. Document analysis

Document analysis was done using publicly available documents and secondary sources. These mainly included corporate annual reports, magazines, heralded documents, newspapers and website content data sources. The document analysis was done for all the six selected listed companies; C1, C2, C3, C4, C5 and C6. The aim for the document analysis was meant to get deeper understanding of the selected companies on how they portray themselves through corporate storytelling for branding and how this may have an impact internal stakeholder's perception of the corporate brand. Themes developed from research questions (emotional attachment and corporate brand) were used to guide the content analysis in the documents that were analysed by the researchers. The elements examined in each of these corporate stories for branding strategies was based on elements found in Keller (1993), Aaker (1997), Thomson et al. (2005), Keller (2006) and Yongjae et al. (2018). The checklist in table 3 was compiled by the researchers as a way to verify evidence in the selected listed companies' corporate stories for branding document content, in terms of emotional attachment and the corporate brand. The source of the corporate stories for branding document content analysis come from official annual reports of the selected

Table 3. Selected listed companies' corporate stories for branding documentary content analytical integrated checklist

Corporate Brand Perceptions

Statement						
Print corporate stories for branding communications improve internal stakeholders' emotional attachment to the corporate brand.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Online corporate stories for branding communications are crucial in internal stakeholders' emotional attachment to the corporate brand.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Corporate stories for branding shared within the organisation make internal stakeholders feel affectionate.	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Corporate stories for branding shared within the organisation make internal stakeholders feel friendly.	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N
Corporate stories for branding shared within the organisation make internal stakeholders feel loved.	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N
Corporate stories for branding shared within the organisation make internal stakeholders feel peaceful.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Corporate stories for branding shared within the organisation make internal stakeholders feel delighted.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Corporate stories for branding shared within the organisation make internal stakeholders feel connected.	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Corporate stories for branding shared within the organisation make internal stakeholders feel bonded.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Corporate stories for branding shared within the organisation make internal stakeholders feel attached.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Corporate stories for branding shared within the organisation make internal stakeholders feel captivated.	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Print corporate stories for branding communications improve internal stakeholders' emotional attachment to the corporate brand.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Online corporate stories for branding communications are crucial to internal stakeholders' emotional attachment to the corporate brand.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N

Corporate Brand Perceptions

Statement						
The corporate brand is committed to time, influence and investment.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is protective.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is clear in terms of its positioning, values and proposition.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is responsive in terms of market changes, challenges and opportunities.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is clear in terms of positioning, values and proposition.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is authentic in terms of internal capability with defined heritage and well-grounded value.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is relevant in terms of internal stakeholders' needs, desires and decision criteria, across all their demographics and geographies.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is understandable in terms of its distinctive qualities and characteristics.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

(*Continued*)

Table 3. (Continued)

Corporate Brand Perceptions

The corporate brand is present in both traditional and social media.	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is different from those of competitors.	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is committed to time, influence and investment.	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is protective.	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is clear in terms of its positioning, values and proposition.	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is responsive in terms of market changes, challenges and opportunities.	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is clear in terms of positioning, values and proposition.	Y	Y	Y
The corporate brand is authentic in terms of internal capability with defined heritage and well-grounded value.	Y	Y	Y

Source of document analytical instrument elements: Based on Keller (1993), Aaker (1997), Thomson et al. (2005), and Yongjae et al. (2018).

listed companies. Companies have been given unique codes; C1, C2, C3, C4, C5 and C6. Verification is indicated by a Y symbol, to indicate presence of an element in the corporate stories for branding and an N symbol to depict absence of the latter.

In reference to the analytical schematic table 3, once the employees are captivated by the corporate stories for branding in an organisation, it becomes easy for them to be emotionally attached to the corporate brand itself. The target audience of corporate stories for branding are influenced by how they evaluate the level of sense making in the latter. The way internal stakeholders position a certain corporate brand in their minds, shows clearly the degree to which an organisation is competent. Corporate activities are very instrumental elements of the organisation as they represent the corporate stories for branding. Furthermore, corporate activities such as corporate social responsibility can be a strong brand story element, which drives a desired brand imaging in the stakeholders mind. All stakeholders, be it internal or external, have an intuitive approach towards activities. They make evaluation against what the corporate brand promises and the desired results (Keller et al., 2002). As internal stakeholders are attached to a corporate story for branding, they are likely to feel closer to the corporate brand due to the existence of emotions. With this knowledge already tapped, a gap exists on whether there is an association between corporate storytelling for branding and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. Therefore, it is argued that an increased connection to the corporate storytelling for branding enhances the probability of internal stakeholders' attachment to the corporate brand. The utilisation of the coding methodology in documentary analysis to analyse the presence and inclusion of Impression Management strategies or behaviours in the corporate storytelling for branding of the six selected listed companies.

10. Observations

As part of the qualitative research study, an effort was made to do observations at the stations which were visited during the interview sessions. There was only one organisation which was excluded from the observation due to its ethical policies. The other five listed organisations have been observed by the researchers in line with the research themes; emotional attachment and the corporate brand perceptions. They recorded the observations during the interview sessions for all the five selected listed corporates. Buildings, clothing (officially approved apparel), posters, frames, digital-static billboards and artefacts inside the buildings were observed to check the presence of the elements related to corporate storytelling for branding. The observation was that it was difficult to notice perceptions and emotional elements related to Impression management. Posters discovered in the five sampled listed corporates available to the public receptions and offices included the heralding of the corporate values in terms of mission statements, corporate goals, corporate visions, snapshots of corporate strategies and the entire corporate brand (Larsen, 2000; Megee & Woodside, 2010). To be more precise the observation results showed that almost all the selected listed companies had their branded apparel worn by employees, mainly in banking area and retail, as well as telecoms. Within the branded apparel, the corporate brand was more visible corporate storytelling element than any other form of corporate brand communications. Posters inside the companies were associated with the corporate brand as well as the main corporate colours. Internal stakeholders resultantly see corporate stories for branding as capable of possessing personality traits (So et al., 2013, Hawabhay, 2009). As alluded to earlier, it was difficult to evaluate the level of perceptions and truthful behaviour of the internal stakeholders and their emotional attachment, as there is an element of dramaturgy in impressions showcased (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005; Smith & Wheeler, 2002). This view is corroborated by Goffman (1959) who argued that people tend to dramatize during their service delivery and at times it may lead to burnouts in terms of how they deliver their service promises. This is in agreement with Spear and Roper (2013) and Hermansson (2008) who found that, corporate storytelling for branding is part of human communication. The way the internal stakeholders interacted within the selected listed companies highly resembled their corporate cultures which are embedded in the corporate values and belief systems. In sync with this notion, corporate stories for branding are intended to effect the corporate's plans of action, through the corporate purpose, core actions and belief systems (Marzec, 2007). Combatively, in summation, the observation research results

showed that majority of the selected listed companies herald their corporate stories for branding in various forms.

11. Managerial implications

As internal stakeholders are attached to a corporate story for branding, they are likely to be attracted to the corporate brand due to the existence of emotions. With this knowledge already tapped, a gap exists on whether there is an association between corporate storytelling for branding and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. Therefore, it is argued that a closer connection to the corporate storytelling for branding is likely to result in internal stakeholders' increased attachment to the corporate brand. The current study seeks to close the gap by evaluating the link on internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions and corporate storytelling for branding. There is a strong link between emotional attachments to the corporate story for branding. Once internal stakeholders are emotionally attached to a brand story, this leads to the directed change to positive perception to the corporate brand. The reverse is therefore true. Corporate stories for branding as the most important element of impression management tactics for the organisations have the ability to improve the strategic elements. The corporate activities element in corporate stories for branding form a great and important part of the demonstrative strategy that organisations can use to differentiate itself from competitors. It is also a vital factor in passing message to corporates on what they will be doing in their organisations (Marzec, 2007; Nyagadza, 2020). Corporate stories for branding can be used to motivate internal stakeholders to create strong emotional bonds and close ranks with the corporate brand itself. The corporate stories for branding form self-promotion behaviour which in turn creates positive reputation for the corporates. It shows they are a vital tool for corporate survival. The likeability of the communicated benefits by internal stakeholders can be made through an ingratiation behaviour resembled in the corporate stories for branding.

12. Conclusion

This article has identified that corporate storytelling for branding can arguably be seen as the corporate narratives, which are totally and timeously linked sequence of events in organisations, such as listed companies. Main contributions of the current research study are in the identification of the gap between theory and practice of corporate storytelling for branding in the selected listed Zimbabwean companies from diverse sectors, of maximising their strategies towards enhancing internal stakeholders' corporate brand emotional attachment. This essentially motivates the internal stakeholders, like employees, to be corporate brand advocates or ambassadors, who can deliver services and products with positive perception of their organisation. In addition, the study contributes to extant literature by depicting the notion that Impression Management theory could be used as an anchor for evaluating nexus between corporate stories for branding, emotional attachment and corporate brand perceptions of internal stakeholders. Alternatively, it advances theory on corporate branding concepts through researching on the ways that drive internal stakeholders' brand loyalty, and positive brand perceptions through corporate brand storytelling from the corporate' perspective. Another issue that was drawn from this research study is that there are some more influences on internal stakeholders' perceptions of the corporate brand than others. The key contributors to corporate storytelling for branding include the perspectives from Boje (1991a, 1991b, 1993, 1995, 2014), Boje and Dennehy (1993), Denning (2006), Woodside et al. (2008), Kadembo (2014, 2016), Spear and Roper (2013), Clegg (1989), Cooper and Burrell (1988), Laclau (1983, 1988), Herskovitz and Crystal (2010), Barker and Gower (2010), and other related authorities of the field. Corporate values can be used as a gateway towards how the listed companies can share their corporate culture (beliefs and principles) and express what the corporate mean to the business world. Managers can use the corporate stories for branding to engage with their subordinates, as internal stakeholders, so that they can appreciate their valuable contribution to the organisation. Further to this, the article showed that there are more existing knowledge gaps as exposed by the development of the corporate brand story telling research. Many issues need to be addressed in link to the corporate associations, emotional attachment, benefits themes, activities and

cogent ••business & management

corporate brand perceptions. The study can be applied in some sections of the business globally, regionally or locally to determine its universal applicability.

13. Limitations and future research direction

The corporate storytelling for branding literature used in building this article suggests that corporate stories shared amongst the internal stakeholders carry some truth for credibility with the targeted audience (Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Heugens, 2002; Spear & Roper, 2013). However, this may not be effectively in tandem with the perceptions of some of the internal stakeholders in an organisation. Again, at times corporate stories for branding can be utilised by companies as a way of defending and conflicting with the business environmental issues, although to some extent there are many retrogressive corporate misbehaviours which go unnoticed and unacknowledged by the top management. This may lead to the negative perceptions of the corporate brand by the concerned internal stakeholders. Future research can look into; investigating whether corporate stories for branding expressed in corporate personality element can be visible and measurable behaviours within internal stakeholders. Furthermore, the researchers in the times ahead through their scientific inquiries can evaluate the connection between employees' behaviours and the influence of corporate stories for branding personalities. More interrogation is required on evaluating the corporate stories for branding if they are not linked to the corporate strategy.

Author details
Brighton Nyagadza[1,2]
E-mail: brightonnyagadza@gmail.com
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7226-0635
Ernest M. Kadembo[3]
E-mail: ekadembo@yahoo.com
Africa Makasi[4]
E-mail: africa.makasi@yahoo.com
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5457-358X
[1] Department of Marketing Management, Midlands State University (MSU), Gweru, Zimbabwe.
[2] Department of Marketing Management, Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology (MUAST), Marondera, Zimbabwe.
[3] Department of Marketing, Richmond, the American University in London, Richmond, UK.
[4] Harold Pupkewitz (HP) Graduate School of Business, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek, Namibia.

Declaration of interest statement
The researchers declare that they do not have any financial interest or benefit that has arisen from the direct applications of this research study.

Citation information
Cite this article as: Exploring internal stakeholders' emotional attachment & corporate brand perceptions through corporate storytelling for branding, Brighton Nyagadza, Ernest M. Kadembo & Africa Makasi, *Cogent Business & Management* (2020), 7: 1816254.

References
Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(3), 347–356. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F002224379703400304

Abratt, R., & Keyn, N. (2012). Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate reputations: Reconciliation and integration. *European Journal of Marketing*, 46(7/8), 1048–1063. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561211230197

Aron, A. & Westbay, L. (1996). Dimensions of the prototype of love. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70, 535–551 3. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.70.3.535

Balmer, J. M. T. & Gray, E. R (2003), Corporate brands: What are they? What of them? European Journal of Marketing, 37(7/8), 972–997.

Barker, R. T., & Gower, K. (2010). Strategic application of storytelling in organizations: Toward effective communication in a diverse world. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(3), 295–312. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021943610369782

Boje, D. (1991a). The storytelling organization: A study of storytelling performance in an office supply firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 36*(1), 106–126. https://doi.org/doi/10.2307/2393432

Boje, D. (1991b). Consulting and change in the storytelling organization. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 4(3), 7–17. https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000001193

Boje, D. (1993). *Premodern, modern, and postmodern: Are we moving forwards or backwards?* [Paper presentation] 11th conference of the European Group in Organization Studies (EGOS), Paris.

Boje, D. (1995). Stories of the storytelling organization: A postmodern analysis of Disney as Tamara-land. ® *Academy of Management Journal, 38*(4), 997–1035. https://doi.org/10.5465/256618

Boje, D. (2014). *Storytelling organizational practices managing in the quantum age.* Taylor & Francis Group. Routledge.

Boje, D., & Dennehy, R. (1993). *Postmodern management: America's revolution against exploitation.* Kendall-Hunt Press.

Bolino, M. C., Kacmar, K. M., Turnley, W. H., & Gilstrap, J. B. (2008). A multi-level review of impression management motives and behaviours. *Journal of Management, 34*(6), 1080–1109. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0149206330302900202

Bowlby, J. (1979). Loss: Sadness and depression. New York: Basic books

Brennan, K. A., Clark, C. L. & Shaver, P. R. (1998). Self-audit report measurement: An integrative overview, In J. A.

Simpson & W. S. Rhodes (Ed.), Attachment theory and close relationships, (pp. 46–76). New York: Guilford Press

Brennan, N. M., Guillamon-Saorin, E., & Pierce, A. (2009). Impression management: Developing and illustrating a scheme of analysis for narrative disclosures – A methodological note. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 22(5), 789–832. https://doi.org/10.1108/09513570910966379

Carroll, B. A., & Ahuvia, A. C. (2006). Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love. *Marketing Letters*, 17(2), 79–89. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-006-4219-2

Carter, S. M. (2006). The Interaction of Top Management Group, Stakeholder, and Situational Factors on Certain Corporate Reputation Management Activities. Journal of Management Studies, 43, 1146–1176 5 doi:10.1111/joms.2006.43.issue-5

Chiu, H., Hsieh, Y., & Kuo, Y. (2012). How to align your brand stories with your products. *Journal of Retailing*, 88(2), 262–275. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2012.02.001

Choudhury, P. K. (2001). *Successful Branding*. Universities Press (India) Limited.

Clegg, S. (1989). *Frameworks of power*. Sage.

Connelly, B. L., Certo, S. T., Ireland, D. R., & Reutzel, C. R. (2011). Signalling theory: A review and assessment. *Journal of Management*, 37(1), 39–67. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0149206310388419

Connolly-Aher, C., & Broadway, S. C. (2007), The importance of appearing competent: An analysis of corporate impression management strategies on the World Wide Web. Public Relations Review, 33, 343–345 3 doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2007.05.017

Cooper, R., & Burrell, C. (1988). Modernism, postmodernism, and organizational analysis: An introduction. *Organization Studies*, 9(1), 91–112. https://doi.org/10.1177/017084068800900112

Cornelissen, J., Christensen, L. T., & Kinuthia, K. (2012). Corporate brands and identity: Developing stronger theory and a call for shifting the debate. *European Journal of Marketing*, 46(7), 1093–1102. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561211230214

Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. L. (1999). *Doing qualitative research*. Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124–130. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

Daugaard, L. M., & Johansen, M. B. (2014). Multilingual children's interaction with metafiction in a postmodern picture book. *Language and Education*, 28(2), 120–140. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2013.786085

De Chernatony, L., & Segal-Horn, S. (2003). The criteria for successful services brands. *European Journal of Marketing*, 37(7/8), 1095–1118. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560310477681

Denning, S. (2006). Effective storytelling: Strategic business narrative techniques. *Strategy & Leadership*, 34(1), 42–48. https://doi.org/10.1108/10878570610637885

Dickinson-Delaporte, S., Beverland, M., & Lindgreen, A. (2010). Building corporate reputation with stakeholders: Exploring the role of message ambiguity for social marketers. *European Journal of Marketing*, 44(11/12), 1856–1874. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561011079918

Dowling, G. (2006). Communicating corporate reputation through stories. *California Management Review*, 49(1), 82–100. https://doi.org/10.2307%2F41166372

Doyle, J. R., & Sims, D. (2002). Enabling strategic metaphor in conversation: A technique for cognitive sculpting for explicating knowledge. In A. S. Huff & M. Jenkins (Eds.), *Mapping strategic thought* (pp.

63–85). Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446220443.n4

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. (2008). *Management Research* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications Ltd. Education.

Elsbach, K. D., Sutton, R. I., & Principe, K. E. (1998). Averting expected challenges through anticipatory impression management: A study of hospital billing. *Organization Science*, 19(1), 68–86. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.9.1.68

Escalas, J. E. (2004). Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14, 168–180. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1401&2_19

Escalas, J. E., & Stern, B. B. (2003). Sympathy and empathy: Emotional responses to advertising dramas. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29, 566–578. https://doi.org/10.1086/346251

Feeney, J. A. & Noller, P. (1996). Adult attachment. London: Sage.

Fehr, B. & Russell, J. A. (1991). The concept of love viewed from a prototype perspective.. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60, 425–438 3. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.60.3.425

Fisher, W. R. (1985). Homo narrans the narrative paradigm: In the beginning. *Journal of Communication*, 35(4), 74–89. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1985.tb02974.x

Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), 343–374. https://doi.org/10.1086/209515

Gardner, W. L., & Martinko, M. J. (1988). Impression management in organizations. *Journal of Management*, 14(2), 321–338. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F014920638801400210

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Anchor Books.

Graneheim, U. H. & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: concepts procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. Nursing Education Today, 24, 105–112.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Sage.

Hawabhay, B., Abratt, R., & Peters, M. (2009). The role of corporate communications in developing a corporate brand image and reputation in Mauritius. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 12(1), 3–20. https://doi.org/10.1057/crr.2009.4

Hermansson, E. (2008). How a company communicates through storytelling? Unpublished dissertation. International Business and Economics program. Kristianstad University: Sweden.

Herskovitz, S., & Crystal, M. (2010). The essential brand persona: Storytelling and branding. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 31(3), 21–28. https://doi.org/10.1108/02756661011036673

Heugens, P. (2002). Managing public affairs through storytelling. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 2(2), 57. https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.94

Holt, R., & Cornelissen, J. (2013). *Sensemaking revisited. Management Learning*. Advance online publication. http://mlq.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/05/21/1350507613486422.abstract

Janssen, S., Van Dalfsen, C. K. A., Van Hoof, J. J. & Van Vuuren. M. V. (2012). Balancing uniqueness and similarities: A content analysis of textual characteristics in Dutch corporate stories. Public Relations Review, 38(1), 32–39.

Jones, B., & Leverenz, C. (2017). Building personal brands with digital storytelling eportfolios. *International Journal of ePortfolio, 7*(1), 67–91.

Jones, E. E. & Pittman, T. S. (1982). Toward a general self-presentation. In J. Suls (Ed.), Psychological perspectives on the self. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Kadembo, E. M. (2012), Anchored in the story: The core of human understanding, branding, education, socialisation and the shaping of values. The Marketing Review, 12(3), 221–231. doi:10.1362/146934712X13420906885313

Kadembo, E. M. (2014). *The narrative/storytelling approach in branding a place: An analytical study of oldham* [Doctoral thesis]. University of Huddersfield.

Kadembo, E. M. (2016). *Book: Story it! Brand it! Sell it!* CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Kapferer, J.-N., & Bastien, V. (2009). The specificity of luxury management: Turning marketing upside down. *Journal of Brand Management, 16*(5/6), 311–322. https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2008.51

Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualising, measuring and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing, 57*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.2307/1252054

Keller, K. L. (2006). *Building, measuring and managing brand equity*. Pearson edition.

Keller, K. L. (2009). Managing the growth trade-off: Challenges and opportunities in luxury branding. *Journal of Brand Management, 16*(5/6), 209–301. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51127-6_9

Kim, J., Morris, J. D., & Swait, J. (2008). Antecedents of true brand loyalty. *Journal of Advertising, 37*(2), 99–117.

Kirk, J., & Miller, M. (1986). *Reliability and validity in qualitative research*. Sage Publications.

Laclau, E. (1983). Socialism, the people, democracy: The transformation of hegemonic logic. *Sociat Text, 7*(7), 115–119. https://doi.org/10.2307/466458

Laclau, E. (1988). Politics and the limits of modernity. In A. Ross (Ed.), *Universal abandon* (pp. 63–82). University of Minnesota Press.

Larsen, M. H. (2000). Managing the corporate story. In M. Schultz, M. J. Hatch, & M. H. Larsen (Eds.), *The Expressive Organisation* (pp. 196–207). Oxford University Press.

Long, L., & Johnson, M. (2000). Rigour, reliability and validity in qualitative research. *Clinical Effectiveness in Nursing, 4*(1), 30–37. https://doi.org/10.1054/cein.2000.0106

Lundqvist, A., Liljander, V., Gummerus, J., & van Riel, A. (2012). The impact of storytelling on the consumer brand experience: The case of a firm-originated story. *Journal of Brand Management, 20*(4), 283–297. https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2012.15

Marzec, M. (2007). Telling the corporate story: Vision into action. *Journal of Business Strategy, 28*(1), 26–36. https://doi.org/10.1108/02756660710723189

Mays, N., & Pope, C. (1995). Rigour and qualitative research. *British Medical Journal, 311*(6997), 109–112. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.311.6997.109

McAlexander, J. H., Schouten, J. W., & Koenig, H. F. (2002). Building brand community. *Journal of Marketing, 66*(1), 38–54. https://doi.org/10.1509%2Fjmkg.66.1.38.18451

McFall, K. K. (2017). *The role of impression management in consulting*. EDUC 648: Issues in Consulting for Training and Development.

McLellan, H. (2006). Corporate storytelling perspectives. *Journal for Quality and Participation, 29*(1), 17–20.

Megehee, C. M., & Woodside, A. G. (2010). Creating visual narrative art for decoding stories that consumers and brands tell. *Psychology & Marketing, 27*(6), 603–622. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20347

Melewar, T. C. (2003). Determinants of the corporate identity construct: A review of the literature. *Journal of Marketing Communications, 9*(4), 195–220. https://doi.org/10.1080/1352726032000119161

Mendonca, V. (2015). Application of storytelling in organizations: A review of latest literature with implications for India. *Centre for Innovation Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE)*, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India.

Morgan, S., & Dennehy, R. F. (1997). The power of organisational storytelling: A management development perspective. *Journal of Management Development, 16*(7), 494. https://doi.org/10.1108/02621719710169585

Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counselling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 250–260. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.250

Morse, J. M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*(2), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690200100202

Mossberg, L. (2008). Extraordinary experiences through storytelling. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 8*(3), 195–210. https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250802532443

Mucundorfeanu, M. (2018), The key role of storytelling in the branding process. Journal of Media Research, 11 (30), 42–54. doi:10.24193/jmr

Muniz, A. M., Jr., & O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research, 27*(4), 412–432. https://doi.org/10.1086/319618

Muposhi, A. (2015). *Green consumer buying behaviour: Antecedents, selection attributes of generation Y consumers and the relationship with future behavioural intentions* [Doctor Technologiae (Marketing) thesis]. Vaal University of Technology.

Musingarimi, H., Nyagadza, B., & Vingirayi, I. (2020). Corporate rebranding strategies effect on telecommunications Zimbabwean company brand performance. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management, 8*(1), 218–233.

Myrdal, G. (1970). *Objectivity in social research*. Duckworth.

Nyagadza, B. (2019). Conceptual model for financial inclusion development through agency banking in competitive markets. *Africanus: Journal of Development Studies, 49*(2), 2663–6522. https://doi.org/10.25159/2663-6522/6758

Nyagadza, B. (2020). Search engine marketing and social media marketing predictive trends. *Journal of Digital Media & Policy*. Intellect publishers, Bristol, United Kingdom (Accepted for publication).

Nyagadza, B., Chodeva, T., & Vingirayi, I. (2018). Rebranding strategy affect on brand preference: Perspectives from a Zimbabwean corporation. *Journal of Global Economics, Management and Business Research, 10*(3), 124–136.

Nyagadza, B., Kadembo, E. M., & Makasi, A. (2019). An application of impression management theory on brand story telling in examining internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. *The Retail and Marketing Review, 15*(2), 39–50.

Oliver, R. L. (1999). Whence consumer loyalty? *Journal of Marketing, 63*(4), 33–44. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F00222429990634s105

Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., & Priester, J. R. (2009). Research directions on strong brand relationships". In D. J. MacInnis, C. W. Park, & J. R. Priester (Eds.),

Handbook of brand relationships, society for consumer psychology (pp. 379–393). M.E. Sharpe.

Patwardhan, H., & Balasubramanian, S. K. (2011). Brand romance: A complementary approach to explain emotional attachment toward brands. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 20*(4), 297–308. https://doi.org/10.1108/10610421111148315

Pawle, J., & Cooper, P. (2006). Measuring emotion – Lovemarks: The future beyond brands. *Journal of Advertising Research, 46*(1), 38–48. https://doi.org/10.2501/S0021849906060053

Polit, D. F., & Beck., C. T. (2004). *Nursing research: Principles and methods*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Romaniuk, J., & Gaillard, E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: Analysis across eight categories. *Journal of Marketing Management, 23*(3/4), 267–284. https://doi.org/10.1362/026725707X196378

Russel, C K.. & Gregory, D. (2003). Evaluation of Qualitative research studies. Evidence based nursing, 6, 36–40 2. doi:10.1136/ebn.6.2.36

Schouten, J. W., & McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research, 22*(1), 43–61. https://doi.org/10.1086/209434

Schroeder, J. E., & Borgerson, J. L. (2005). An ethics of representation for international marketing communication. *International Marketing Review, 22* (5), 578–600. https://doi.org/10.1108/02651330510624408

Shlenker, B. R. & Weigold, M. F. (1992). Interpersonal processes involving impression regulation and management. Annual Review of psychology, 43(1), 133–168.

Smith, F. L., & Keyton, J. (2001). Organisational storytelling: Metaphors for relational power and identity struggles. *Management Communication Quarterly, 15*(2), 149. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0893318901152001

Smith, S., & Wheeler, J. (2002). *Managing the customer experience*. Financial Times Series.

So, J. S., Parsons, A. G., & Yap, S.-F. (2013). Corporate branding, emotional attachment and brand loyalty: The case of luxury fashion branding. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, 17*(4), 403–423. https://doi.org/10.1108/JFMM-03-2013-0032

Spear, S., & Roper, S. (2013). Using corporate stories to build the corporate brand: An impression management perspective. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 22*(7), 491–501. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-09-2013-0387

Spence, M. (2002). Signalling in retrospect and the informational structure of markets. *American Economic Review, 92*(3), 434–459. https://doi.org/10.1257/00028280260136200

Sternberg, R. J. (1997). Liking versus loving: A comparative evaluation of theories.. Psychological Bulletin, 102, 331–345 3 doi:10.1037/0033-2909.102.3.331

Surujlal, J. (2011). Gambling on the 2010 FIFA World Cup™: A qualitative analysis of first time gamblers experiences and perceptions. *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance, 17* (1), 118–129.

Surujlal, J., & Dhurup, M. (2011). Athlete perceptions and preferences of coach behaviour: A qualitative study of female soccer players. *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance, 17*(1), 22–36. https://doi.org/10.4314/ajpherd.v17i1.65239

Tetlock, P. E. & Manstead, A. S. R. (1985). Impression management versus intrapsychic explanations in

psychology: A useful dychotomy? Psychological Review, 92, 59–77.

Thompson, C. J., Rindfleisch, A., & Arsel, Z. (2006). *Emotional Branding*. McGraw-Hill Irwin.

Thompson-Whiteside, H., Turnbull, S., & Howe-Walsh, L. (2018). Developing an authentic personal brand using impression management behaviours: Exploring female entrepreneurs' experiences. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 21*(2), 166–181. https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-01-2017-0007

Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. J., & Park, C. W. (2005). The Ties That Bind: Measuring the Strength of Consumers' Emotional Attachments to Brands. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 15(1), 77–99. doi:10.1207/s15327663jcp1501_10

Van Riel, C. B. M., & Fombrun, C. J. (2007). *Essentials of corporate communication: Implementing practices for effective reputation management*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.crr.1550039

Vingirayi, I., Nyagadza, B., Mavhunga, C., & Munjeri, N. (2019). Customer retention strategies effectiveness in the Zimbabwean medical industry: Perspectives from cellmed health fund. *European Journal of Business and Management Research, 4*(6), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.24018/ejbmr.2019.4.6.83

Warrington, P., & Shim, S. (2000). An empirical investigation of the relationship between product involvement and brand commitment. *Psychology & Marketing, 17* (9), 761–782. https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6793

Weick, K. E., & Browning, L. D. (1986). Argument and narration in organizational communication. *Journal of Management, 12*(2), 243–259. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F014920638601200207

Wells, W. D. (1988). Lectures and dramas. In P. Cafferta & A. Tybout (Eds.), *Cognitive and affective responses to advertising* (pp. 13–20). Lexington Books.

Wertime, K. (2002). Building brands and believers: How to connect with consumers using archetypes. New York: Wiley.

Woodside, A. G. (2010). Brand-consumer storytelling theory and research: Introduction to a psychology and marketing special issue. *Psychology and Marketing, 27*(6), 531–540. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20342

Woodside, A. G., Sood, S., & Miller, K. (2007). When consumers and brands talk: Storytelling theory and research in psychology and marketing: Storytelling theory and research in consumer psychology and marketing, Psychology & Marketing, 25, 97–15 2 doi:10.1002/(ISSN)1520-6793

Woodside, A. G., Sood, S., & Miller, K. E. (2008). When consumers and brands talk: Storytelling theory and research in psychology and marketing. *Psychology and Marketing, 25*(2), 97–145. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20203

Yongjae, K., Soojin, K., Seungbum, L., & Sungho, C. (2018). A structural validation of brand personality scale: Assessing the congruence effects of sport sponsorship. *Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science, 3*(24), 351–363. https://doi.org/10.1080/1091367X.2018.1523794

Young, J. A., Gardener. W. L., & Gilbert. F. W. (1994), Impression management techniques in marketing channels: A theoretical perspective and research agenda. Journal of Marketing theory and Practice, 29–38

Yu, H., & Chang, Y. T. (2013). How to influence the brand attitude of the audience by micro-films. *Journal of Promotion Management, 19*(5), 674–686. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2013.839242

cogent •• business & management

Cogent Business & Management (ISSN:) is published by Cogent OA, part of Taylor & Francis Group.

Publishing with Cogent OA ensures:

- Immediate, universal access to your article on publication
- High visibility and discoverability via the Cogent OA website as well as Taylor & Francis Online
- Download and citation statistics for your article
- Rapid online publication
- Input from, and dialog with, expert editors and editorial boards
- Retention of full copyright of your article
- Guaranteed legacy preservation of your article
- Discounts and waivers for authors in developing regions

Submit your manuscript to a Cogent OA journal at www.CogentOA.com