



The Never-Ending Story Teller – A Narratological Genealogy of Storytelling in Marketing and Management

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling has become remarkably important in marketing and in numerous other areas in the discipline of management and organization studies. While recent studies have only focussed on details, narratological theories, unlike other popular approaches, offer the chance to observe storytelling from a structuralist or functionalist view as a systematic phenomenon that follows specific rules. These basic rules can be combined in a step-by-step blueprint that permits the creation and advancement of stories that pertain to the needs of marketing and management. In this research, the most important aspects of narrative theory have been compiled, from literature and language studies of the post pragmatic turn with modern ideas regarding screenwriting, archetypal characters, and brand management. The results reflect the need to develop a concept that can detect major problems with coherent storytelling. While storytelling has become of major interest in marketing and management, the phenomenon has not been sufficiently discussed from the perspective of narrative theory, the field in which it is originally rooted. Hence, many specific story elements have not been examined. This article collects the most important approaches to framework stories and consequently presents the possibility of creating a concept of storytelling based on narrative elements, with both contributions to further research and practical implications.

Keywords: Story Teller, Narratological Theories, Marketing, Management

JEL Classifications: M1, M31

Everything you look at can be turned into a story, and you can make a tale from everything you touch.

(Hans Christian Andersen, The Elder-Tree Mother)

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of storytelling as a tool for brands, marketing, and business has become surprisingly important to both professionals and researchers in recent years: “Today, scientific research has laid the foundations for a sound empirical understanding of storytelling [...] as way of recognizing and identifying with brands of any type” (Herskovitz and Crystal 2010. p. 21). Keeping academic statements like this in mind, it may not surprise that rather professional experts even try to create a new definition of marketing, such as Seth Godin postulates:

“Marketing is no longer about the stuff you make but about the stories you tell” (Cohen, 2011 and Rangel and Rosso, 2015. p. 1). Even special issues of journals (such as Psychology & Marketing; cf. Woodside, 2010) prove the importance of addressing the subject from various perspectives and with different research methods, and numerous studies have discussed storytelling from the perspective of marketing and management (cf. Lundqvist et al., 2013 and Visconti, 2015). Nevertheless, the more that researchers try to observe the phenomenon and apply methods for analysing, elucidating, and operationalising it – that is, qualitative and quantitative methods and methodologies – the more it becomes obvious that storytelling is to be discussed in various scientific disciplines. As a matter of fact, popular publications on storytelling in marketing and management seem to come from writers with a rather practical orientation. Works such as these cannot withstand the expectations of both marketing researchers and professionals, for they ignore research that has been performed

for decades or even centuries. This becomes obvious when we consider that storytelling is an original purpose of literature and hence narratology and must be essentially considered from this perspective; furthermore, storytelling is also the subject of other disciplines, such as linguistics and psychology. All of those perspectives have a rather different background from disciplines that primarily address brands and business. Nevertheless, if we assume that the stories that we refer to with the terminus technicus of storytelling (i.e., stories as a tool of marketing and management by all means) have created a literary genre of their own, research must both incorporate the qualitative methods used in the humanities and face the theories and academic criticisms behind them to meet contemporary standards.

This paper seeks to first localise storytelling in the field of philology and therefore narratology, providing established and proven theories and techniques of literature and linguistics, rather than the previously used and more popular literary approaches, to build a conceptual framework for the specific characteristics that stories in the field of business storytelling address. For this concept, which can be called a blueprint for storytelling in marketing and management, it is mandatory to ask where and how meaning is produced in a story, which obviously also requires a linguistic and semiotic approach from the beginning. The intended framework will offer both an overview of the necessary and reliable theoretical backgrounds of contemporary humanities and other disciplines and feasible methods for analysing stories with the specific demand of creating meaning, concentrating on the core elements of storytelling from a narrative point of view.

2. DISCOVERING STORYTELLING FOR MARKETING AND BRANDS

If you stop thinking about it, you'll have to admit that all the stories in the world consist essentially of twenty-six letters. The letters are always the same, only the arrangement varies. From letters words are formed, from words sentences, from sentences chapters, and from chapters stories.

(Michael Ende, *The Never-Ending Story*)

Discovering storytelling for marketing and brands also means discovering a remarkably valuable communication tool: “Whether you are dealing with product brands or company brands, storytelling is essential to successful branding, since your brand is the sum of all your corporate behaviors and communications that inform your customers’ experiences with your product or company” (Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010. p. 21). Starting from here, those academic approaches should be introduced more intensively which cover traditionally a narratological point of view to observe the mechanism of stories: “Narrative theory informs the development of propositions of storytelling behavior by providing understanding and description of story enactments and content” (Woodside, 2010. p. 534). To determine the main modules for blueprinting the phenomenon of stories, it is necessary to first examine the original background of storytelling and observe the main approaches. Doing so leads to the theories and concepts of

the humanities, such as literary studies, followed by the framework of logic and effect, which can be found in the fields of rhetoric and semiotics.

2.1. Storytelling in Marketing and Management

As the interest in storytelling in marketing and management has grown, it has usually been discussed in an empirical context, despite its natural roots in the field of the humanities. However, the qualitative-analytical perspective is so lacking in reflection that popular and accessible structures or rather fundamental exegeses on the other hand are often chosen (e.g., Fog et al., 2010 for a discussion from the practitioner’s view; Gabriel, 2005, Li et al., 2013, and Hsu et al., 2013 for a marketing and management science focus; Gottschall, 2012 as an example of the more prominent types of essays; and Boyd 2009 for the philosophers’ anthropologic contributions), missing the numerous profound pragmatic approaches and reflections of literary and other types of studies that can be subsumed by the philosophy of narratology and narrative theory.

2.2. Narratives of Storytelling in Brand and Marketing Management

Narrating stories seem to meet the core needs of any brand creation and marketing efforts: “Whether you are dealing with product brands or company brands, storytelling is essential to successful branding, since your brand is the sum of all your corporate behaviors and communications that inform your customers’ experiences with your product or company” (Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010. p. 21). Creating brand stories, however, is a complex venture: “The brand owner [...] has to navigate its brand content through the consumer-generated content to ensure that consumers’ brand stories remain as close to as the brand owner’s desired story” (Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012. p. 190). Besides empirical studies and content analyses (just as examples: Janssen et al., 2011 and Spear and Roper, 2013 as well as Megehee and Woodside, 2010 and Chiu et al., 2012) rather hermeneutic approaches again start to discuss the phenomenon for marketing communication (e.g. Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012 and Grodal and Kahl, 2017; cf. also Hansen et al., 2013). While remaining a minority in marketing, approaches from a structuralist or functionalist view have been introduced in organizational research in the past 20 years (e.g. Weick, 1995; Wahren, 1996; Gabriel, 2000; Czarniawska-Joerges and Gagliardi, 2003; Boje, 1991; 1995; 2008; and 2014). Still, striving for provable generalizations, the “relationship between academic research and storytelling has been ambiguous” (Gabriel, 2000. p. 3).

2.3. First Narratological Turns: Early Approaches in Literary Criticism

Even earlier, demanding discussions from the later 20th century, e.g., those led by Barbara B. Stern (Stern, 1989; 1995; Russell and Stern, 2006; also see Brown, 2015) focussed on popular literary criticism rather than evaluating the approaches of literature and language studies of the post pragmatic turn (Passalacqua and Pianzola, 2011), already deploring its standing in marketing and brand research: “Although literary theory is a valued member of marketing’s conceptual cast list, it performs in a supporting capacity rather than the starring role” (Brown, 2015. p. 446). With respect to these discussions in the humanities, a story’s medium

is definitely linked to its context. This means that the traditional assumption of narrative prose is not sufficient for business storytelling, nor is the traditional definition of storytelling itself: “Storytelling is usually referred to as the telling of a story without the aid of the printed page, pictures, or any properties which would break the magnetic flow between the listener and the teller” (Chesin, 1966. p. 212). This statement cannot apply to storytelling in marketing and management as a general definition, and it marks a notable indication: While the term had been used in the sense of narrating orally in earlier decades only, its meaning is broader by now. The term storytelling, referring to the use of composed stories as a marketing and management tool, is a metonym for both a range of narrative texts in, from, and about the specific field of business, including marketing, management, brands, and other related areas and for the production of these texts. Storytelling in this sense surely contains aspects of (once oral) tradition, but in fact, storytelling in the field of business comes with the possibility of quite different media options: A story told in a commercial spot refers to a moving image; a company’s history as a written narrative may be published in a printed document or virtually on the internet; and a story used as a management tool can be presented orally. This variety of media leads to the need to include theories and methods from different disciplines: Not only literature and linguistics, but film, media, and other appropriate schools of narrative theory. It is obvious that the inclusion of fundamental approaches such as these will require some effort and certainly several studies, and they cannot be simplified without omitting major fields of academic research.

2.4. Towards a Narratology of Storytelling

To make a profound start to this approach without ignoring the complexity of including fundamental fields, it is recommend finding the major shapes first that allow a grounded approach to stories in business storytelling. These shapes can be found in the major aspects that all stories used for business storytelling have in common (cf. also Boje, 2014. p. 3): First, there is a narrative hitch that differentiates narrative stories from all other texts and is surrounded by narrative characters and narrative elements of style. Second, these messages contain characteristics, attributes, or intentions – briefly: Issues – that are illustrated and transported via a story and that are eventually meant to have a specific effect, i.e., persuasion, in the rhetorical sense. Third, these composed narrative stories are created within specific institutions (i.e., business corporations) with the intention of illustratively delineating specific issues regarding the institution with the help of narration:

“[...] what is necessary [in sensemaking]? [...] something that preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is reasonable and memorable, something that embodies past experience and expectations, something that resonates with other people, something that can be constructed retrospectively but also can be used prospectively, something that captures both feeling and thought, [...] something that is fun to construct. In short, what is necessary in sensemaking is a good story” (Weick, 1995. p. 60f.)

As aimed to present a grounded philological approach to storytelling in marketing and management, this research will start by discussing the first major link, a narrated event of change that

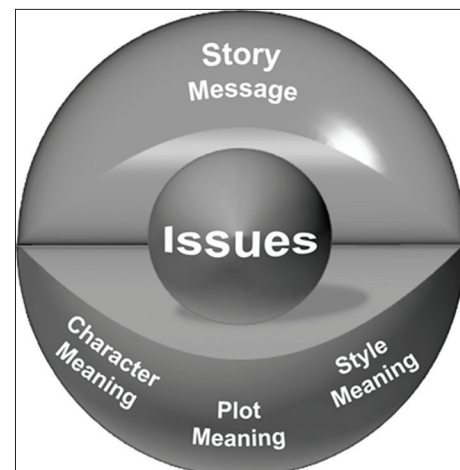
leads a character to a problem whose solution is challenged by a conflict. This characteristic differentiates narrative stories from all other forms of texts (Abbott, 2010. p. 43; Bal, 2009. p. 189-201; Abbott, 2013. p. 20-24); hence, we may call it the first core element of story. It is followed by characters and motives and by wording and style. The graphical framework below illustrates the idea that is supported here: A narrative story in the context of business storytelling is a nutshell, a tool for transmitting issues related to a specific business corporation or an aspect of it (cf. Figure 1).

The phenomenon of story can hence be described as a medium for messages and, in this sense, as a complex semantic structure (cf. Volli, 2002. p. 93-147) with specific elements that create a nutshell whose dimensions produce detailed semantic meaning and eventual transmitting issues. Therefore, the task of any philological approach is to enable the analysis and identification of the elements that comprise the semantic framework for the specific issues. Consequently, if we want to establish the assumption that stories in business storytelling are a semantic framework for specific issues, we must first legitimise this approach from an aesthetic point.

2.5. Narrative Effects and Aesthetics: Storytelling from a Rhetorical Point of View

Discussing storytelling in marketing and communication from a narrative perspective must also cover the aspects of rhetoric and persuasion: “[...] storytelling also plays a role in persuasion, because the best way to persuade someone is by telling a compelling story“ (Delgado-Ballester and Fernández-Sabiote, 2016. p. 116). Whenever we propose that storytelling may be used to transmit specific issues (which can be interpreted) for the purpose of producing specific effects (which can be predicted), we immediately encounter various established theories of the humanities that challenge these assumptions. Even when they are short, narrative (and hence poetic) stories are complex semantic structures with broad meanings and codes and a distinctive “aesthetic function,” which is used to “purposely manipulate the surface expression of a text to rupture the automatism of reception as well as the referential meaning” (Volli, 2002. p. 97; own translation). Thus, both interpretations and predictions depend on hermeneutic processes that are neither exact nor generally valid. This is even more true because a storyteller is an author and therefore an encoder, but the reader (or listener) is

Figure 1: The nutshell of business storytelling



the one who decodes with her or his specific abilities to do so: “If the construction of a text’s meaning demands the participation of the reader, who has to recognise the provided structure for generating the meaning, one may not forget that the reader is always outside the text” (Iser, 1994. p. 246; own translation). A story has to influence this position outside the text to lead the reader’s point of view in specific directions. Faced with the problem of readers’ different abilities and capabilities, a story as a complex semantic framework cannot be interpreted, and its effects cannot be predicted with universal validation. This conclusion reveals the dilemma that arises if we only have the text – the narrative story – available for an analysis. The solution can be found in aesthetic theory regarding narrative texts: “The aesthetics of effect determine reception from the point of view of the text” (Turk, 1976. p. 7; own translation). If we assume that the author uses different elements to purposefully equip a text to create a narrative story containing a conflict, characters, and other elements of “aesthetic function” (v.s.), we can determine all those elements in the text itself and connect them semantically (with respect to the presented framework); furthermore, we may also describe them as the story’s intended reception (cf. König, 2011. p. 26). This approach refers to a structuralist view, a perspective of “making sense” and “sense-giving attempts” (Søderberg, 2003. p. 8), of storytelling being a “process of making sense of actions, events and objects, or of explaining the relationships between them” (ibid: 6, cf. Weick, 1995. p. 60f.). If we want to analyse stories concerning those intended elements, these assumptions lead to a combination of standard methods of narration on the one hand and the aesthetic approach and methods of rhetorical text analysis on the other hand (cf. e.g., Abbott, 2013. p. 40-54; Phelan, 2010. p. 203-216; Plett, 2001; Lausberg, 1990).

While this approach focuses on storytelling as a textual object which is specifically designed by a sender, there is also research on the effect of this design regarding the recipient’s perception and behavior. König et al. (2018) proved empirically that the success of a luxury brand story depends on how it is designed according to narratological rules. Other examples of empirical research in marketing and management provide, among others, Janssen et al. (2011); Spear and Roper (2013) as well as Megehee and Woodside (2010) and Chiu et al. (2012), however usually not referring to the empirical effect of certain narrative elements. Other research approaches are discussed e.g. by Schröder (2007), reflecting the effect of narrative elements within a discourse, and by Boje (1991), using conversation analysis for qualitative research. Boje also compiled several pragmatic research methods for analysing storytelling; among these are critical, ontological, post-positivist and epistemic pragmatic storytelling methodologies (Boje, 2014. p. 225-319).

3. A CONCEPT FOR A STORYTELLING BLUEPRINT

If we assume that philologists established the groundwork for literature and narratology, we must determine how they approach the phenomenon of storytelling – and therefore narration. It is remarkable that, for instance, German and French narratologists are

mainly concerned about the act of narrating and hence perspective, time, setting, and the connection between those elements. Plots and characters receive hardly any attention (cf. Martinez and Scheffel, 2012). In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, we may discover greater interest in the plots and characters; this interest has increased in recent studies of plot in US research that links former European concepts with new, original approaches, either in traditional research (e.g., Campbell, 2004 and Mark and Pearson, 2001) or especially in film studies (and usually in a rather practical context), regarding suspense and arc (e.g., McKee, 1999 or Field, 1994). In comparison, the phenomenon of character is approached from a rather practical point of view (cf. Schmidt, 2001 or Mark and Pearson, 2001) and in other disciplines, such as psychology, with valuable results (cf. László, 2008).

In the following, the conceptual framework of storytelling on the basis of narratological approaches will be established first. Then, the paper determines which concepts contribute to the different dimensions of plot, character, and style, and how they are used as tools for storytelling in marketing and management against the backdrop of the narratological approaches. In terms of the value of this study, it can be reported how those elements support specific meaning in the field of marketing and management.

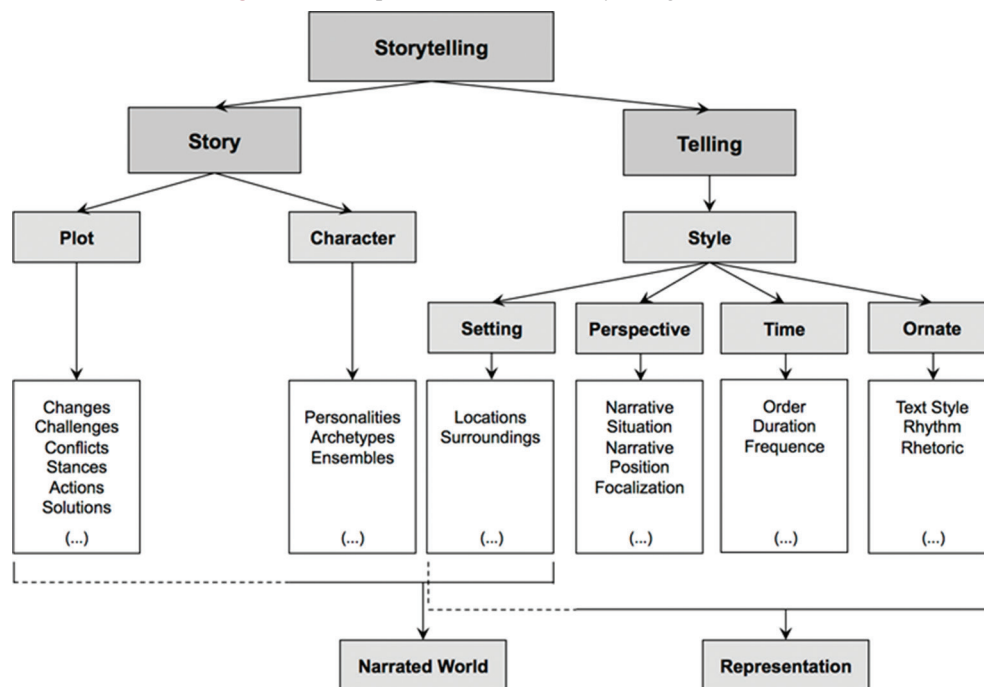
3.1. A Conceptual Frame of Storytelling Elements

While the presented nutshell breaks down all modules into the very basic elements of plot, character, and style, those dimensions can be filled with various approaches and theories that support an understanding of the construction of stories. It is both simple and consequential that the term storytelling combines two main thoughts about the phenomenon of narration: First, it refers to the story as a specific type of narration itself, and second, it sums up all possibilities for narrating the story with the term telling. While the term story can be divided into the two basic components of plot (aspects concerning the driving content and structure) and character (the people whose experiences are narrated), the term telling, referring to the style of narration, may be broken down into the various different aspects of designing the story, such as the perspective, time, setting, and ornate (cf. Figure 2).

From a narratological point of view, storytelling can also be divided into the different perspectives of observing the narrated world (what?) and representing (how?) the narrated world (cf. Martinez and Scheffel, 2012). In these two classifications, characters and setting (and plot, to a lesser extent) mainly belong to the concept of the narrated world, although the setting may be discussed against the backdrop of its contribution to the story’s design, while the plot generally refers to logic and semantics. Perspective, time, and the ornate represent the story. These elements can be easily added to the presented concept, as described above.

3.2. The First Dimension: Plot

There are various options for determining what a text must look like to become a narrative and how narration becomes a story. A story may be defined, for example, in terms of the “aesthetic function” of the language (Volli, 2002. p. 97; own translation), the classes of social systems (cf. Lotman and Uspenskij, 1984), the difference between textualised and grammaticalised cultures (and thus between texts and stories), or on the basis of the

Figure 2: Conceptual framework of storytelling dimensions

fabula arrangement as a semantic determination (cf. Abbott, 2013, p. 16-27). In this context, Greimas' actantial model (1984, p. 174-185 and 192-212) has to be mentioned as well, being a popular semiotic approach relating elements of action.

In this paper, another narratological perspective is chosen: Namely, every story contains a problem that has to be solved, and solving the problem is connected to a conflict that influences (the ability to obtain) the solution. As a basic condition, the problem occurs because of a change in the situation. This simple approach allows us to distinguish narrative stories from most other texts, and indeed, the definition is the core proposition of dramatic theory, which is rooted in the ideas of Aristotle (1995), and has been expanded by researchers and poets such as Freytag (2003). According to dramatic theory, a plot's structure may also be described as: "The BME narrative genre is defined by a style that is abstract, a function that generalizes, and a form that tries to annihilate living stories' content. BME is beginning, middle and end" (Boje, 2014, p. 3). Arranging an event of change and the affected aspects within this structure may be considered the main task of storytelling. This arrangement leads to concept of narrative plot, meaning the turn of a fabula into a sjuzet (cf. Propp, 1968, Shklovsky, 1965; Abbott, 2013, p. 18, Bal, 2009, p. 75-77): A plot in this context is the "artful construction of story," and therefore, the "artful disclosure of story" (Abbott, 2010, p. 43), referring to "that combination of economy and sequencing of events that makes a story a story and not just raw material" (ibid.). An additional literary approach towards plot may be found in the works of Campbell (2004), who observed numerous myths and legends of different cultures and developed the idea that stories circulate suspense but reveal borders to be crossed and a plot-flow, corresponding with all previous models of the basic structure of story. In fact, all the different theories on story structure are comparable in terms of their major elements (cf. Table 1).

In contemporary approaches, the phenomenon of plot is also developed in the discipline of narratology and film. This development has been extensively discussed by McKee (1999), Field (1994) from a rather professional perspective and, for example, by Hickethier (1996), Monaco (2000), Faulstich (2013), Bordwell and Thompson (1997), and many more studies in the field of film research. The event of change, which contains the problem and conflict, is usually referred to as the plot point in this context: "The PLOT POINT is an incident or event, that 'hooks' into the action and spins it around into another direction. It moves the story forward" (Field, 1994, p. 11). Plot points are events in narration that change a situation, causing the problem and hence the conflict a character must solve. They have been part of stories – in the aesthetic sense – since Aristotle proposed his philosophy of drama. German poet Friedrich Schiller called those events *punctum saliens* (jumping points), and they may be regarded as the neuralgic elements that drive a narration towards a specific direction, serving as peaks in a story's curve of suspense (cf. König, 2005, p. 26-30). Plot points (in both drama and film aesthetics, we have come to expect two major types: One that delivers the problem and one that delays its solution; cf. Field, 1994, p. 9 and Freytag, 2003, p. 94f.) are the most important element of story; they are the precondition for narrating stories, and they allow the transmission of specific meaning (issues). When the plot points within a story are detected, directly (or indirectly) offered meaning can also be detected. Hence, regarding business storytelling, the plot points of the story must be of core interest.

Consequently, a narrative turn (plot point) that produces a conflict-laden problem leads to a challenge for a character. The character's response to the challenge and the actions he or she takes to solve the problem discloses the character's stance (attitude) towards the conflict. In this logical chain, every story reveals a message, and in the way a character solves the problem and discloses his

Table 1: Basic story structures

	Acts	Changes	Climax	Ending	Suspense
Aristotle De Poetica (e.g. 1995)	3-5	Peripety	Peripety (Act 2/3 or 3/5)	Katastrophe	linear; going up – peripety –falling down
Freytag Technik des Dramas (e.g. 2003)	5	Katastese (erregendes Moment), Retardation (retardierendes Moment)	Climax (Act 3)	Katastrophe	linear; going up – climax –falling down
Campbell The Hero with a Thousand Faces (2004)	3 (17 Stages)	Crossing the threshold, crossing the return threshold	The ultimate boon (Act 2, Stage 11)	Freedom to live	circulating
FieldScreenplay (1994)	3	Event/Conflict; Plot Point I, Plot Point II	Climactic Struggle (Act 3, cf. Hant, 1999)	Resolution	linear; going up – climactic struggle – falling down

or her attitude, we may expect a moral evaluation of the narrated action (cf. van Dijk, 1980. p. 140-144 and László, 2008. p. 16). Thus, all stories – and all storytelling – are based in the logic of semantics. The events arranged in a plot do not (just) present a joined-together overview of what and when the events happened but why they happened: Why a situation changed, why a character was challenged to act, why an ostensible obstacle turned out to be surmountable, why the character acted the way he or she did, and why the solution payed off (or did not). Thus, stories instantly give us a simple but qualified explanation of the world that we are forced to believe (cf. Herman, 2002. p. 38-50 and van Dijk, 1980. p. 140-144): “[...] consumers are complicit in marketing. Consumers believe stories” (Godin, 2009. p. 18).

3.3. The Second Dimension: Character

A story's hero, his or her friends and enemies, and other people may be referred to as its characters. Characters comprise the second dimension of core story elements. In the context of story, a character is “a literary figure; that is, an artistic product or artifice constructed by an author for some purpose” (Margolin, 2010. p. 66); the protagonists (heroes) “display different features” (Bal, 2009. p. 133) that represent different specific personality types. These characteristics are linked to motives and point to specific motivations to solve a conflict: “Insertion necessitates motivation” (ibid.: 41). This approach corresponds with the theory of narrative psychology: Characters act according to their personality, in their individual way, and again, we can expect the represented causality of a logic chain: “Responsibility implies choice. In narrative, we seek intentional stances that underlie action; they are motives or reasons [...]” (László, 2008. p. 16).

The psychological term stance can be easily compared with the phenomenon of attribute in marketing and management. Regarding storytelling, attributes are linked to specific issues that the author (or storyteller) would like to communicate. Hence, the creation of characters follows the same rules that Krappmann described in his theory of social interaction (Krappmann, 2010). Identities emerge within social interactions, *vulgo*: How a character addresses a problem and interacts with other characters reveals his or her personality to the audience. Consequently, this idea equates with Field's assumption about story characters, their arrangement, and their ability to interact: A character's personality is narrated by his or her experience of conflict, by his or her interaction with other characters, and by his or her interaction with him- or herself (Field,

1994. p. 28f.). Thus, a qualitative analysis should focus on these three characteristics to identify stories' characters, their motives, and the narrated issues. The already mentioned (semiotic) actantial model by Algirdas Julien Greimas can enhance this approach by adding another dimension: It describes the relation between the interacting actors within a story, concluding how the relation leads to a plot (cf. Herman, 2000. p. 260). In this sense, the model represents how character action creates a plot within a storyline, being “a grammar of action, a syntax of doing” (ibid.). Hence, by applying Greimas' model, this paper's dimensions of plot and character can be related to each other, defining protagonists and antagonists, supporters and enemies, desires and fears (cf. Rimmon-Kenan, 1983. p. 35).

Additional information can be found using an interdisciplinary psychological, literary, and marketing-oriented approach. While archetypes in the tradition of C.G. Jung have been well known and used in psychoanalysis for a long time (cf. Jacobi, 2012, Tepes, 2013), they have recently been rediscovered for interpreting and creating characters in narrations and brands (cf. Mark and Pearson, 2001, Roberts, 2010, Cooper et al., 2010). As a special characteristic, recipients implicitly understand archetypal figures and are able to feel affective empathy or identify with them:

[...] grounded in the premise that product brands, like archetypes, reflect the ways in which humans interpret their relationships with their way of life, and thus serve to provide symbolic meaning that consumers around the world may use for identity construction (Tsai, 2006. p. 250).

Considering that archetypes comprise most important characters in many legends, myths, fairy tales, and other traditional stories (cf. Kaye, 1995) and that there are approaches to creating whole brands that are based on archetypes (cf. Häusel, 2014), it is logical to create stories in marketing and management that also refer to specific, corresponding literary archetypes.

3.4. The Third Dimension: Style

The last core dimension of storytelling, which consists of meaning and is hence able to create and transmit certain issues, can be identified as the style of a story. Style comprises all of the other modules involved in narrating a story: “In narrative, we usually have a steady stream of literal renderings” (Abbott, 2013. p. 165). Usually, narratological theory can be divided into two main fields of

interest: The focus on what is narrated (the narrated world) and how it is narrated (the representation of the narrated world). The third dimension, therefore, refers generally to the design of narrating, hence, how a story is told in terms of the perspective (narrative situation), time (and narrative structuring in terms of time), the setting (spatial structuring and locations), all of the interdependent connections of those aspects, and, finally, the linguistic (or pictorial) design in terms of rhetorical ornaments, such as figures and tropes (and the corresponding elements of the moving image).

In literary studies, especially in the German and French traditions, the form of narration and its limitations play a major role:

If narratology [...] were to be divided into just two major parts, then narration and focalisation would be very suitable candidates. Narration is the telling of a story in a way that simultaneously respects the needs and enlists the co-operation of its audience; focalisation is the submission of [...] narrative information to a perspectival filter (Jahn, 2010. p. 94).

Genette (1983) and Stanzel (2010) are especially pertinent for narration and focalisation – or narrative situation in general – and distinguish among various types of narrating. While these approaches are literary and hence refer to structure and aesthetics, recent studies indicate the specific relevant impact of narration and focalisation on perception and credibility (cf. e.g., Lucaites and Condit, 1985, Warnick, 2004, Manson and O’Neill, 2007). Hence, the type of narrators and their focalisation play a significant role in what information can be delivered and how, and studies indicate that credibility and therefore trust depend on this role.

3.5. Meaning and Message: Values as Issues of Marketing and Management

McKee differentiates between two different types of ideas regarding narrative stories: “Premise, the idea that inspires the writer’s desire to create a story, and Controlling Idea, the story’s ultimate meaning expressed through the action and aesthetic emotion of the last act’s climax” (McKee, 1999. p. 112). Within this concept, the second type of idea may also be considered in terms of issues, including one or more issues, and may be presented not only through the last act’s climax but through the three dimensions of storytelling described previously. These elements, alone or in combination, reflect specific values and form a specific message: “For most companies, storytelling is about using stories to communicate messages that reflect positively on the company brand” (Fog et al., 2010. p. 34). There are numerous issues a company could seek to address through a story: Issues of brand personality, issues of sustainability, or issues of value. Value in particular seems to be an issue that can be introduced into this concept exceptionally well: “A strong brand builds on clearly defined values, while a good story communicates those values in a language easily understood by all” (ibid.: 23).

To allow for comparable results, the identification of values should not be managed just by intuition and description but on the basis of an established model. Such a model can be found in contemporary studies of marketing and management, such as those by Sweeney and Soutar, who differentiate emotional value, social value, functional value (price), and functional value (performance/

quality) (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001. p. 211f.), or that of Wiedmann et al. (e.g., 2007, 2009), which differentiates among financial value, functional value, individual value, and social value (Wiedmann et al., 2007. p. 5) in terms of luxury values. These specific types of value must be identified within the three dimensions of storytelling if the aim is to detect the issue value as a narrative message of a story.

4. DISCUSSION

After establishing an original conceptualisation for marketing and management based on the fundamentals of narratology, we can now discuss the accessibility implications against the backdrop of the existing research. In the following, it is firstly shown how the previously established ideas can lead to a step-by-step storytelling blueprint and secondly this paper’s limitations and future implications are discussed.

4.1. A Storytelling Blueprint for Marketing and Management

The following drawing board for storytelling in marketing and management is a general approach based on the previously discussed narratological theories regarding story and narration. This blueprint may be applicable to various stories in various situations and for various purposes, which need to be determined. Depending on these prerequisites, we have derived the basic questions a storyteller has to answer to complete a story with respect to the narrative conditions discussed above (cf. Table 2).

First, the main character must be defined: Who is the story’s hero (protagonist), and what is his or her personality in terms of addressing problems – and why? Second, the character has to face a problem that arises because of a change in his or her situation. This event challenges the hero and evokes a desire, and the satisfaction of that desire is linked to a conflict the hero faces. However, the hero has an

Table 2: A Storytelling blueprint concept

Who? Who is your hero?	What? What happens? What is changing his or her world?	What effect? How does the hero solve the problem?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is his or her personality? • What is his or her archetype? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the problem? • What is the hero’s desire? • What is the conflict to reach the desired goal? • What is the hero’s motivation? What is the incentive? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What delays the solution secondly? • What is his or her attitude hence? • What is his or her moral? • What is your message?
Increasing suspense <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the hero’s enemy? • Who is the hero’s friend? 	Increasing causality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How and why is the enemy against the hero? What is his or her character? • How and why is the friend supporting the hero? What is his or her character? • What kind of basic plot is chosen – and why? 	Increasing design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is telling the story? And how? • What frame supports the message? • What style supports the message?

inner motivation and other incentives to overcome the conflict, solve the problem and satisfy the desire. This package of character and event leads to the last central story modules, which are represented by how the hero finally solves the problem (we know already why he or she decides so) and what effect the solution creates. Usually, basic plots delay the solution with a second plot point that forces the hero to act more decisively (and enhances the story’s suspense). The solution and its effect also describe the hero’s attitudes and set up a moral for the story by evaluating the outcome as positive or negative. We may call this evaluation the story’s final message.

After we have met all of the major story demands, we can enhance the story’s representation and enhance the message’s validity: For example, by adding enemies who want to foil the hero’s intentions, which can enhance suspense and underline the moral evaluation, or by adding friends who may motivate the desired rightness. Furthermore, those accompanying characters also have personalities that explain their own motivations and actions. Regarding storytelling (especially in marketing and management), we must still research what types of typical confrontations and plot sets create specific basic story genres, though it might be good to be aware of existing general approaches (cf. Tobias, 2012). In the end, the story can be finalised with respect to the narrative situation (who is telling the story and from which perspective?), the framework for its narration (in terms of the setting and other aspects, such as the focus), and the style of language (or the aesthetics of the pictures in moving images), always keeping in mind the questions of if, why, and how those applications support the story’s message and eventually its expected effect.

This storytelling blueprint should be combined with determinations of the company, brand, or product that provides the context of the story (cf. Table 3). Certainly, it is necessary to answer basic questions about the brand to know about the basics of the context, followed by the more story-related questions of how and why the story is linked with the brand. There are various possibilities for representing the brand in a story, ranging from simply using the story as a tool to solve the problem via represented values to using the hero’s character to represent a brand’s identity. The prerequisites – meaning the context in which the story is told, and for what effect – finalise this framing marketing and management step, forging a bridge to the previously described blueprint.

4.2. Limitations and Implications

Although the presented approach is based on various established theories and discussions of narratives, not all aspects could be

Table 3: Brand context sheet

What kind of brand?	Brand within the story?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the company’s tradition and heritage? • Who is the company’s customer? • Who is the company’s competitor? • How does this company differ and why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is the brand represented • as a direct tool? • in values? • in characteristics of the hero’s character? • Why are there other references to the brand in the story? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the occasion/ motivation to tell the story? • What is the desired effect? • Who is the story’s audience? • Where and how is the story to be told?

covered that might be relevant to conceptualising storytelling in marketing and management. This is certainly because research on the phenomenon is still limited, and narratology does not deal (yet) with some of the perspectives that are relevant to the topic in this specific context. Still, there is no structural classification of stories in marketing and management that can also refer to the specific media that are needed for specific genres and contexts. While archetypal characters have been the object of some popular discussion, there is a lack of concise research-based reflection on these types of characters. Furthermore, other approaches to personality may also contribute to understanding why and how specific characters work better in specific contexts. This paper also lacks empirical studies regarding whether stories (and their messages) are fully understood by the audience as they were intended – a question that would very valuable to answer given that the understandable message should be the core value of a story. We also still know little about the matter of narrative perspective and its credibility, but certainly it makes a difference whether a story is told auctorially or by an I-narrator. The phenomena of narrative perspective should definitely be a research focus in the future, in addition to the questions of how different perspectives change the possibility of what can be told, which stories from which perspectives are remembered better, and what happens if they are retold (which, again, offers the possibility of discussing appropriate narrative perspectives and situations). Furthermore, we have already touched on matters of story and suspense. Presumably, a more suspenseful story gathers more attention, is remembered better and is more likable. Still, these assumptions lack both empirical evidence and a qualitative approach to enhancing suspense in storytelling (which would naturally be needed if the hypotheses are true). Consequently, such research will also lead to questions regarding whether we can identify general master plots for general problems in marketing and management.

Regarding limitations and implications for the field of professional marketing and management, it is also suggested discussing how to represent specific issues in a story. As stated above, brand and story may be linked in different ways, but we know little about which links work better in what context. Finally, all of those approaches, including the presented blueprint concept, need to be evaluated in praxi to determine whether they are practicable and how future research may help to understand other phenomena and problems in this context.

5. CONCLUSION

11:55, almost midnight. Enough time for one more story. One more story before 12:00, just to keep us warm.

(John Carpenter, The Fog)

Storytelling as a metonym for stories, their production and their potential in a business-related field is becoming increasingly important to both researchers and professionals in marketing and management: “This is a whole new way of doing business. It’s a fundamental shift in the paradigm of how ideas spread. Either you’re going to tell stories that spread, or you will become

irrelevant” (Godin, 2009. p. 1). Nevertheless, applicable and established approaches from the philologies and other disciplines in general and from narratology, linguistic, and psychology specifically are rarely introduced and applied. This paper presented a brief overview of typical approaches that, when combined, offer a proper qualitative approach towards stories that takes into account the standards and critiques in this specific area of academic research.

The particular value of this study is that it enables a discussion of a popular phenomenon, leading to a distinguished blueprint concept developed against the backdrop of established literary theories and observations. By classifying different perspectives and arranging them as core elements of storytelling, a collection of story dimensions could be designed to help with both understanding and creating stories. While value research is already established in the field of marketing and management and is even mentioned in relation to narrative stories and storytelling, a qualitative approach that allows comparable results and consecutive quantitative studies has been missing, even though “a good story communicates [...] values in a language easily understood by all” (Fog et al., 2010. p. 23). This paper presents a conceptual framework that closes this gap.

From a research perspective, the findings strongly support the use of established theories, which future research could enhance by focussing on the storytelling in marketing and management that are still poorly understood, such as credibility, message effectiveness, suspense, and personality types. For professionals in brand management, the presented approach already offers a rather accurate and distinguished concept. Nevertheless, it will be essential in the future to use the feedback of professionals to improve the concepts for praxis needs.

It was also the aim to consider a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in the field of storytelling to allow the use of different approaches and to produce a broader range of consecutive results. The conceptual framework presented in this paper and the blueprint concept are first steps towards this effort. Eventually, it becomes clear that stories are not just made out of 26 letters, and storytelling demands more than just converting 26 letters into numbers of correlation. However, the effort pays off, for stories not only represent our world, they create it:

Don't you know that Fantastica is the realm of stories? A story can be new but telling about ancient times. History is emerging from it.

(Michael Ende, The Never-Ending Story).

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