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The Influence of Brand Stories on Consumers' Brand Attitudes under the Internet Background

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Doctor of Management

Supervisors:

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University of Electronic Science and Technology of China

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Abstract

Story is a method of brand marketing. The theory of brand marketing and the successful brand story marketing of many enterprises prove that brand story plays a key role in brand marketing. Due to the unique drama, conflict and communication of the story, it can effectively and sustainably seize people's hearts, so it has become the favorite of the communication between enterprises and consumers. In reality, due to the differences between Chinese and Western cultures and domestic and foreign markets, the needs for character setting and emotional color of brand stories are not uniform, so the theoretical and practical achievements of foreign brand story marketing are not necessarily applicable to the story marketing of Chinese brands. The past marketing practice has proved the importance of brand story marketing, so it is necessary to build a set of theoretical framework including story design logic and element arrangement, in order to provide theoretical support for brand story marketing practice.

Based on this, from the perspective of the constituent elements and characteristics of brand stories, this study discusses the influence of characters and event Settings in brand stories on consumers' brand attitudes. Specifically, the following research hypotheses are verified and analyzed through laboratory experiments. (1) Brand story features affect brand attitudes through the mediating variables of imagination fluency, self-brand connection and story involvement. (2) The influence of brand story features on brand attitude occurs through the double mediating chain of imagination fluency and self-brand connection. (3) Consumer value perception plays a moderating role in the effect of brand story features on brand attitudes through the fluency of imagination. (4) The moderating effect of consumers' self-worth perception on the chain dual mediation model composed of brand story features, imagination fluency, self-brand connection and brand attitude. The research results of this thesis can provide theoretical basis and management enlightenment for enterprises to design brand stories and attract consumers through story marketing.

Keywords: brand story; brand story characteristics; brand attitude; double mediation chain

JEL: M21; D21

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Resumo

A história é um método de marketing de marca. A teoria do marketing de marca, bem como o marketing de história de marca bem sucedido de muitas empresas, atesta o papel fundamental que a história de marca desempenha no marketing de marcas. Devido ao caráter dramático, conflitante e comunicativo característico das histórias, elas são capazes de capturar as pessoas de forma eficaz e duradoura, tornando-se assim a comunicação preferida entre empresas e consumidores. Na realidade, devido às diferenças entre as culturas chinesa e ocidental e os mercados nacionais e estrangeiros, as necessidades para a configuração do personagem da história da marca, bem como a cor emocional não são uniformes. Portanto, as realizações teóricas e práticas estrangeiras sobre o marketing da história da marca não são necessariamente aplicáveis ao marketing da história da marca chinesa. Considerando que as práticas de marketing anteriores comprovam a importância do marketing de histórias de marca, é necessário construir um referencial teórico que inclua a lógica de design de histórias, arranjo de elementos, de forma a dar suporte teórico às práticas de marketing de histórias de marca.

Com base nisso, a pesquisa foi contextualizada sob a perspectiva dos elementos constitutivos, características da história de marca, com o objetivo de investigar a influência dos personagens e da configuração do evento na atitude de marca do consumidor, especificamente, as seguintes hipóteses de pesquisa foram verificadas e analisadas através de experimentos laboratoriais neste estudo: (1) as características da história da marca influenciam a atitude da marca através das variáveis mediadoras da fluência imaginária, da ligação eu-marca e do envolvimento da história; (2) a influência das características da história da marca na atitude da marca ocorre por meio de um caminho de dupla mediação em cadeia de fluência imaginária, ligação eu-marca; (3) a percepção de valor do consumidor atua como moderadora no processo em que as características da história da marca atuam na atitude da marca através da fluência imaginária; (4) o papel moderador da percepção de autoestima do consumidor sobre o modelo de dupla mediação em cadeia constituído pelas características da história da marca, fluência imaginária, ligação eu-marca e atitude da marca. Os resultados desta pesquisa podem fornecer subsídios teóricos e de gestão para as empresas conceberem histórias de marcas e envolverem os consumidores através do marketing de histórias.

Palavra chave: história da marca; características da história da marca; atitude de marca; modelo de dupla mediação chain.

JEL: M21; D21

摘要

故事是一种品牌营销的方法，品牌营销理论以及众多企业成功的品牌故事营销证明了品牌故事在品牌营销中发挥的关键作用。由于故事特有的戏剧性、冲突性及传播性，能够有效持久地抢占人心，因此成为了企业与消费者沟通的宠儿。在现实中，由于中西方文化和国内外市场的差异，对于品牌故事的人物设定以及情感色彩的需求并不统一，因而国外关于品牌故事营销的理论与实践成果并不一定适用于中国品牌的故事营销。而过往的营销实践证明品牌了故事营销的重要性，因此需要构建一套囊括故事设计逻辑、要素安排的理论框架，以此给品牌故事营销实践提供理论支持。

基于此，本研究从品牌故事的构成要素、特征角度切入，探讨了品牌故事的人物、事件设定对消费者品牌态度的影响，具体而言，在本研究通过实验室实验对以下研究假设进行了验证和分析：（1）品牌故事特征通过想象流畅性、自我-品牌联结、故事涉入度的中介变量影响品牌态度；（2）品牌故事特征对品牌态度的影响通过想象流畅性、自我-品牌联结的链式双中介路径发生；（3）消费者价值感知在品牌故事特征通过想象流畅性作用于品牌态度的过程中起到调节作用；（4）消费者自我价值感知对品牌故事特征、想象流畅性、自我-品牌联结、品牌态度所构成的链式双中介模型的调节作用。本文的研究成果可以给企业设计品牌故事并通过故事营销吸引消费者提供理论依据和管理启示。

关键词: 品牌故事；品牌故事特性；品牌态度；链式双中介模型

JEL: M21; D21

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research background

With the development of the Internet industry, media forms and contents are becoming more and more diversified, which makes it more difficult than ever to achieve effective communication by accurately and effectively transmitting information and quickly catching the attention of consumers. At the same time, with the advent of the 4G and 5G era and the diversified development of Internet platforms, audiences are inundated with fragmented quick information, and empty and stereotyped slogans are difficult to attract attention and spark discussion as before (T. Wen, 2009). Compared with the times before the arrival of the 4G era and the era of intelligence, consumers now can obtain comprehensive and specific feedback on products or services from multiple platforms, which means that the degree of information asymmetry between enterprises and consumers is reduced.

For example, the growth of demographic dividend. The growth spurt of the scale of Internet platform users is bound to help increase the mutual feedback and exchange heat of consumers on platforms, so as to improve the negotiation ability of consumers on the weak side of information (G. Zhang et al., 2019). Therefore, today when information explodes and the Internet is dominant, enterprises need to seek marketing and communication modes that accurately reach the target consumer groups, more easily attract consumers and guide them into the set scenario.

As a marketing tool, brand story has proved the important role of brand management, especially brand story management in marketing, as proven by many studies on marketing theory and successful brand-building cases of enterprises in practice. Stories of unique dramatic, conflicting and communicative natures make them the most effective and lasting tool to capture people's hearts. Therefore, storytelling has become a favorite for enterprises' brand building (Facenda, 2007). Stories can help people better understand the brand and enable consumers to immerse in the scenario set by brand stories. The emotions, values and significance given to the characters in stories may be transferred to consumers themselves through stories (X. Chen et al., 2019). Concerning brand building, storytelling can better build the brand, and the brand can also better convey its symbolic significance to consumers

through stories. Enterprises take the story as a carrier and pass on the connotation and value proposition of the brand to their customers by means of narration, so as to bring differentiated perception (Chiu et al., 2012), and then improve their brand attitude under the condition of arousing consumers' emotional resonance. This is brand story-based marketing. The brand stories of most enterprises are developed according to the use scenario or emotional development of the target consumers. For example, the story of Zhang Ruimin of Haier smashing refrigerators meets consumers' expectations for the excellent quality of brand products or services, which makes consumers have higher trust in Haier when comparing different brands of similar products, contributing to positive cognition and emotional attitude, as well as purchase behavior.

As the role of brand stories in brand marketing practice is constantly proven, studies on story-based marketing theory are also carried out from various angles. According to Keller and Lehmann (2003) in his studies, building the brand and giving play to the brand effect is one of the key points of enterprise marketing. The brand helps consumers remember the core information of products or services and prevents competitors from imitating. Successful brand management can help make profits by attracting consumers' attention, positively affecting consumers' attitudes, and retaining consumers' brand loyalty (Douglas, 2009).

In addition to century-old brands such as Tongrentang, many young enterprises founded after the reform and opening up have also occupied an excellent market position when competing with international brands by virtue of their sincere and moving brand stories. For example, Huawei has become the pride of a new generation of Chinese brands through the spread of the story of technology R&D and innovation. When smart devices such as Apple and Samsung encroach on the Chinese market, Huawei has found a way to rank among the best in the domestic market and also occupy a large market share in international markets such as European countries. In addition to excellent product quality that makes it popular nationwide, the newly created catering brand Modern China Tea Shop integrates brand culture, brand creation and interaction with consumers into its brand story in brand marketing, making a unique publicity means, thus creating unique image of Chinese style tea (Liu & Wang, 2009). The development and growth of these brands rely on technological innovation and excellent quality. Coupled with attractive stories, these brands become consumers' first choice by the image created by the stories when competing with similar brands. Therefore, in the actual brand management practice, story-based brand communication mode has been proven to be an effective marketing means.

The development and communication course of enterprise brands accumulated by

countless stories. These stories may be the hard and legendary entrepreneurial stories of the enterprise founders, the development history of the brand, or the touching stories in the interaction with consumers (Jia, 2017). These stories with different types or different elements and characteristics have situational correlation and emotional resonance with the target consumer groups of brands, so that consumers keep the brands in mind and put the brands in the first place in making purchase decisions (L. H. Yu, 2010).

In reality, the demand for character settings and emotions of brand stories is not unified because of the essentially different types of products or services and cultural differences between China and western countries. Therefore, foreign theories and practices on brand story-based marketing may not be able to successfully guide the story-based marketing of Chinese brands. Story-based marketing is indeed effective in past practice, so it is necessary to develop a general framework including story design logic and element arrangement to meet the practical needs of story-based marketing of different types of brands of Chinese enterprises.

Based on this, this study, with brand story as its object of study, analyzes and discusses the influence of the character and event setting of the brand story on consumers' brand attitude from the perspectives of elements and characteristics of the brand story. The specific research questions are developed from the direct, mediating and moderating effects of the brand story on brand attitude. Through the verification of experimental survey data, this study discusses how the characteristics of the brand story affect brand attitude and what factors interfere with the influence on attitude. Therefore, in this study, the following issues are profoundly discussed and analyzed: (1) Brand story affects brand attitude through such mediating variables as imagination fluency, self-brand connection, and story involvement. (2) the influence of brand story on brand attitude occurs through the chained double mediating path of imagination fluency and self-brand connection. (3) the moderating effect of consumers' self-worth perception on brand story affecting brand attitude through imagination fluency. (4) the moderating effect of consumers' self-worth perception on the chained double mediating model composed of brand story, imagination fluency, self-brand connection and brand attitude. Through the verification and analysis of the above issues, this study improves the theoretical studies on the mediating and moderating effects of brand story on the influence path of consumers' brand attitude, so as to contribute theoretical guidance to brand story-based marketing to better meet consumers' demand preferences and psychological characteristics.

1.2 Research significance

1.2.1 Theoretical significance

Most of the stories come from the dramatic adaptation of life. As a form of information spreading and expression that can trigger the imagination and immersion of audiences, stories are easier to arouse psychological changes in audiences than plain information. Therefore, stories are applied to marketing to establish consumers' deep understanding of the brand image and lasting loyal attitude. Previous theoretical studies on the brand story mainly focused on what story to tell and how to tell the story. Therefore, starting from the design of the elements and characteristics of the brand story, this study explores the influence of the character and event setting in the story on consumers' brand attitude, analyzes what story can attract audiences and change their attitude, improves the theoretical basis of brand story design, explores the psychological changes after reading brand stories from the perspective of consumers and how such psychological changes will affect their attitude and intention, and supplements the theory of difference in the influence of brand attitude under different brand story dimensions. This study also verifies the different types of mediating paths of stories affecting brand attitude in studies on brand story, and fills in the study on the difference in changes of psychological factors of consumers influenced by stories.

1.2.2 Practical significance

Since stories are an effective marketing tool that can enhance consumers' "empathy" with brands, finding ways to design stories that are more attractive and realize the transference from story scenario to real scenario is one of the difficult problems to be solved in the actual story-based marketing. Therefore, innovations in research from the theoretical level of brand story can contribute theoretical reference to story-based marketing practice. This study mainly discusses the role of story characteristics such as the similarity between characters of brand stories and audiences and the perception of the truth of a story in consumers' attitude, and analyzes the mediating effect of such mediating variables as the imagination fluency, self-brand connection and the story involvement on stories and attitude from the perspective of consumers.

Nowadays, consumers are in the era of big data where they are always bombarded with massive information. Among many heavy and complicated information, the key to effective

brand value spreading is to accurately receive and understand the key information of the brand by the target consumer groups. In this study, the analysis of the moderating and mediating effects of the brand story itself and consumers' psychological characteristics on the story influencing attitude can help enterprises more effectively carry out marketing practices such as designing stories and accurately positioning the target audiences, and providing a theoretical basis for enterprises to attract consumers and establish loyal consumer groups through story-based marketing.

1.3 Research objectives and contents

From the perspective of the characteristics of brand stories, this thesis takes the characteristics of brand stories, for example, different story character settings and story event arrangements, as its main object of study, and combs through and integrates the relevant research results of narrative theory, individual psychological characteristics and consumer behavior through a large number of literature review and research. On the basis of literature research, this study discusses the difference in the interference effect of characteristics of brand stories on brand attitude under different settings, theoretically analyzes and summarizes the cause-and-effect of variables such as imagination fluency, self-brand connection, story involvement and consumers' perception of value in relevant previous studies, theoretically deduces the direct and indirect effects between various variables in combination with the cause-and-effect relationship between specific dependent variables and independent variables in this study, and puts forward research hypotheses of this study accordingly and combs through the overall model of research hypotheses.

In order to verify the conceptual model formed on the basis of theoretical analysis, this study obtains the subjects' attitude differences and other psychological characteristics by means of questionnaire via the intergroup experimental design. This study verifies the differences and significance of subjects' attitude towards the brand set in the materials under different independent variables via variance analysis. In addition, this study verifies the mediating effect, chained double mediating effect and moderating mediating effect between variables via layer-by-layer regression analysis and model test. Specifically, through the empirical analysis of the experimental data, this study verifies whether there are significant differences in the effect of the brand story composed of the similarity between the setting characteristics of the story characters under different conditions and audiences (consumer groups) and audiences' (consumer groups') perception of the truth of the story events on the

brand attitude, and figures out variables constituting the mediating path through which independent variables at different levels affect audiences' brand attitude.

According to the determined research objectives, this study systematically expounds the theory of connotation definition, relevant theoretical research, dimensional division and measurement methods with regard to brand story, imagination fluency, self-brand connection, story involvement, consumers' perception of value and brand attitude. Based on the theoretical analysis of the cause-and-effect of variables, this study deduces the possible influence relationship between variables, puts forward the hypotheses of this study, and constructs the theoretical research model. Then, this study carries out intergroup experimental design and questionnaire test, collects and sorts out the experimental data in questionnaires, makes quantitative analysis on the questionnaire data through SPSS software and its Chinese microprogram, and finally verifies hypotheses in the research model one by one according to the data results after empirical analysis. Based on the empirical test on hypotheses, this study summarizes the research conclusions, and contributes corresponding practical suggestions to enterprises for their brand management and story-based marketing.

According to the above research objectives and planned research contents, this thesis consists of five parts, and the organizational framework is as follows:

Chapter I is about introduction. It mainly includes the research background, research significance, research contents, research methods and technical route of this thesis, and expounds the possible innovations of this thesis.

Chapter II is about theoretical basis. It mainly combs through and summarizes the related concepts of brand story, imagination fluency, self-brand connection, story involvement, brand attitude and consumers' perception of value, related studies on cause-and-effect relationship, dimensional division or measurement methods by combing through the existing relevant literature, so as to contribute theoretical support to the proposal of research framework.

Chapter III is about research hypotheses and the conceptual model. Based on the above theories, it deduces and determines the interaction relationship between variables, puts forward research hypotheses about each variable, and completes the construction of the theoretical model.

Chapter IV is about experimental design. In this Chapter, the author selects reasonable brands, designs eight groups of different experimental brand story materials according to the dimension of research variables, and determines the experimental process. We also test the reliability and validity of the scale in combination with the collected experimental data, and completes the descriptive statistical analysis of the data.

Chapter V is about the empirical analysis of research results. It collects and sorts out the experimental data, and analyzes the mediating effect via the one-way variance analysis, linear regression and multi-layer regression models of SPSS and Model 6, Model 7 and Model 83 in the microprogram PROCESS 3.4 to verify the hypotheses put forward in Chapter III.

Chapter VI is about conclusions and expectations. Firstly, it explains the experimental results from the theoretical level based on the results of empirical data analysis in Chapter V. Secondly, it discusses the implications of the research results for story-based marketing and brand management in combination with the experimental research results and theoretical analysis results. Finally, it puts forward the limitations of this study in the experimental process, and some expectations for future studies.

1.4 Research methods and technical route

The main research methods used in this thesis are:

(1) Literature research method. By reviewing the existing research literature on brand story, fluency, involvement, brand attitude and perception of value, this thesis sorts out the relevant research contents, and puts forward the main viewpoints and key problems to be solved accordingly.

(2) Experimental method. According to the criteria for dimensional division of independent variables and moderating variables, this study sets up 8 groups of experimental materials (2*2*2) respectively to explore the influence of character similarity and event authenticity involved in characteristics of brand stories on the story audiences, and the moderating effect of the difference in value perception level brought by brands of different product types on the research model.

(3) Questionnaire and quantitative analysis. Through the existing literature research, this study selects the mature variable measurement tools that meet its needs, prepares questionnaires, and obtains the required variables by virtue of the experimental questionnaires. After data collection, this study makes reliability and validity test with SPSS, descriptive statistical analysis, variance analysis and regression analysis, and verifies the mediating and moderating mediating effects with the microprogram PROCESS 3.4. Finally, based on the data analysis results, this study verifies the hypotheses and draws the research conclusions.

The technical route of this study is shown in Figure 1.1:

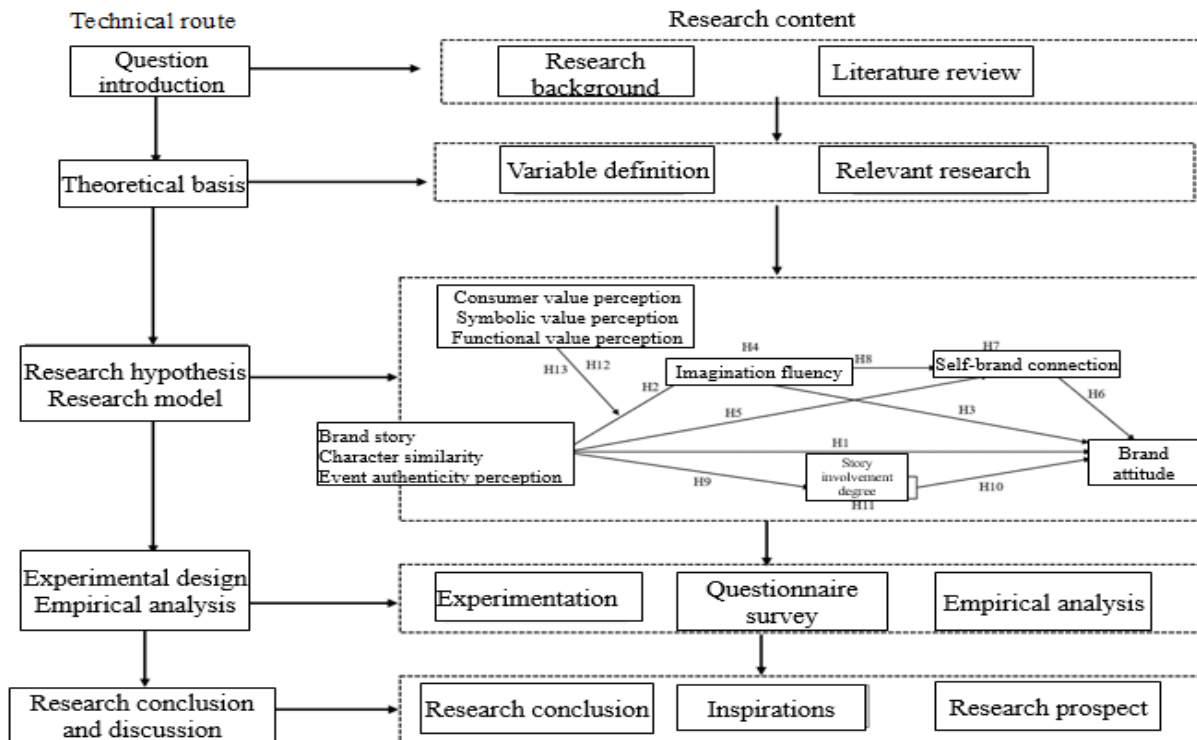


Figure 1.1 Technical route

1.5 Innovations in research

This study focuses on the theoretical logic of whether characteristics of brand stories affect brand attitude and how to affect consumers' brand attitude. In academic circles, there have been rich and perfect research results on whether brand stories affect consumers' brand attitude. Based on previous studies, this study, starting from the research on characteristics of brand stories, analyzes whether there are significant differences in brand attitude under different setting standards of characters and events, focuses on how to arrange the elements of stories (characters and events) to optimize the story-based marketing effectiveness and deepens the research on the composition mechanism of the brand story. In other words, the empirical research results will contribute substantive reference to the design of brand stories.

Secondly, previous studies on story-based marketing and brand management rarely comprehensively consider the interference of consumers' individual psychological characteristics on the brand story-based marketing effect. From the perspective of consumers, this study discusses the possible mediating paths through which brand stories affect consumers' brand attitude, and how consumers' perception of brand value regulates the existing mediating effect. It also verifies the possible chained double mediating path of the imagination fluency and self-brand connection between the brand story and brand attitude,

systematically studies the mechanism of brand story affecting consumers' brand attitude, enriches the research on the path that brand story affects consumers' brand attitude, and contributes a reference to making brand story-based marketing meet the characteristics of target consumers.

Thirdly, when designing the experiment, this study considers the value differences provided by different brands to consumers, and puts forward suggestions on the design of brand stories highlighting different types of value by studying the first half of the chained double mediating path of consumers' value perception of brands set by materials. Telling enterprises what kinds of stories matching what types of brands helps shape a positive attitude towards the brand in consumers' mind.

Finally, as a new marketing tool, stories should be attractive and capable of capturing people's hearts. Therefore, the key to successful story-based marketing is to get consumers immersed into the story scenario and transfer their emotions and connections generated therein to the relationship between real self and brand. This study on the influence of story characters and events on consumers' attitude through consumers' imagination fluency and story involvement just verifies the empathy effect of stories at different independent variable levels.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Brand story

2.1.1 Connotation of brand story

2.1.1.1 Story and narration

Although the word “story” is a commonly used popular word, its theoretical connotation is very profound. According to Whyte and Classen (2012), story is the construct of real life. If people explain some needs to others or themselves, they can explain them by means of storytelling. According to Douglas (2009), stories help us integrate the reasonable elements in the picture into a more emotional and meaningful whole.

According to McKinnon (2008), stories allow us to try to explore a variety of realities in a safe environment, and help us understand different views and look forward to the expected future. According to Silverman (2006), storytelling is a communication behavior that provides a set of information transmission elements, and people can thus quickly grasp information, understand information and create meaning.

According to Harris and Barnes (2006), storytelling is a powerful method to spread complex ideas. Compared with abstract and boring generalization and fact explanation, story performs better in infection and persuasion. Storytelling is a way for narrators to communicate with audiences. It organizes a series of relevant elements according to the logic of practical activities, causality or the development order of things (J. Escalas, 2004). It generates the “symbolic system” of meaning by oral expression or text language, and contains three elements of “beginning, middle part and ending” (Bruner, 1990) in its structure. Storytelling is a basic way for people to organize various experience into things with practical significance (Hopkinson & Hogarth-Scott, 2001).

When audiences or readers of stories receive the story content, this “symbolic system” can mobilize the audiences' past emotions, memories, and experience, and get themselves immersed into stories, thus triggering the perception and judgment of the core concept or meaning of stories (Woodside, 2010). Much information and knowledge in life are stored,

compiled and extracted in the form of stories. New worlds or problems are also understood by connecting with previously understood stories. Stories help people understand life experience. People rely on stories to grasp the meaning of things around them and various situations in life (Loebbert, 2003).

According to Douglas (2009), stories help us integrate the reasonable elements in the picture into a more emotional and meaningful whole. According to McKinnon (2008), stories allow us to try to explore a variety of realities in a safe environment, and help us understand different views and look forward to the expected future. According to Silverman (2006), storytelling is a communication behavior that provides a set of information transmission elements, and people can thus quickly grasp information, understand information and create meaning.

The research on narratology originated from Todorov's formal proposal of the concept of "Narration" in the modern sense in 1969, and then experienced the development of structuralist narratology, classical narratology and post classical narratology. Narration is the act of telling a story with viewpoint and theme. Theme is the soul of the story and dominates the narration. Narration is a process of constructing and updating cognitive patterns in the brain (Herman, 2001). People construct thinking and organize information through narration (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Holt & Thompson, 2004). For stories with the same theme expressed by different narrators, their expression forms will be different. The narrator's point of view is generally consistent with the theme of the story.

Despite different studies on narration and the connotation of story, it can be found from the research viewpoints of scholars that the story conveys an idea, concept or message to audiences in an interesting way or a way that is easy to resonate with audiences. This way is vivid and rich in meaning, facilitates audiences' understanding and gets audiences deeply immersed. Better communication will be achieved by communicating with audiences through stories.

2.1.1.2 Story and brand

The American Marketing Association defines brand as the name, term, symbol, mark or design and its combination used to identify one or a group of products or services, and to distinguish it from other similar competitive products or services. According to Kevin Keller, the brand is also a product with various characteristics or attributes, which makes it different from other products that meet the same needs. In other words, the difference between products lies in rational and visual product functions or characteristics, as well as symbolic

and emotional meanings and values conveyed by the brand. Therefore, the brand can be understood from two aspects: brand identification function and brand information transmission function.

As a symbol or mark, brand helps people in the consumer world identify the products and services sold by a particular manufacturer and distinguish them from other competitors (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 1999; Keller & Lehmann, 2003; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Nowadays, brand has become the identity representation of marketing offerings or providers. How to effectively play the role of brand mark or symbol? The brand story comes into being. Since the brand story is the narrative logic and thinking of the story to convey the characteristics of the brand, the brand story needs to have the characteristics of the brand and the story at the same time, or in other words, take the history, culture and product information of the brand as the background, and have the plot, theme and other elements of the story.

It is an efficient modern enterprise marketing method for enterprises to create brand stories to attract consumers and influence consumers' attitudes towards brands after integrating key events of company development, personal experience and cultural connotations. Many academic research results and successful cases of real enterprises have proved the important role of brand story polishing and communication in the marketing process.

For example, Levi's jeans birth story, condiment Lao Gan Ma's brand legend story, the origin story of the new pastry brand Bao Shifu. The marketing story practice of these brands shows that story has gradually become the core pillar of brand advertising, which can affect consumers' emotional response, attitude preference and behavior choice. Brand stories can achieve good marketing results, essentially by bringing positive emotional value to consumers, and play an important role in meeting the spiritual and cultural needs of consumers, which has attracted wide attention of scholars. Therefore, on the one hand, brand story marketing depends on the quality of brand story, on the other hand, it depends on brand value.

As for the research on the connotation of brand stories, at first, scholars believed that brand stories are the carrier of brand image and brand value spreading. Van Heerden and Puth (1995) believed that by telling brand stories, enterprises can convey their values, ideas or significance to consumer audiences. According to them, brand stories are the carrier of corporate brand image and brand positioning, which can bring differentiated competitiveness to enterprises, help enterprises build a coherent process of inception, development and growth, and pass on a series of events in the process to consumers by means of narration or storytelling. D. Y. Yang (2005) believed that brand story is a clear, easy-to-remember and

imaginative thought achieved by combing through and summarizing its excellent aspects in the process of brand development and the brand story is a successful emotional transmission with consumers in the process of brand development. From the perspectives of brand culture, brand value and product interest appeal, S. G. Yuan (2005) believed that the brand story connects consumers and the brand thanks to existentialism. It conveys the brand connotation of the enterprise by storytelling, coupled with advertisements, news and advertorials, public relations activities and cultural communication activities, hoping to resonate with consumers in terms of personal ideas, social ideas and value propositions.

Later, scholars began to pay attention to the theme and content of the story itself. For example, Denning (2005) thought from the perspective of the school of story management that the core of the brand story is to promise consumers and tell consumers “who I am”, “where I come from” and “what I want to do in the future”. From the perspective of brand strategy, brand strategy expert G. D. Li (2015) defined the brand story as: influencing consumers combined with the means of brand story-based marketing based on historical events during the enterprise development, relevant character stories and the cultural content contained in the enterprise, so as to attract consumers' attention and improve their recognition of the brand.

Q. Li (2009) directly stated that the essence of brand stories is the summary of advantages in the process of brand growth. Now scholars combine the two and think that the brand story is the tool of enterprises' brand marketing. It makes the enterprises' brand value easier to understand in a narrative tone and conveys it to customers through story-based marketing, hoping to better build their own image with the help of consumers' emotional resonance (L. H. Yu, 2010). Peng (2012) proposed in the research on brand story building that brand story refers to the practical activities of enterprises by means of storytelling for the sake of arousing the resonance of consumers and building a good brand image.

2.1.1.3 Storytelling and brand building

It was found after studying consumer behavior that besides the functions and attributes of the product itself, the brand story related to the product will also significantly affect consumers' attitude towards the brand, and then affect their purchase strategy and purchase intention. According to Vincent (2002) in his studies, “brand story is at the very foundation of brand capability, and it builds a bridge and bond between brand and the enterprise's consumers by virtue of expressions of existentialism and connects the two”. From Stern's (1991) proposal of the influence of advertising narration on advertising effect in the advertising field, to the

analysis of how consumers express their stories of consumption from the perspective of narratology, and then to the introduction of the concept “story management” into the field of business management, “brand story-based marketing” as a new marketing concept and marketing tool, has gradually become one of the important factors for enterprises to successfully carry out marketing and promotion. Whether in the field of marketing, consumer or advertising, storytelling is more and closely related to business. So how does story-based marketing play a role in business activities? Its mechanism is essentially the process in which enterprises share stories of brand values, products and services to users, and audiences converts these stories into their own experience.

The brand integrates “storytelling” into the brand story-based marketing process, makes consumers better understand the brand value (Yan, 2007) in light of the “mode of narrative thinking” when consumers receive external information (Adaval & Wyer, 1998; Bruner, 1990), and then establishes some emotional connection with the brand (S. G. Yuan, 2005). Consumers can also experience the brand value through the beliefs and meanings conveyed by the brand story, so as to better express themselves and enrich life (Goulding et al., 2001). In today’s Internet-based consumption environment, consumers have more channels and forms to independently obtain information and feedback, and conveying the brand meaning and concept with stories as the carrier is more easily accepted by consumers, thus many enterprises conveying brand meaning or concept to consumers with the help of brand stories (Chronis, 2015).

Scholars also pay attention to the communication role of stories and find that storytelling helps brands achieve more effective two-way communication with consumers (Mattila, 2000), is easier to resonate with consumers and creates competitive advantages for enterprises (Boje, 2019). The reason why stories affect people’s views, identification and judgments is that stories can guide people to imagine (H. H. Huang et al., 2012).

An agency that studies advertising in New York and the American Association of Advertising Agencies studied the relationship between storytelling and brand building by investigating consumers’ emotional response to TV advertisements in a three-year field investigation, and found that advertisements that tell brand stories have better effects than those that emphasize product positioning (Facenda, 2007).

Peng (2012) sorted out previous studies on the relationship between storytelling and brand building, and found that: (1) in the era of flooding marketing information, storytelling is more “eye-catching”. (2) communicating with audiences by means of storytelling can concretize abstract brand concepts, values and other information. (3) stories generally have

task subjects, and the characteristics and plots of these subjects are more likely to arouse the empathy of audiences, thus making storytelling-based marketing advertising better than simple graphic advertising in terms of getting audiences immersed. (4) the plot is mostly literary or interesting, so the story content stays in memory for a longer time when audiences accept and understand a brand story, which is easy to lead to a thinking set. (5) the literariness of the story makes it more and more influential in interpersonal communication. As one of the means of enterprise marketing, brand marketing can help enterprises build customer assets and maintain sustainable development. Brand building is to create a unique brand personality and culture, and to combine this personality and culture with consumers' minds and needs, so as to build a close relationship between brands and consumers, realize the emotional communication between brands and consumers, and change consumers' attitude towards brands.

Therefore, this study defines the brand story as a marketing activity dedicated to consumer-oriented promotion by means of narrative expression that integrates the corporate development concept, brand significance, and product information.

2.1.2 Relevant studies on brand story

The study on stories originally belongs to the field of literature. With the extensive application of story functions, many scholars found that narrative advertisements have a significant positive effect on consumers' attitude, preference and loyalty.

Most scholars focused on "how to design stories" in their study on the brand story. Fog et al. (2005) made a profound study on the four basic elements of narration, namely, the information, conflict, characters and plot of the story. In terms of information and characters, Denning (2001) believed that a good brand story should contain positive themes and reflect the core concept of the brand, and at the same time, the story itself should include four elements: truth (Morgan & Dennehy, 1997), emotions (Godin, 2005), consensus (Godin, 2005) and commitments (Denning, 2006; Godin, 2005). In terms of conflict and plot, scholars believed that a good story should follow the narrative logic (Goulding et al., 2001), reflect the beginning, middle part and ending of the story in time sequence, and create a tense atmosphere and incite practice in plot (Fog et al., 2005). Starting from the elements of the brand story, Jia (2017) believed that the characters, plots, events, emotions and spirit of the story can represent the attraction of the story. Attractive stories make it easier to attract consumers' attention and change their attitude.

L. Xu et al. (2020) proved that the similarity between the characters in the story and the

target consumers will affect consumers' imagination of the brand story, and then affect consumers' brand attitude. Y. Yuan et al. (2016) proved that the authenticity of the brand story and the narrator would interfere with consumers' cognition of the relationship between themselves and the brand. As for the influence of brand story on brand attitude, M. Xu (2020) found that the ending arrangement of brand story will affect consumers' brand attitude.

In the functional research on brand stories, Peng (2012) elaborated the relationship between storytelling and brand building, and found that story advertisements are more likely to resonate with audiences, contribute to greater immersion, and more likely to transfer the ad-consumer relationship to the consumer-brand relationship. M. Xu (2020) proposed that the influence of brand stories on consumers' brand attitude is subject to the perceptual path, which controls consumers' attitude preferences and behavior choices mainly by building emotional bonds between brands and consumers. When people process narration, they not only have an understanding of the story, but also experience psychological simulation. Psychological images are easily triggered by information processing, and individuals are easier to imagine when dealing with story scenario (Taylor & Schneider, 1989).

When consumers process narrative advertisements, they imagine that they are experiencing the events described as if they were roles in the advertisements. Consumers are more likely to accept the values and significance conveyed in the advertising narration that plays the persuasive function of narration to convince consumers of the information in the story (Boller & Olson, 1991).

Brand stories can easily connect with consumers, and meaningful stories may resonate with audiences and affect them. Brand stories have their own structure and expressions. Good content and expressions are conducive to people's thinking and understanding of things, and making brand values, propositions and beliefs more acceptable to consumers (Herman, 2001). Brand stories change consumers' personal beliefs and attitude, including empathy and consumers' emotional reactions (Green & Brock, 2000).

According to G. Y. Huang (2006), if consumers understand the brand and further identify with the brand concept, the brand can align with consumers by storytelling and further create a stable relationship between consumers and the brand accordingly. Therefore, he concluded that storytelling helps build and upgrade the brand, and its function can be reflected in three aspects: first, making consumers know the brand; second, making consumers identify with the spirit and values of the brand; third, touching consumers, so as to reach a close relationship between the brand and consumers. This stable relationship will strengthen consumers' loyalty to the brand. Z. H. Zhou (2010) proved his proposition by content analysis: brand stories

helping improve brand image.

According to Peng (2012), brand stories are very different from general advertisements. Brand stories pay great attention to building successful emotional transmission with consumers. When consumers buy products of a certain brand, excellent brand story can make consumers feel the emotional experience and arouse related associations beyond the physical products, and these associations will make consumers resonate and identify with the brand. A. Q. Xu (2012) proved the superiority that brand stories positively affect brand attachment by experimental method.

G. D. Li (2015), a well-known brand strategy expert, proposed in his book *Story Marketing: Brand Model in the Mobile Internet Era* that brand story-based marketing is the most popular brand model in the world. He pointed out that “brands are vivid because of stories”. Domestic scholars' research on brand stories focuses on the positive influence of brand stories on consumer loyalty and the long-term development of brands, relatively takes into account China's national conditions, and is more suitable for the application background of brand stories in the field of domestic brand management.

2.1.3 Dimensional division of brand story

Different scholars have different perspectives on the dimensional division of brand stories, some according to the theme type of stories, some according to the elements of the story content, and some according to the authenticity of stories. Hopkinson and Hogarth-Scott (2001) classified brand stories from the perspective of story sources: managers' knowledge, consumers' consumption experience, employees' work experience, journalists' reports on new products, competitive strategies, and enterprise information.

O'Conner (2004) classified brand stories into creation stories, vision stories, strategic stories, marketing stories, convention stories, and historical stories from the level of organizational leadership. Silverman (2006) classified brand stories into professional stories, personal stories, and organizational success stories from the perspective of story nature. The representative view in foreign literature is the school of story management. According to the view of the school of story management, brand stories belong to stories of identification nature, which aims to tell consumers who I am, where I come from, and what I want to do in the future (Denning, 2005).

Similar to this view, Loebbert (2003) summarized three types of stories: who I am, who we are, and where we are going. The first stories of “who I am” tells consumers what the brand is like, and the second stories of “where I come from” enables consumers to understand

the source of the brand, such as brand birth, founder, and historical origin. The third story of these two views is the same. They both tell the enterprise development vision, formulate brand development goals, and attract consumers to understand and pay attention to the future development of the brand.

In the domestic literature, G. Y. Huang (2006), a Taiwanese scholar, classified brand stories into three aspects: enterprise stories, stories of commodities or services, and stories of people, including people inside and outside the enterprise. Specifically, from the perspective of brand management, there are 10 types of brand stories: (1) stories of the birth of brands, (2) stories of business organization; (3) stories of brand vision, (4) stories of brand evolution and innovation, (5) stories of brand interests and values, (6) stories of brand spokesman, (7) stories of brand and consumers, (8) stories of brand success, (9) stories of brand image, and (10) stories of the relationship between brand and society.

Besides, G. D. Li (2015), a well-known brand strategy expert, classified brand stories according to story themes, including love stories, stories of life, stories of virtue, stories of respect, and stories of personality. These two domestic scholars' views on the classification of brand stories are more comprehensive, specific, and suitable for the actual background of domestic brand management.

Q. Q. Chen (2017) classified brand stories into five categories: stories of brand birth (indicating the creation process of the brand), stories of brand founders (indicating the personality and other deeds of brand creators), stories of the brand and consumers (indicating the people represented by the brand and the brand's service concept to its customers), stories of products (indicating the characteristics of product quality, materials and workmanship), and stories of brand values and vision (indicating the connotation and concept of the brand).

Jia (2017) classified brand stories into two categories: one is factual stories, or legendary stories, such as biographical brand stories; the other is fictional stories. L. Xu et al. (2020) also selected the authenticity of stories as the research variable affecting the brand attitude in the study on story design mode. X. Chen et al. (2019) also considered the role of perceptions of authenticity on brand attitude in the study on stories with unsound people as protagonists.

In the study on the elements of story content, scholars put forward different views on which elements the content of brand story is mainly composed. According to Vincent (2002), the story contains four elements: plot, character, subject, and aesthetics.

Combined with the practical experience of story-based marketing, Fog et al. (2005) summarized four elements of the story: message, conflict, character, and plot. At the same time, American scholar Lawrence believed that storytelling has three important points: plot,

character, and aesthetics. These three scholars have similar views on the elements of the story.

Some scholars also analyzed the composition of the story from perspectives of dimension and structure. For example, Bruner (1990) proposed that the two dimensions of story construction are: actional vision and perceptual vision. Among them, actional vision refers to the events visualized by the public, while perceptual vision requires audiences to carefully understand the roles in the story.

According to J. Escalas (2004), the narrative structure of the story has two important elements: chronology and causality. The two scholars put forward the components of the story from the level of story purpose and logical relationship. Other scholars summarized the elements of the story from the core characteristics.

According to Gergen (1988), the story usually has the following characteristics, which are also its core elements, sorted in their establishment order: (1) focus, (2) material, namely event as the content of the story, (3) event sorted in chronological order, (4) sequence as a causality, and (5) a clear dividing point between the beginning, middle part, and ending of the story.

G. Y. Huang (2006) classified brand stories into seven elements: character, event, common object, conflict, message, narrative structure, and narrative characteristic. This view is recognized and quoted by domestic researchers in their analysis of brand story elements. As the factors after the decomposition of brand story, these seven factors are usually taken as the basic starting point when studying the influence of brand story on other things. Jia(2017)classified the elements of story content into five parts, including story character, story event, story plot, story emotion, and story spirit.

Combined with the classification methods of G. Y. Huang (2006) and Jia (2017), this thesis considers the influence of the attraction and vividness of the brand story on consumers' brand attitude. Therefore, the brand story is classified according to the elements of story content in its dimensional division to study the influence of the similarity between the role of the brand story and the story audiences and the authenticity of the event on the brand attitude.

The role of the story may be the founder of the brand, such as the brand story whose protagonist is Tao Huabi, the founder of Old Godmother, Coco Chanel in Chanel, and Harland Sanders, KFC founder and KFC's logo sample. It may also be the target consumer groups of the brand. For example, McDonald's collects stories of consumers on its Weibo and makes public these stories on its official account "McStories", so as to establish an emotional connection with consumer groups. Evian curing stone patients takes the target consumer groups in pursuit of health as its story character. Some scholars also analyzed the similarity

between the story character setting and the target consumer groups in their study on brand story. The setting standards of these story characters will greatly affect the ease with which story audiences get themselves immersed into the story scenario.

In the process of brand development, some important events become the basis of brand story creation. The event of the brand story includes three aspects: (1) real stories of brand creation, such as the name DOVE of Dove chocolate comes from a regretful love story, or Tao Huabi found the business opportunity of chili sauce and founded the brand, Lao Gan Ma. (2) virtual stories set for brand promotion in line with consumer behavior preferences, such as the brand story JOJO of Cheers to Joy is based on the fact that Flamingo's love heals the broken heart of a wife losing her husband. It suggests that brand stories may be virtual fairy tales or influential events in the process of brand creation. The influence and power of persuasion of stories on audiences should be considered from the perspective of the authenticity of stories.

To sum up, the dimensions of the brand are divided as follows: Character of brand story, including similar and dissimilar; brand story event, including real and unreal.

2.2 Brand attitude

2.2.1 Connotation of brand attitude

In the seventh edition of *Consumer Behavior* (Schiffman et al., 2013), attitude is defined as: Attitude is the long-term good or bad, emotional feelings and resulting behavioral tendencies of individuals on certain things or ideas, the most common ABC Model of Attitude. Attitude is the most common psychological phenomenon in social life and the constituent basis of human social perception and social behavior (Baron & Byrne, 1977).

Kotler and Gertner (2002) emphasized that attitude is an individual's estimation and experience of, as well as action tendency to the advantages and disadvantages of objects or concepts formed and maintained over time. Brand attitude is a positive or negative continuous reaction of consumers to a certain brand, which mainly comes from consumers' cognition. Brand cognition activity is a long-term accumulation process from perceptual to rational. Once brand loyalty is formed or consumer trust relationship is established between consumers and a certain brand, consumers' purchase intention to the brand will be strengthened. Brand attitude is the lasting internal evaluation of brand by consumers, and it is the key factor to determine consumers' purchase intention. Enterprise brand usually provides consumers with products or services with specific attributes to increase consumers' brand preference. The

rapid development of social media in the context of the Internet has prompted consumers to share their unique brand attitudes with others through multiple channels. Story is one of the important ways for brands to communicate with consumers. Many enterprises influence consumers' attitude towards brands by telling consumers stories about the origin, development and spokespersons of brands.

For the definition of brand attitude, Percy and Rossiter (1992) believed that brand attitude includes cognitive and emotional aspects, which is a comprehensive measure of whether the brand meets a customer's own needs or consumption purposes. Sengupta and Fitzsimons (2000) believed that brand attitude is that when consumers get stimulated by brand attributes or characteristics, they, combined with their own experience and grasped information, will have their cognition of and feelings about the brand changed accordingly and finally have their behavioral intention affected after internal psychological evaluation. Schiffman et al. (2013) believed that brand attitude is a learned tendency of consumers to a specific object in a specific situation, which leads consumers to form a relatively stable positive or negative behavior towards the object. Sengupta and Fitzsimons (2000) defined brand attitude as an inner state of consumers, or an inner evaluation of the brand after contacting brand related information based on their own experience and perception.

Combined with previous studies, this thesis defines brand attitude as a complex composed of brand cognition, emotion, and consumers' behavioral intention. It can be interpreted as that consumers form an evaluation of a brand by contacting the relevant information of a brand or actually experiencing the products or services of the brand in the combination with their experience and perception, and then reach an inner state that tends to buy the products or services of the brand.

2.2.2 Relevant studies on brand attitude

Through marketing communication, salespersons change consumers' brand attitude and finally realize brand loyalty. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (1999) proposed that the factors affecting consumers' attitude are divided into internal ones and external ones. Internal factors refer to those related to consumers themselves (such as consumers' personality). For example, it was found from studies that consumers' global consumption orientation has a positive influence on their attitude towards global brands of developed countries. While external factors refer to those related to the product, brand, or environment (such as brand image).

For example, according to studies, humanization, enterprise and symbol dimensions in brand image can positively affect brand attitude (Liu & Wang, 2009), and an enterprise's

charitable donation can also affect consumers' brand attitude (H. X. Yuan & Tian, 2015).

Obviously, brand story is an important external stimulus related to products and brands, which has a certain influence on brand attitude. J. Gao et al. (2016) found that telling brand story, a We-Media based brand marketing mode, has a more significant influence on consumers' brand attitude than customers' interactive participation. Brand attitude is an important brand equity. The formation of brand attitude can also be seen from the perspective of customer-based brand equity pyramid.

Specifically, consumers' brand attitude can be influenced through rational and perceptual paths. The rational path refers to that after recognizing the brand significance, consumers can make rational judgment on the product (such as affirming its quality) by understanding the product attributes in the brand positioning and then change their attitude. While the perceptual path refers to that after recognizing the brand significance, consumers can have feelings for the brand through cognizing the brand intention (such as feeling brand image and personality), and finally change their attitude.

As mentioned in the functional research of brand story in the previous part, brand story is of important symbolic significance, is conducive to brand image building and the transmission of brand personality, and can establish a deeper emotional connection with consumers. Obviously, it is a perceptual method to change consumers' brand attitude by storytelling.

2.2.3 Dimensional division of brand attitude

The study on attitude has been relatively perfect, while the academia has different voices in the measurement of attitude. In Percy and Rossiter (1992)'s two-dimensional attitude research model, brand attitude is composed of cognitive attitude and emotional attitude. Consumers find the benefits that a brand can bring through the cognition of values and functions. It means that cognitive attitude is a rational judgment to guide consumers' behavior, and emotional attitude will stimulate consumers' behavioral tendency to choose the brand. Millar and Tesser (1986) believed that brand attitude should include two categories: cognition and emotion, also known as the two-dimensional division method.

Yi (2009) also agreed with the two-dimensional division of brand attitude, and proposed that cognition is the process for consumers to obtain and understand brand content and information, and emotion is the decision of consumers on whether to buy the product by integrating existing brand knowledge with their own experience.

At the same time, as the research perspective of consumer experience tends to be open

and changeable, Rosenberg (1960) believed that brand attitude includes three components: cognition, emotion and intention. Among them, cognition is the basic part in the formation process of consumers' brand attitude, which is the rational cognition of brand or product, indicating consumers' views on the brand. Emotion refers to the perceptual level of brand attitude, which is disturbed by emotional factors and stems from consumers' preference and love for the brand. Intention refers to consumers' behavioral tendency, which is based on cognition and emotion, inevitably has an influence on consumers' personal behavior and then affects consumers' purchase decision.

In current studies on attitude, the generally accepted attitude measurement models are the multi-attribute attitude model established by Fishbein, TRA model (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and ABC model in the field of psychology.

Fishbein proposed the multi-attribute attitude model in 1963. This model predicts the attitude towards a specific brand by measuring the strength of consumers' belief in various attributes of a brand. If consumers have higher comprehensive evaluation score of the multiple attributes of a specific brand, they will have more positive brand attitude. The cognitive component, emotional component, and behavioral tendency component of brand attitude is of a certain internal congruity, and interact with and influence each other. Therefore, higher positive consumers' cognition of the brand indicates more positive brand attitude. The measurement formula of multi-attribute attitude model is as follows.

$$A_0 = \sum_{i=1}^n (b_i e_i) \quad (2.1)$$

In this formula, A_0 is consumers' attitude towards brands. I is various attributes expressed by the brand. b_i is strength of consumers' belief in attribute i . e_i is evaluation of attribute i .

Another TRA model of rational behavior for attitude measurement is shown in the figure below. This model was proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) on the basis of adjusting and extending the multi-attribute attitude model. In TRA model, attitude and subjective norms affect behavioral tendency, and behavioral tendency determines the possibility of a specific behavior. This model focuses on the formation process of attitude towards cognitive information and assumes consumers as rational people.

ABC Model of Attitude divides attitude into cognitive component, emotional component, and behavioral tendency component. Emotion refers to the audience's knowledge about and belief in the attitude object, emotion refers to the audience's feelings of attachment to and recognition for the attitude object, and behavior refers to the tendency to practical action generated by the attitude object. This model emphasizes the relationship between cognition, emotion, and behavior. Consumers generally obtain the information related to the brand or

product through the cognitive process, thus producing favorable emotional attitude towards identification or disidentification with the brand or product, and then producing the intentional state of whether to make a consumption choice.

Based on previous attitude measurement models and the definition of brand attitude in this thesis, this thesis uses ABC model to measure brand attitude, and divides brand attitude into cognitive brand attitude, emotional brand attitude and intentional brand attitude. The scale for reference is as follows in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Brand attitude measurement scale

Dimension	Measurement Item
Cognitive attitude	(1) The brand story deepens my impression of this brand
	(2) The brand story enables me to get more information about the products of this brand, such as product functions and applicable scenarios
	(3) The brand story enables me to get more information about this brand, such as brand image, brand positioning, and brand values
Emotional attitude	(1) The brand story shortens the distance between me and this brand and makes me feel closer
	(2) The brand story increases my favor for this brand, and I prefer the brand more
	(3) The brand story increases my recognition of this brand and I trust this brand more
Intentional attitude	(1) After reading the brand story, I will give priority to this brand among similar brands
	(2) After reading the brand story, I am more likely to the products of this brand
	(3) After reading the brand story, I prefer to recommend this brand to the people around me

2.3 Imagination fluency

2.3.1 Connotation of imagination fluency

The research on fluency originates from the research on stimulating cognitive processing. The speed and accuracy of cognitive processing are largely affected by the information to be processed (Bernstein & Welch, 1991). Oppenheimer (2008) defined fluency as easy or difficult subjective experience related to psychological process. In other words, fluency is not about the process itself, but information about how simple the process is. Alter and Oppenheimer (2009) developed the classification of fluency effects, including perceptual fluency, conceptual fluency, language fluency, retrieval fluency, and imagination fluency. The imagination fluency studied in this thesis is one of its branches.

Imagination is a quasi-perceptual experience and the generation of image like representation in thinking (Kosslyn, 1976). It is easier for audiences to get immersed into the story scenario and have a story picture in their mind by describing the plot of the story and

guiding people to imagine (W. Huang, 2010). Even after leaving the virtual world created by the story, the positive relationship between the individual and the story can be transferred to the positive relationship between the brand and the individual in the real world (X. Chen et al., 2019).

This study adopts the definition of imagination fluency by Chang (2013). Imagination fluency is the ease with which audiences imagine their participation in the story when they perceive and process the story content, and it is also the subjective experience of whether the audience can easily imagine (Flavián et al., 2017).

2.3.2 Relevant studies on imagination fluency

In studies on fluency, Reber and Schwarz (1999) studied what factors affect fluency. According to the results, the difficulty of information understanding, and cognition felt by audiences is affected by the objective characteristics of information which include the vividness and accessibility of information, as well as affected by the subjective familiarity with information. According to Green and Brock (2000), the ease of imagination is used to manipulate which strategies or clues are used to deal with a task. This can be weighted and applied to judgment, so as to manipulate audiences to choose what strategies to process this information. These strategies and other information in turn affect the final judgment. The feeling of ease is not used as information that can be used to solve problems. The basis of individual judgment is the declarative information applicable to the target that just comes to mind when the individual makes judgment. In this case, positive evaluation of a product makes it easier for the individual to think that the authenticity of the imagined information is high (Schwarz, 2004).

In studies on the influence of imagination fluency on brand attitude or product preference, Petrova and Cialdini (2005) proposed the fluency of consumption imagery. They asked the research participants to read a holiday advertisement and imagine the holiday, and then rated the difficulty of their imagination. According to their study, compared with people who watch advertisements that specifically guide their imagination (such as “imagine that you are here”), subjects without such instructions show a less positive attitude. Petrova and Cialdini believed that the ease of information processing felt by consumers is related to the positive influence. According to the study on the influence of imagery on likelihood judgment, individuals tend to use the ease with which they generate psychological scripts for events as an indicator of the likelihood of events. When the information consumers want to receive is vivid and interesting or is familiar, consumers will embrace more fluent imagination and can easily imagine what

the products or services expressed by this information are (Flavián et al., 2017).

According to the study of Green and Brock (2000), to some extent, individuals being attracted or getting immersed into the narrative world by the story may embody the influence of the story on their belief in real world. Therefore, when individuals read brand stories, if they can easily imagine the plot in the story, their belief in the story will be transformed into belief in the real world. This view was also confirmed in the study of X. Chen et al. (2019) as when individuals get immersed into the virtual scene of the story, this virtual emotional connection will be transferred to brand attitude in real world. Boller and Olson (1991) found that when consumers process narrative advertisements, they imagine that they are experiencing the described events as if they were roles in the advertisements. It suggests that when consumers contact the brand story, they will get themselves immersed into the story and compare their experiences with the story plot, so as to produce consistent experience and emotional resonance with the story characters (L. Xu et al., 2020).

Some scholars also believe that by changing the expression of information carrier or the physical characteristics of information, making consumers repeatedly exposed to the information content environment, using the simple exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968), repeatedly releasing product or brand information, or transmitting information in stages can consumers have a familiar feeling of imagination, so as to change their attitude or preference. Audiences have their ability to understand and process the story information improved by processing stories (Nielsen et al., 2018), which helps consumers easily simulate the story scenario psychologically in combination with their personal experience, thus contributing to high imagination fluency. When individuals actively invoke their memories and experience to imagine stories in order to acquire purchasing experience, these activities of invoking and connecting personalized experiences increase people's imagination fluency during processing stories.

2.3.3 Measurement of imagination fluency

Speaking of the measurement scale of imagination fluency, the most commonly used one is the scale developed by Bone and Ellen (1992). When processing advertisements, people may have images depicted by advertisements in their minds. Please evaluate the extent to which you agree with the following three items describing your advertisement processing experience: It is difficult for me to imagine the scene depicted in my mind; I find it difficult to have the image depicted in the advertisement in my mind; and I quickly have the image depicted in the advertisement in my mind. Chang (2013), Flavián et al. (2017) and others optimized the scale

on the original basis.

In this thesis, Chang's (2013) imagery fluency scale is used to test the subjects' imagination fluency according to the following 7-point Likert scale. Specifically, it includes the following four items: (1) It is not difficult for me to imagine the image of the story in my mind; (2) I can quickly form my imagination of the scene depicted in this story; (3) I think it is easy for me to get myself immersed into the characters in the story; (4) I feel that the scenes described in the story are easy to appear in life.

2.4 Self-brand connection

2.4.1 Connotation of self-brand connection

Although researchers have explained and explored self-brand connection from different perspectives and methods, the concept of self-brand connection mainly includes two main points: self-concept and brand image based on scholars' study on the concept of self-brand connection. Self-brand connection is based on self-concept.

Self-concept is a person's experience of his/her own existence, including both individual self and social self. Brand image is consumers' perception of the meaning and values of the brand through personal experience, word-of-mouth spreading of others or brand advertising information. Self-brand connection (SBC) measures the degree to which consumers integrate brands into their self-concept (J. Escalas, 2004).

Different scholars have different perspectives on the definition of the concept of self-brand connection. Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) believed that consumers build their social identity externally and build their cognition of self-concept internally through the meaning conveyed by the brand. C. W. Park et al. (2008) believed that when consumers regard the brand as a part of their self-concept and convey their self-concept to the outside world with the help of the meaning of the brand, there is a self-brand connection between self and brand.

C. Y. Wang (2012) believed that when consumers build their individual self and social self through brand, there is self-brand connection between consumers and brand. Although scholars give different explanations for the causes of self-brand connection from different angles, it can be seen that the causes of self-brand connection can be summarized into two categories. One is that individuals convey to others through brands their excellent personalized qualities that they have or hope to have to distinguish themselves from others. The other is that individuals build social identity externally through brands and convey the

organizational identity to others to which they belong or want to belong.

Based on previous studies, this thesis defines self-brand connection as the degree to which consumers build their individual self and social self with the cultural or psychological significance conveyed by the brand by choosing a brand, and integrate the brand into a part of their self-concept.

2.4.2 Relevant studies on self-brand connection

Self-brand connection is the degree to which consumers express themselves with brands after perceiving the brand image and values and comparing them with their self-image on the basis of processing the relevant information transmitted by brands. Many studies have proved that the degree of self-brand connection significantly affects consumers' attachment and loyalty to the brand, or in other words, consumers' attitude towards the brand and final purchase decision will be affected by consumers' degree of integration into the brand. Previous studies on self-brand connection mainly focused on the formation mechanism of self-brand connection and the consequences of self-brand connection (Hao, 2018). Scholars generally study the formation mechanism of consumers' self-brand connection from two perspectives: brand identity and brand connotation spreading.

From the perspective of brand identity, consumer identity is an important factor in the generation of self-brand connection (Oyserman, 2009), which is affected by consumers' self-congruity and self-improvement. In terms of self-congruity, Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) believed that people generally like people or things similar to themselves. Therefore, when consumers have little difference between their own characterization and the external image of the brand they are exposed to, they will hold a better and closer attitude towards the brand, resulting in a more positive brand attitude (H. H. Huang et al., 2012), in terms of self-improvement, Rhee and Johnson (2012) believed that consumers prefer brands that can get them to positive evaluation in order to meet their pursuit for positive image.

Aguirre-Rodriguez et al. (2012) found in their studies that consumers oriented to improvement show higher self-esteem, so they are more motivated to spend money on self-improvement and are willing to pay a higher premium for it. Consumers oriented to prevention are more willing to show higher self-brand connection for brands consistent with their self-concept in maintaining their original self-concept. In addition, according to J. Escalas' (2004) studies, the refinement of consumers' cognition will give birth to a stronger self-brand connection effect. Taking young people's clothing consumption as the object of study, Hémar-Nicolas and Gollety (2012) pointed out that individuals' social self will interfere

with their shopping behavior. On the whole, consumers build different levels of self according to the four levels of consumption process (I can control, I like and I share, I belong to, and I am what I am) (Woodruffe Burton & Wakenshaw, 2011), and build a series of individual, collective, and national self-brand connection according to the dimensions of consumer identity (individual identity and social identity) (C. Y. Wang, 2013).

Among them, the self-brand connection under the dimension of consumers' individual identity is mainly affected by three values of consumers: functional value, hedonic value, and symbolic value (Kleine III et al., 2009). While self-brand connection under the dimension of consumers' social identity is mainly affected by the reference group (also known as "social circle") (L. Gao et al., 2009; J. K. Park & John, 2010). When the groups consumers desire or identify with are closely related to brands, they will hope to use these brands to show their own characteristics and then build and express themselves, so as to further approach or become the desired "reference group" (J. E. Escalas & Bettman, 2003, 2005; Yao et al., 2011) and Ye et al. (2015) proved in their studies that social circle and face consciousness play a significant moderating role in self-brand connection in China. In addition, when consumers are under the ethnic (national) identity dimension subject to social identity, the self-brand connection is mainly affected by the country where the brand belongs to (Swaminathan et al., 2007).

From the perspective of brand connotation spreading, the important factor of self-brand connection is the individual's absorption and perception of the internal meaning contained in the brand. Consumers form brand recognition through brand stories or other advertising types, during which they will be directly or indirectly exposed to brand information (such as advertisements and products), so the content, type and even spreading mode of brand information may lead to difference in consumers' recognition of brand image (Flavián et al., 2017) and an unique personal understanding of the meaning of the brand in combination with environment and consumers' own experience (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998).

Y. Yuan (2016) found in her studies that the authenticity of stories and the clarity of characters would affect consumers' cognition and understanding of the brand image, and lead to a comparison between the brand image and self-image. When consumers connect with brands, especially when consumers form self-brand connection, they can be attracted and retained easily, so as to improve the competitiveness and business value of enterprises. Flavián et al. (2017) found in their studies that transmitting brand information by video can make the information more vivid, help consumers imagine the brand, and thus enhance consumers' cognition of the brand image.

Therefore, scholars study the formation of self-brand connection from three aspects: building brand meaning, disseminating brand meaning and correctly understanding brand meaning. Building brand meaning is mainly to tap memories of brand by virtue of consumers' nostalgic psychology. For example, Xue and Huang (2011) found that individuals' nostalgic psychology could significantly affect consumers' shopping decisions. In addition, C. Y. Wang (2013) also found that brands could affect the connection between consumers and brands by awakening the "brand prototype" in consumers' minds, and then affect consumers' brand attitude and purchase decisions.

Brand meaning is mainly disseminated through advertising system and fashion system. For example, Yao et al. (2011) found that advertising appeals can significantly affect consumers' willingness to buy, emotional appeal related advertisements of which can effectively improve the willingness to buy experiential products. J.K. Park and John (2012) further found in their studies that informational appeal related advertisements could better convince consumers who believe that their self-concept is not easy to get changed, while advertising appeal for self-improvement is more suitable for consumers who believe that their self-concept can be changed.

In terms of correctly understanding brand meaning, scholars mainly start from the individual consumers and their group culture. For example, Berthon et al. (2009) found that consumers' unique understanding of brand is affected by not only individual experience, but also their groups (in-group and out-group). Among them, consumers are more inclined to buy brands associated or consistent with the in-group, while rejecting or avoiding brands associated or consistent with the out-group (J. E. Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

X. C. Zhou and Zhang (2014) further abstracted the "social position" and "uniqueness" of social groups to study their interference effect on consumers' self-brand connection, and found that they have an obvious moderating effect. It was also found that in the in-group, the individuals' social position and uniqueness would enhance their positive relationship with the corresponding brand. In the out-group, individuals' social position and uniqueness have the opposite effect. Therefore, paying attention to the individual differences of consumers and the group environment that guides consumers' information contact can effectively promote consumers to have a self-brand connection that is more in line with business expectations.

2.4.3 Measurement of self-brand connection

From two research perspectives on self-brand connection, the formation of consumers' self-brand connection can be divided into two steps: (1) being stimulated by external information

(such as advertisements and products); (2) processing external stimuli with their own experience before forming self-brand connection. Combined with relevant studies on narrative theory, it can be found that consumers will also experience two steps in the process of hearing brand stories: (1) resonance processing: imagining the scenes in the story, projecting the situations experienced by the protagonist in the heart story onto themselves, and feeling the inner activities of the protagonist; (2) internalization: self getting immersed into scenes in the story by imagining them and associating his/her experience with story events to produce emotional connection. It can be seen that self-brand connection is the key factor for consumers to imagine and recognize brand stories, and then affect their own attitude and shopping behavior.

There are mainly two scales to measure self-brand connection, namely the 7-point scale separately developed by J. E. Escalas and Bettman (2003) and Sprott et al. (2009), as shown in their Self-brand Connection Scale ($\alpha = 0.9$), including 1) The brand reflects who I am; 2) I identify with this brand; 3) I think there is a personal connection between me and this brand; 4) I rarely use this brand to tell others who I am; 5) I think this brand can help me become the person I want to be; 6) I think this brand is “me”; 7) This brand suits me very well; Sprott's Brand Engagement Scale ($\alpha = 0.94$), including 1) There is a special connection between me and my favorite brand; 2) I think my favorite brand is part of myself; 3) I often feel that there is an association between me and my favorite brand; 4) In life, part of me can be defined by brand; 5) I think I have a close relationship with my favorite brand; 6) I identify with important brands in my life; 7) The brand I like is related to how I see myself; 8) My favorite brand is an important sign of who I am. Among them, the 7-point scale is the most widely used one.

2.5 Story involvement

2.5.1 Connotation of story involvement

M. Sherif and Cantril (1947) first put forward the concept of “ego-involvement”. In the study of involvement, scholars have continued deepening the meaning of this concept. C. W. Sherif et al. (1973) defined “involvement” as the psychological state caused by the correlation between perceived importance and self. Zaichkowsky (1985) defined involvement as the psychological activity generated by stimuli, which is the degree of consistency between consumers' needs and their inner feelings. In other words, individual involvement is an

individual's perception of external contact and stimuli, which is related to the individual's own situation to external contact and stimuli.

Therefore, combined with the definition and connotation explanation of involvement in the above studies, story involvement can be defined as the perception of the story audience about the relationship between themselves and the brand story, and can be understood as consumers' attitude towards the brand story. Taking into account previous studies on involvement, Jia (2017) defined story involvement as the degree of attention paid by consumers in the process of contacting and understanding stories, and divided story involvement into three dimensions: interest in and preference for stories, attention paid to stories, and processing depth of story content.

This study adopts Jia's (2017) definition of story involvement, which is the degree of consumers' own cognitive and emotional arousal in the face of brand stories.

2.5.2 Relevant studies on story involvement

As for the types of involvement, involvement can be divided into different types according to different standards in different research fields. Rothschild (1984) divided involvement into three types: situational involvement, persistent involvement, and reactive involvement. Situational involvement refers to people's involvement in relevant information in special situations, which is a temporary involvement in terms of duration; persistent involvement refers to the degree of people's long-term and continuous attention to an object, which is not affected by specific situations and a long-term and continuous involvement in terms of duration. Reactive involvement refers to the individual's response to the brand strategy when thinking about it, which has nothing to do with the duration, but consumers' thinking about the specific brand strategy. Zaichkowsky (1985) divided involvement into three categories according to individuals involved into information processing: information involvement, product involvement and purchase decision involvement. Information involvement refers to the degree to which consumers attach importance to obtaining information, product involvement refers to the degree to which individuals attach importance to products and the degree to which products matters to individuals, and purchase decision involvement refers to the degree to which individuals attach importance to the purchase decision they want to make. The concept of story involvement in this study is similar to that of situational involvement and information involvement. Firstly, brand stories are like providing consumers. Readers of stories, with a specific situation, thus being similar to the concept of situational involvement; secondly, story involvement can be regarded as the degree of attention and effort paid by

consumers when they are exposed to story information, and the level of story involvement depends on whether consumers actively explore the information in the story, thus being similar to the concept of information involvement.

In the study on factors influencing involvement, Zaickowsky (1985) divided reasons of involvement into personal factors, product or stimulating factors, and situational factors. Personal factors mainly include values, self-concept, demand for and interest in the thing. Behe et al. (2015) believed that product related factors such as product price, product cognitive risks, difference in alternative scheme, and media form would affect the degree of involvement. Zaichkowsky (1985) believed that situational factors mainly involve external physical environment, social environment of purchasing, time factor, and behavioral purpose. Therefore, as consumers' perception of the relationship between story and self, story involvement may also be affected by the attractiveness of the story, besides consumers' self characteristics and objective environmental factors (Jia, 2017).

The role of involvement is mainly reflected in influencing consumers' purchase intention and purchase decision (X. S. Dong & Zhang, 2009; Krugman, 1966; Y. Li et al., 2015). Consumers' involvement can change their perception of product risks, lower their attention to the negative impact of products and reduce their doubts about products. Sinclair and Campbell (2014) made analysis from the perspective of perceived value and believed that consumers' product involvement is significantly related to perceived value. According to studies of Widiyanto et al. (2012), the degree of involvement positively affects consumers' purchase decisions. It was found that consumers' involvement in products may be reflected in actively processing information about products, leading to more positive consumption decisions. The specific information processing path that consumers choose is closely related to the information transmitted by advertisements and the degree of relevance to individuals (Jia, 2017). Therefore, as the reflection of consumers' degree of attention and processing effort to story information, higher story involvement implies that it is more likely the story attitude, brand awareness and understanding, brand attitude path will occur. When applied to the study of brand story, it can be found that consumers with different story involvement have different and new understanding of the brand and different attitudes because they pay different attention to the story.

2.5.3 Measurement of story involvement

Jia (2017) developed the measurement scale of story involvement based on scales of involvement measurement prepared by De Dreu and Boles (1998). Green and Brock (2000)

demonstrated its good reliability and validity in her research results. Therefore, this thesis adopts the maturity scale developed by Jia (2017) to test the subjects' story involvement according to the following 7-point Likert scale: 1) I am relatively focused while reading this story. 2) I like reading this story because it is interesting. 3) I know what this story tells after reading it. 4) I am even immersed into this story.

2.6 Consumers' perception of value

2.6.1 Connotation of consumers' perception of value

The study on value is a field concerned by many disciplines. For example, economics pays attention to "exchange value" and "use value", while accounting and finance emphasizes "book value", "estimated value", "market value", and "replacement value". Value is derived from customers' direct evaluation and perception of goods. Rokeach (1973) pointed out that value is a persistent belief and is the basis of human action preference, so that individuals or society prefer a certain behavior pattern or expected state of existence, and dislike the opposite of it. Value may be the influence of long-term experience, which will be transformed into a concept and view of consumers. Value is the key factor influencing purchase behavior or repurchase intention. Customers' positive belief in value will lead to positive purchase behavior or repurchase intention, while negative belief in value is unfavorable to consumers' purchase behavior or repurchase intention.

The idea of customer perceived value can be found in *The Practice of Management* (Drucker, 2012). He pointed out that what consumers buy and spend money on is not products, but value. In the same year, Miles (2015), an engineer of General Electric Company, associated consumer effectiveness with consumer demand. The views of these two masters are the initial source of exploring consumer perceived value.

Some scholars defined consumers' perception of value from the cost-performance ratio between pay and gain, rationally considering the advantages and disadvantages of choosing a brand or product, which belongs to the "gain and loss theory". This view defines consumers' perception of value based on the assumption that humans are rational. Porter and Millar (1985) believed that consumer perceived value is the trade-off between consumer perceived performance and consumer perceived cost. Mazumdar and Monroe (1990) believed that perceived value can be defined as the ratio between perceived return and perceived pay, and that consumer perceived value reflects the comparison between consumers' perceived quality

or perceived benefit of products and the perceived pay caused by paying money. Zeithaml (1988) believed that consumer perceived value is the overall evaluation of the effectiveness of products or services after weighing the benefit that consumers can perceive and the cost they pay in obtaining products or services. Spreng and Olshavsky (1993) believed that consumer value is consumers' expectation of the results of purchasing products from the perspective of gain and loss. Day (1994) believed that consumer perceived value is the difference between consumers' perceived benefit and perceived cost.

D. H. Dong (1999) believed that consumer perceived value is consumers' comparison between the effectiveness acquired by consumers and the cost paid in the whole process of purchasing and using a product. Parasuraman and Grewal (2000) believed that consumer perceived value is a trade-off between consumer perceived gain and perceived loss. Bai and Liao (2001) also defined perceived value from the perspective of trade-off between advantages and disadvantages, and believed that perceived value is the comprehensive result obtained after the trade-off between perceived loss and perceived gain.

Z. Chen and Dubinsky (2003) believed that consumer perceived value is the net profit earned by consumers minus the cost paid for profits. Wu and Fan (2004) believed that consumer perceived value is the overall evaluation formed after individual consumers or consumer groups with special needs and purposes, under specific use scenarios, perceive various benefits having been, being or to be obtained and various contributions having been, being or to be made to obtain these benefits in the process of getting their needs satisfied thanks to the specific market supplies provided by specific companies, and weight and compare these benefits and contributions. Zheng and He (2004) believed that consumer perceived value is also consumer perceived benefit or consumer perceived gain, the synthesis of material and spiritual benefits felt by consumers in transactions or through consumption, as well as a subjective feeling and post-event comprehensive evaluation indicator.

Some scholars defined consumers' perception of value from the perspective of consumers' overall evaluation of brands or products to understand consumer's perception of value from an empirical perspective, which belongs to the "overall utility theory". Gale (1994) believed that consumer perceived value is the quality perceived by consumers after the adjustment to the relative price of products. Grönroos (1997) believed that consumer perceived value is the overall self perception of products, services, information, interaction, experience, relationship and other elements in the interactive relationship between consumers and enterprises. Woodruff (1997) believed that consumers' perception of value is the preference of consumers to evaluate and subjectively perceive the attributes, performance and results of products in

order to achieve their goals and objectives.

Sihna and DeSarbo (1998) believed that consumer value refers to the value given to or from consumers, which would be generated by the product itself or relevant immaterial images or experience, and has been realized in the past or would be realized in the future. Value can refer to not only the gain obtained by the supplier from exchange, but also the benefit obtained by the demander from products and services (Woodall, 2003). Du et al. (2009) believed that brand perceived value is consumers' comprehensive evaluation of functional and emotional benefits of a brand. Zha and Wang (2006) believed that consumer's perception of value is an overall and comprehensive evaluation of the whole consumption process of products or services and a highly personalized and abstract cognition including not only the relative relation between the benefits obtained and the sacrifices borne, but also the emotional and experiential values obtained by consumers in the consumption process.

Scholars have different opinions on what consumers' perception of value is. Since perception is an individual subjective experience, scholars believe that consumers' perception of value is a subjective experience that is the consumers' subjective cognition of the functions, image embodiment, meaning realization and other characteristics of products or services. Therefore, this study defines consumers' perception of value as consumers' overall subjective evaluation of the use process of products or services provided by the brand, which represents consumers' evaluation of quality commitment and demand satisfaction of the brand.

2.6.2 Dimensional division of consumers' perception of value

Barney (1991) believed that from the perspective of customers, customer value consists of five dimensions: social value, emotional value, functional value, cognitive value, and conditional value, which provides the basis for the expansion of the existing customer value composition system. The theory of customer delivered value of Kotler (1998) holds that the total customer value includes: product value, service value, personnel value, and image value, while the total cost includes monetary cost, time cost, energy cost, and physical strength cost.

Obviously, this classification, especially the classification of total customer value, is from the perspective of enterprises, not or at least not all based on customers. Keller and Lehmann (2003) further divided brand perceived value into functional value, symbolic value, and experiential value. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) believed that consumer value includes four dimensions, namely emotional value, social value, quality value, and price value. Flint (2002) understood value from three aspects: values, ideal value, and value judgment, and believed that consumer perceived value is consumers' trade-off and comparison between characteristics

of giving up and expectation. Sihna and DeSarbo (1998) believed that there are four consumer value: acquisition value, the benefits obtained after paying a certain amount of money; transaction value, the happiness consumers get from the transaction process; use value, the effectiveness achieved in the use of products or services; and redemption value, the residual value obtained after the exchange of old products with new ones or the termination of services.

Based on western research results of customer value, Bai and Liao (2001) believed that the composition and driving factors of customer value of service enterprises include service quality, brand value, systematic organizational learning, and customer relations, and made a preliminary study on the relationship between customer loyalty and competitiveness of service enterprises. Holbrook (1999) divided the types of value from three key dimensions: (1) external/internal value, (2) self-directed/others-directed value, and (3) proactive/responsive value. Value is divided into eight types according to these three dimensions. Among them, functional value is an external, self-directed, and responsive value. It refers to the responsive evaluation of the potential ability of an object or experience as an external means to meet a personal and internally directed purpose. It emphasizes the practicality and means of object and experience.

Symbolic value means that consumers actively control their customer behavior as an external means to positively respond to others-directed goals. This is an external, others-directed, and proactive value. C. W. Park et al. (1992) pointed out that consumers choose a brand or product to meet their functional and symbolic needs. Functional needs are related to specific and actual consumption issues, while symbolic needs are related to self-image and social identity. In other words, when consumers score the attributes of a brand or product, they evaluate the functional value or symbolic value of the brand or product.

Bhat and Reddy (1998) pointed out that brands can convey functional value and symbolic value to consumers. Among them, functional value of brands emphasizes the benefits of solving consumption issues to meet the practical and rational needs of consumers, while symbolic value of brands emphasizes the social and pleasure aspects to meet consumers' needs for self-expression and self-enhancement. When consumers focus on the functional value of brands, they will be eager to obtain information about the functionality and practicability of the brand. When consumers focus on the symbolic value of brands, they are eager to establish a specific personal connection with the brand (L. Xu et al., 2020).

Taking into account previous studies and the objectives of this study, "dichotomy" is adopted to dimensionally divide consumers' perception of value into symbolic value perception and functional value perception. This study adopts the maturity scale developed by

Bhat and Reddy (1998) to measure consumers' symbolic value perception and functional value perception and makes adjustment to Bhat's scale according to the needs of this study. The scale contains dimensions of symbolic value perception and functional value perception. The former dimension is measured by items of 1) Using this brand can reflect my personality; 2) I think it is worth buying this product; 3) Products of this brand have high popularity in society. The dimension of functional value perception is measured by items of 1) The product quality of this brand is trustworthy; 2) Products of this brand have stable performance; 3) Products of this brand have good effect in use.

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Chapter 3: Research Design and Model

3.1 Research hypotheses

3.1.1 Influence of brand story on brand attitude

Brand story can be applied in marketing research because of narrative transportation theory and narrative persuasion theory. It indicates that the story helps the audience empathize and resonate with the plot, characters, and emotions of the story and at the same time, the content and narrative mode of the story are easier to understand than other marketing advertising contents (such as technical parameters and grades), thus enhancing consumers' understanding fluency and making the story more persuasive to the audience.

Narrative transportation is the third way of persuasion to change consumers' attitude beyond the centralized path and peripheral path during processing the model, which goes beyond the possibility of refinement. It emphasizes that the story receiver feels personally on the scene due to the story and gets a sympathetic experience, and the fascinating story gets audiences immersed into the story world and experience the characters and plot of the story in imagination. The reason why the story receiver gets immersed into the story largely lies in empathy (Slater & Rouner, 2002) and mental imagery (Green & Brock, 2000). To make it easier to understand something abstract, some scholars defined narrative transportation as two aspects, namely, the degree to which the story receiver resonates with story characters, or in other words, the dynamic process of the receiver experiencing story characters in an imaginative way (Zheng & He, 2004) and the sum of consumers' imagination inspired by the story (Van Laer et al., 2014) to make consumers experience reality in the process of receiving the story. Consumers can interpret their brand experience through brand story. This sense of consumption experience is different from the experience from direct contact with products or brands. When hearing or reading a story, the listener or reader is drawn to the story situation and feels the emotions of the characters. He or she is pulled back into a similar personal experience or background of understanding meaning (Morgan & Dennehy, 1997). Stories are easy to be remembered because they trigger visual images and emotions. Bell (1992) believed

that a good story can let everyone touch familiar things and show new things about our life, the world, and ourselves. Therefore, brand story can make consumers feel quite deep through the experience in the story. Especially, brand stories themed by family affection, friendship and love are more likely to trigger consumers' positive emotions. To some extent, individuals are attracted by a story or drawn to a narrative world, and they may show the impact of the story on their beliefs in the real world. Green and Brock (2000) conceptualized transportation as a unique psychological process, and a fusion of attention, imagery, and feeling. When individuals read the story and get immersed into the scene, the ideas, values and meaning conveyed in the story will change individuals' cognition, emotion, and attitude.

Narrative persuasion in narratology is a further effect of narrative transportation, which well explains the persuasiveness of brand story. It emphasizes that consumers get their emotions, cognition, beliefs, attitudes, and intentions changed due to empathy (Van Laer et al., 2014). This change is mainly a result of positive psychological persuasion, which is specifically reflected in the positive attitude of consumers towards the story, as well as the story-consistent attitude and story-consistent intention during experiencing story plot. Generally, in the process of brand communication, brand story is a more effective way of communication than traditional ways driving purchase, like lectures and publicity. Telling brand story has the unique potential to go beyond directly sharing information with consumers. The content expressed in the form of story is often more emotional and persuasive to consumers than that expressed in the form of explanation with charts.

Besides the transportation and persuasion effects of the brand story, the brand story also helps consumers deeply understand the brand and improve consumers' brand involvement. The special arrangement of story characters, events and emotions helps consumers picture a virtual situation in which consumers are willing to indulge, so as to enhance consumers' brand involvement. Additionally, brand story can also strengthen the emotional connection between the brand and consumers. When reading the brand story, consumers will subconsciously get themselves immersed into the characters of the brand story, as well as learn and imitate the events experienced by the characters to gain experience. In this way, consumers have a "empathic" psychological attachment to the brand and get their brand loyalty strengthened.

Adaval and Wyer (1998) proposed that the narrative form of information presentation may have a more positive emotional response to marketing stimuli, thus inducing consumers to adopt more positive processing strategies. According to G. Y. Huang (2006), if consumers understand the brand and further identify with the brand concept, the brand can align with consumers by storytelling and further create a stable relationship between consumers and the

brand accordingly. Therefore, he concluded that storytelling helps build and upgrade the brand, and its function can be reflected in three aspects: first, making consumers know the brand; second, making consumers identify with the spirit and values of the brand; and third, touching consumers, so as to reach a close relationship between the brand and consumers. This stable relationship will strengthen consumers' loyalty to the brand.

Z. H. Zhou (2010) proved his proposition by content analysis: brand stories helping improve brand image. According to Peng (2012), brand stories are very different from general advertisements. Brand stories pay great attention to building successful emotional transmission with consumers. When consumers buy products of a certain brand, excellent brand story can make consumers feel the emotional experience and arouse related associations beyond the physical products, and these associations will make consumers resonate and identify with the brand. A. Q. Xu (2012) proved the superiority that brand stories positively affect brand attachment by experimental method.

G. D. Li (2015), a well-known brand strategy expert, proposed that brand story-based marketing is the most popular brand model in the world. He pointed out that brands are vivid because of stories. M. Xu (2020) also found in her studies on ending of brand stories that brand stories can change consumer behavior by strengthening consumers' brand cognition and emotional connection with the brand. People engaged in narrative processing can shift their attention from critical thinking of information content to producing positive influence, so as to produce favorable associations. On the other hand, if the brand does not show its story, consumers will lack a channel to build brand association, and may tend to evaluate the brand through the product itself (J. E. Escalas, 2004).

Telling brand story makes it easier to get consumers' continuous attention, has a more positive impact on consumers' evaluation than traditional didactic information, and strengthens the self connection between consumers and brands. Narrative processing can create or enhance the self-brand relationship because people usually explain the meaning of their experience by integrating the experience into the story.

Similarly, in response to advertisements that tell stories, when consumers try to associate the incoming narrative information with the story in memory, narrative processing may create a link between the brand and self, leading to a more positive brand attitude (J. E. Escalas, 2004). The character setting of the brand story determines the persuasiveness of the story to a certain extent.

L. Xu et al. (2020) proved in the research that when consumers feel that they have similar characteristics with the protagonists in the brand story, consumers will actively draw on their

experience and memory to process the story to obtain experience and to form a more positive brand attitude accordingly. It indicates that the audience is similar to the characters in the brand story, so it is more likely that the audience is to get immersed into the characters to experience the situations experienced by the characters in the story.

Additionally, the most important function of the story, a means of persuasion marketing, is to convince consumers of the brand and products. Therefore, the event selection of the brand story will affect the audience's degree of perception of the authenticity of the story event. When consumers feel that the information conveyed by the brand story is true, they are more likely to invoke cognitive resources to extract the events in memory and connect the plot in the story with the elements in memory, so as to deepen their immersion and understanding of the story and produce a more positive brand attitude (J. E. Escalas, 2004).

In combination with previous studies, this thesis puts forward the following hypotheses:

H1: Brand stories have positive influence on consumers' brand attitude.

H1a: Similarity of characters in brand story has positive influence on consumers' brand attitude.

H1b: The audience's perception of the authenticity of the event has positive influence on consumers' brand attitude.

3.1.2 Mediating effect of imagination fluency

The reason why stories affect people's views, identification and judgments is that stories can guide people to imagine, compare, and get immersed (W. Huang, 2010). He proposed that stories and narration are largely used to communicate and establish relationships with people because stories have the power to invite audiences to imagine. The brand story increases the vividness of the information conveyed by the story via reasonable and interesting plots or setting character characteristics similar to target audiences. In the study on imagination fluency, the difficulty of information processing and imagination felt by the information audience is affected by the objective characteristics of information (Reber & Schwarz, 1999), as well as the vividness of information. Therefore, vivid information will induce consumers to think imaginatively about their experience of brand and product or service (Nowlis & Shiv, 2005).

If consumers can easily describe the brand in the story, they can actively evaluate the brand in combination with this information and form a favorable purchase intention (Flavián et al., 2017). Adaval and Wyer (1998) proposed that the new information presented in narrative form is easy to understand because it is structurally similar to life experience and

can help consumers imagine the value and significance of the brand. The plot, characters, themes, and events of the brand story determine the attraction and vividness of the story, and the vividness enhances the comprehensibility of and immersion in the story, leading to higher imagination fluency (Jia, 2017).

According to the dual information processing theory, consumers' processing of acquired information is divided into two pathways. One is the fast rule processing of explicit information about brand, and the other is the slow associative processing of implicit information about brand (Smith & DeCoster, 2000). Both systems of processing give birth to the characterization of the brand, and the narrative storyline is used to express the brand personality, through which consumers have a more visual understanding of the brand personality, feel easy to get immersed into the brand story and have imagination about the story scene.

X. Chen et al. (2019) believed that brand stories can effectively improve audiences' imagination fluency by invoking their own memories and experience with the help of the created virtual world with characters, events, plots, and emotions. Van Laer et al. (2014) proved in their studies that based on the narrative transportation theory, consumers are inspired by the story plot to imagine the story scene in the process of receiving the story when they perceive and process the brand story. If the information, clues, and plots in the story are reasonable and considered by audiences as highly authentic brand experience, they will have a higher motivation to obtain personal experience through understanding real information (J. E. Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

As a result, it is relatively easy to establish connections. Consumers' familiarity with the brand and their favorable, powerful, and unique brand associations in their memory help themselves easily imagine the scene of the brand story (W. Huang, 2010). According to studies of Stern (1991), narrative processing occurs naturally, and it is easier for individuals to process story information than non-story information. When individuals believe that the events in the story are true and reasonable and have a high possibility of occurrence, they can easily understand and imagine quite complex stories.

In combination with the above research results on imagination fluency, the hypotheses of this study are as follows:

H2: Brand stories have positive influence on consumers' imagination fluency.

H2a: Similarity of characters in brand story has positive influence on consumers' imagination fluency.

H2b: Perception of the authenticity of the brand story event has positive influence on

consumers' imagination fluency.

In previous studies on fluency, many scholars pointed out that fluency can significantly enhance the audience's belief in the authenticity of information and higher product preference. The subjective experience of the ease of imagining products can be used as valuable information to determine attitude and purchase intention (Petrova & Cialdini, 2005; Schwarz, 2004). In the e-commerce environment, if consumers can easily describe the product, they will actively evaluate the product by taking into account this information and form a favorable purchase intention (Flavián et al., 2017). L. Xu et al. (2020) studied the mediating effect of fluency of self-imagination in the study on brand story design mode, and found that audiences associate the subject and plot in the brand story with themselves by virtue of fluent self-imagination, which will transfer the positive relationship between consumers and the brand in the story to the relationship between audiences and the brand and promote the audience to perceive the degree of connection between themselves and the brand, thus leading to a positive brand attitude. Therefore, it is necessary to consider whether imagination fluency has a significant impact on consumers' attitude.

H3: Imagination fluency has positive influence on consumers' brand attitude.

Based on the above theoretical deduction of hypotheses 1-3, it was found that brand stories may enhance consumers' imagination fluency, and imagination fluency will then positively affect consumers' brand attitude. Individuals are attracted by the story and get immersed into the narrative world through imagination. They change their belief in the real world according to their experiences in the story world (Green & Brock, 2000). When individuals have relatively high imagination fluency, they can better get themselves immersed into the virtual world created by the story (X. Chen et al., 2019), and the brand story-brand attitude path is more likely to occur. Since imagination fluency is an individual's subjective experience (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009), different individuals will invoke their own memories and experiences to understand even the same story to varying degrees, leading to individuals' different brand attitudes. In other words, consumers' imagination fluency is not only affected by the attraction and vividness of brand stories, but also affects consumers' brand attitude. Brand stories have a direct impact on brand attitude, so consumers' imagination fluency is a mediating factor in the path of brand stories affecting brand attitude.

H4: Imagination fluency plays a mediating role in the relationship between brand story and consumers' brand attitude.

H4a: Imagination fluency plays a mediating role in the relationship between similarity of characters in brand story and consumers' brand attitude.

H4b: Imagination fluency plays a mediating role in the relationship between perception of the authenticity of the brand story event and consumers' brand attitude.

3.1.3 Double mediating effect of self-brand connection

Laer et al. found that whenever the story audience experiences the characteristics of the character setting and resonates with the emotions in his/her associations, self-brand connection will come into being. Piaget et al. (1981) found that the individual's cognitive process follows the STAR principle. It indicates that reaction is made when a certain stimulation is assimilated into theta structure by the individual. In a combination of narrative management and brand management, there is a two-step process that consumers go through when they hear a brand story: (1) "Resonance processing": Consumers project the situation of the hero in the story they hear into themselves to feel the inner activity of the hero; (2) "Internalization": Consumers associate brand stories with their own experiences and are resonated emotionally; self-brand connection occurs when the brand story is "resonated, processed and internalized" by consumers.

In studying the relationships among social circles, face awareness, and self-brand connection, Ye et al. (2015) indirectly demonstrated that brand stories have a positive impact on consumers' self-brand connection. It is therefore necessary to presume that the brand story feature can bring about notably different effects of interference to the self-brand connection. According to Sen (2015), a brand story with clear identity message can help build brand identity, or consumers are more likely to identify with the brand when the characters in the story are of practical reference significance. The study of Y. Yuan et al. (2016) indicates that the narrative person, plot clarity and event genuineness in a brand story have a marked impact on consumers' perception of brand image, thus producing different levels of self-brand connection.

Hence, the thesis proposes the following hypotheses:

H5: A brand story has positive influence on self-brand connection among consumers.

H5a: Brand story character similarity can positively promote self-brand connection among consumers.

H5b: Perception of genuineness of brand story events can positively promote self-brand connection among consumers.

Y. Yuan et al. (2016) hold that self-brand connection means consumers' self-extension of the brand. Therefore, consumers, as individuals, are bound to maintain internal consistency. In other words, self-brand connection can cause significant interference with their brand

attitudes and behavioral intentions. Moore and Homer (2008) found in their survey that university students' attitudes toward WNBA could be positively interfered by consumers' self-brand connection. Ferraro et al. (2013) once again proved the correlation between self-brand connection and brand attitude when they studied the influence of consumers' use of brands in a conspicuous way on others.

Hence, the thesis proposes the following hypothesis:

H6: Self-brand connection can have a marked positive impact on brand attitudes.

Reviewing Hypothesis 1, 2 and 3, we can conclude that brand stories impact consumers' brand attitudes and self-brand connection and that self-brand connection also influences brand attitudes among consumers. Does this suggest that the impact of brand stories on brand attitudes is transmitted through self-brand connection? Does self-brand connection mediate the mechanism of action between them two? Hence, the thesis proposes the following hypotheses:

H7: Self-brand connection mediates brand stories and consumers' brand attitudes.

H7a: Self-brand connection mediates character similarity in brand stories and brand attitudes among consumers.

H7b: Self-brand connection mediates perceived genuineness of story events and consumers' brand attitudes.

The impact of brand stories on consumer attitudes is contingent not only on their appeal and convincingness but also on consumers' self-concept (Jia, 2017). After hearing the brand story, consumers will perceive and imagine the brand story based on their own experience, meaning system, and internalized rules and values. If it is easy to conceive the story, consumers can be immersed in the imaginary scene of the story. The mental process of identifying and emotionally experiencing the characters or scenes in a story can enhance the individual's positive cognition and emotions as well as the persuasive power of the story (X. Chen et al., 2019). Self-brand connection measures the extent to which an individual has integrated the brand into himself (J. E. Escalas & Bettman, 2003). The chain of associations that consumers have with a brand is a significant part of brand value, and the brands consumers use can be associated with their own mental representations because they use these brands to define and create their self-concepts (J. M. Zhang, 2019). When they can easily imagine the scenarios and characters of a story, consumers will, in the virtual world created in the story, associate the features of the characters and the events of the story with themselves to form self-brand connections (Y. Yuan et al., 2016). Consumers form varying degrees of self-brand connections as they perceive a brand story, and such connections further influence

consumers' brand attitudes (Q. Q. Chen, 2017). Hence, the thesis proposes the following hypotheses:

H8: The mediating mechanism of imagined fluency between brand story and consumer brand attitude is further interpreted by self-brand connection.

H8a: The mediating mechanism of imagined fluency between brand story character similarity and consumer brand attitude is interpreted by self-brand connection.

H8b: The mediating mechanism of imagined fluency between brand story event genuineness and consumer brand attitude is interpreted by self-brand connection.

3.1.4 The mediating role of story involvement

Story involvement refers to a person's perception of relevance to a brand's story based on personal factors such as their intrinsic needs, values and interests. Although it is the degree to which consumers pay subjective attention to the brand story, this variable is influenced not only by consumers' own characteristics but also by the object, namely the brand story. Y. R. Jia (2017) found in her study that the composition of a story determines the appeal and persuasive power of the story, thus having an impact on how consumers attach value to a brand's story. Therefore, as consumers' perception of the relationship between story and self, story involvement may also be affected by the attractiveness of the story, besides consumers' self characteristics and objective environmental factors.

It is found from the study of involvement influence factors that the external stimulus brought by information is viewed as essential. X. S. Dong and Zhang (2009) summed up a wide range of definitions and classification approaches of involvement in marketing research and noted that experts and scholars in related fields generally agree that the cause of involvement is external stimulus and that information processed in the brain, in combination with the level of self-accord with consumers, has an impact on the consumer's attention to and participation in the object. Behe et al. (2015) also held that information can influence the level of consumer involvement.

When explaining information involvement, Zaichkowsky (1985) defined it as the level of attention that consumers pay to the information they acquire or contact with advertisements and noted that consumers with high involvement would actively explore information when exposed to it. Therefore, we can perceive information transmission and presentation as well as increase of external stimulus as effective ways to enhance consumer involvement.

According to Silverman (2006), storytelling is an act of communication that provides a whole set of elements for conveying information, enabling people to quickly assimilate and

understand information and produce a new meaning. Storytelling can thus be comprehended as an effective way of information transmission. We can figure out a path of telling brand stories: conveying story information and enhancing story involvement based on the foregoing reasoning process and taking into account the influence of information on consumer involvement and the attribute of brand story's "conveying information". In case of a higher degree of information genuineness conveyed in the story and self-similarity between story characters and consumers, consumers are able to relate the plot of the story closely to the elements in memory while invoking cognitive resources to retrieve events from memory. On the basis of the deduction above, we can conclude that brand story is able to enhance the story involvement among consumers and that both the event genuineness and character similarity of brand stories have a positive impact on consumer story involvement.

H9: A brand story can enhance story involvement among consumers.

H9a: Brand story character similarity can enhance story involvement among consumers.

H9b: Perception of genuineness of brand story events can enhance story involvement among consumers.

When applied to the study of brand story, we can find that if consumers have a high level of involvement in the brand story or if they pay high attention to and attach great value to the brand story, they have more knowledge about the brand and are more likely to have a positive attitude to the brand.

According to Y. Li et al. (2015), involvement has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention and decision-making. Higher level of consumers' involvement in the brand means that they are more willing to purchase, and they process product information in a more positive attitude and input more time and energy in making a purchase decision. Accordingly, when consumers are more involved in the brand story, they know more about the brand information, are more likely to have purchase intention for the brand and devote more energy to the brand when making consumption decisions, thus generating a positive attitude to the brand. Hypothesis can be made from this:

H10: Story involvement has positive influence on consumers' attitude to the brand.

Based on the theoretical deduction of Hypotheses 9-10 above, we can find that brand story can promote consumers' story involvement, and story involvement can promote consumers' attitude to the brand. Previous research has also confirmed that there is a significant correlation between consumer involvement in the brand story and perceived value.

According to Verbeke et al. (2009), consumers' involvement can change consumers' risk perception of products, diminish their concerns and doubts about the negative effects of

products, and enable them to focus more on the positive impact of products when receiving product information to have a more positive attitude. J. Y. Liu et al. (2009) noted that the prerequisite for perceived risk to play a role in consumer behavior is high involvement. In the case of low involvement, perceived risk does not have any influence on consumers. Based on the above conclusion, we can infer that even for the same brand story, different consumers have different levels of story involvement and attitude toward the brand. In other words, consumers' story involvement has a positive impact on consumers' attitude to the brand while being influenced by the genuineness of brand story events and character similarity. Accordingly, we can hypothesize that story involvement mediates the brand story and the attitude to brand.

H11: Story involvement mediates brand stories and consumers' brand attitudes.

H11a: Story involvement mediates character similarity in brand stories and brand attitudes among consumers.

H11b: Story involvement mediates perceived genuineness of story events and consumers' brand attitudes.

3.1.5 The moderating role of consumer value perception

Bai and Liao (2001) argues that the level of consumers' perceived value is a direct factor affecting consumer satisfaction and loyalty and that the enhancement of perceived value can be achieved via decrease of perceived loss and increase of perceived gain. In the study of brand value, a great many scholars hold that consumers' loyalty and attachment to a brand are contingent upon their ability to meet their own value demands. Motivation orientation influences cognitive activities and information processing when consumers make choices, according to De Dreu and Boles (1998).

Rokeach (1973) referred to such orientation as "human value" and maintained that such value guides people's behavior to a large extent in the daily environment. Value is motivational in nature, where value is evidently a derivative of the consumers' purchase goal. The empirical study of Bhat and Reddy (1998) proved that functional and symbolic benefits have similar impact on consumers' evaluation of practical and expressive brands. In the empirical study of the relationship between various types of value and brand loyalty, Tsai proved that repeated purchase intention for brands is influenced by functional value, affective value and symbolic value.

The research of C. L. Yu (2005) further discovered that functional, experiential and symbolic values drive repurchase intention in different regions. When studying value

perception, Zou et al. (2007) found that functional value has a non-linear effect of increasing returns on brand loyalty and that its influence on brand loyalty enhances with the increase of functional value.

L. Xu et al. (2020) found in the study of brand story that when consumers have a higher perception of symbolic value, they pay less attention to the practical information of the brand, which means that the authenticity of the marketing information such as brand story is less important, while what the brand can construct and how it expresses itself are more concerned. When consumers perceive higher functional value from the brand itself, they attach more importance to the practical information conveyed by the brand story and expect to obtain real information about the brand products or services. In order to obtain or learn from authentic and reliable experience, audiences with higher functional value perception are more significantly affected by the authenticity of stories and the similarity of characters. Functional value perception has a significant difference in the influence of functional value perception on story character immersion and imagination.

If consumers perceive a higher symbolic value from the brand, such value perception can help consumers establish a specific anthropomorphic self-brand connection with the brand, and express themselves through brand construction and expression. Therefore, when consumers understand brand stories, they focus on refining the meaning of the story and comparing it with their own meaning system (Malhotra, 1988). In this condition, consumers will pay more attention to whether the values and sense of meaning conveyed by the story itself can resonate with personal values rather than the specific characteristics of the story such as plots and events (Nan & Heo, 2007). Hence, consumers' perception level of symbolic value mainly affects their understanding of brand meaning rather than the story itself. In other words, consumers' perception level of symbolic may not significantly affect their imagination of story scenarios.

If consumers perceive higher functional value from the brand, they pay more attention to the practical information about the quality and function of the product or service conveyed by the brand story, so as to judge whether the product or service is useful or not. In other words, the real, referable or production-agency information conveyed by the brand story is more important to consumers. It has a greater impact on how consumers put themselves in the context of the story. Therefore, when consumers perceive higher functional value, brand stories with similar characters and true events have a stronger positive impact on the audience's understanding and imagination into the story.

Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H12: Consumers' perception of brand value (symbolic value/functional value) moderates the relationship between brand story characteristics and consumer imagination fluency.

H12a: The difference in the level of symbolic value perceived by consumers from the brand does not affect the effect of story character setting similarity on consumers' imagination fluency when they self-substitute the story.

H12b: The difference in the level of functional value perceived by consumers from the brand will significantly affect the effect of story character setting similarity on consumers' imagination fluency when they immerse themselves in the story.

H12c: The difference in the level of symbolic value perceived by consumers from the brand will not significantly affect the effect of story authenticity perception on consumers' imagination fluency when they immerse themselves in the story.

H12d: The difference in the level of functional value perceived by consumers from the brand will significantly affect the effect of story authenticity perception on consumers' imagination fluency when they immerse themselves in the story.

3.1.6 Moderated mediating effect

According to the above hypotheses, it is found that consumers' value perception (symbolic value perception/functional value perception), brand story characteristics (character similarity and event authenticity), imagination fluency, and self-brand connection constitute a moderated chain-based dual mediation model. When the brand story characteristics (character similarity and event authenticity) influence the brand attitude, imagination fluency and self-brand connection play a chain dual mediating role. Besides, the first mediation path of the chain-based dual mediation model is moderated by consumer's value perception (symbolic value perception and functional value perception).

Specifically, imagination fluency and self-brand connection mediate the effect of brand story on brand attitude, and consumers' value perception influences this mediation path. When consumers perceive higher symbolic value, the identity, status, emotional expression and other symbolic factors that brands can bring to themselves play a stronger role in influencing audience's reception and understanding of the story.

Therefore, the moderating effect of the perception of symbolic value on the chain dual mediation model which is constituted by brand story characteristics (character similarity and event authenticity), imagination fluency, and self-brand connection, may not be significant. When the audiences perceive higher functional value from the brand, they pay more attention to the real information that can be used for reference in the brand story. If the character setting

of the brand story is similar to the audience or the story events are real and referable, the audience is more likely to be affected by the functional value when they receive and understand the story and immerse themselves into the story context.

In summary, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H13: Consumers' value perception moderates the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection on brand story characteristics and brand attitude.

H13a: The symbolic value perception moderates the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection on the character similarity of brand story and the brand attitude.

H13b: The functional value perception moderates the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection on the character similarity of brand story and the brand attitude.

H13c: The symbolic value perception moderates the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection on the perception of event authenticity and the brand attitude.

H13d: The functional value perception moderates the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection on the perception of event authenticity and the brand attitude.

3.2 Conceptual model

This study focuses on the influence of brand story characteristics (character similarity and event authenticity) on brand attitude. It uses real and fictional brand design materials to explore and empirically study the relationship between brand story characteristics, imagination fluency, self-brand connection, story involvement, consumer value perception, brand attitude, and other variables. The first step is to verify the main effect of brand story characteristics on brand attitude; the second step is to separately analyze the single mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection on brand story characteristics and brand attitude and verify the chain dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection on brand story and brand attitude; the third step is to verify the single mediating effect of story involvement between brand story characteristics and brand attitude; the final step is to explore the moderating effect of consumer value perception on the relationship between brand story characteristics and imagination fluency.

According to the hypotheses of this study, the moderating effect of consumer value perception occurs in the first path of the chain dual mediating effect. On the basis of above research verification, a moderated chain dual mediating effect model is constructed by five variables: brand story characteristics (character similarity and event authenticity), imagination fluency, self-brand connection, consumer value perception (symbolic value perception and functional value perception), and brand attitude, to analyze whether there are significant differences in mediating effects between $X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2$ and $X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y$ under different consumer value perception levels. The study contents are as follows:

- 1) Explore the influence of brand story characteristics on brand attitude.
- 2) Explore the mediating effect of imagination fluency on brand story characteristics (character similarity and event authenticity) and brand attitude.
- 3) Explore the mediating effect of self-brand connection on brand story characteristics (character similarity and event authenticity) and brand attitude.
- 4) Explore the chain dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection on the relationship between brand story characteristics (character similarity and event authenticity) and brand attitude.
- 5) Explore the mediating effect of story involvement on brand story characteristics (character similarity and event authenticity) and brand attitude.
- 6) Explore the moderating effect of consumers' value perception (symbolic value perception and functional value perception) on the relationship between brand story characteristics (character similarity and event authenticity) and imagination fluency.
- 7) Explore the chain dual mediating effects of imagination fluency and self-brand connection on brand story characteristics (character similarity, event authenticity) and brand attitudes under different levels of consumers' value perception (symbolic value perception and functional value perception). The overall research model idea is shown in Figure 3.1.

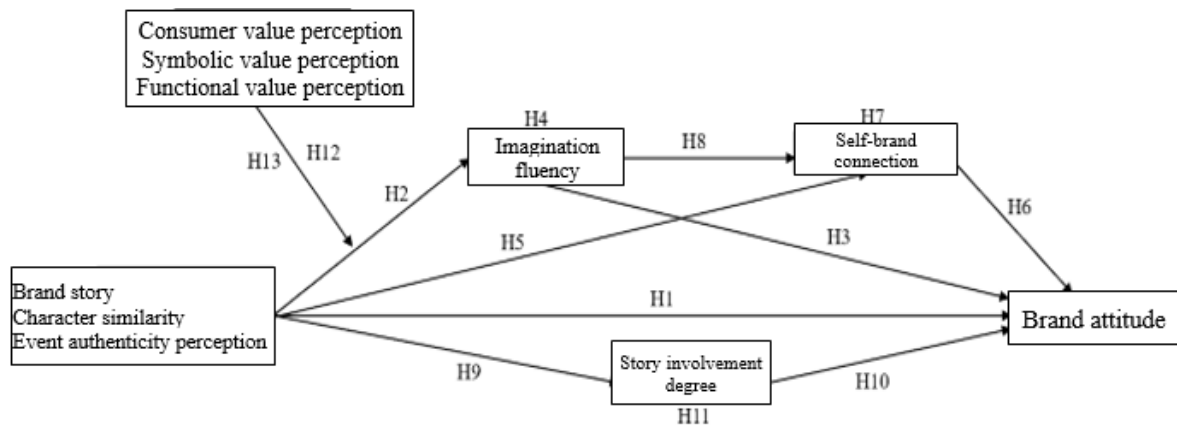


Figure 3.1 Research model

Chapter 4: Experimental Design and Data Collection

This Chapter is about research design and data processing. Based on literature review and theoretical analysis, scientific and rigorous research schemes are designed to ensure the reliability of subsequent research data and analysis conclusions. This Chapter mainly contains: experimental objectives, design ideas and preparation process of experimental materials, dimensions and items of relevant measurement scales, process of issuing formal questionnaires, descriptive statistics of experimental data, reliability and validity test and conclusion of each variable, and process and conclusion of one-way ANOVA of different variables.

4.1 Experimental objectives

How do the perception of plot authenticity and the character similarity of brand story affect consumers' attitude towards the brand? What are the roles of imagination fluency, self-brand connection, and story involvement in the process of brand story influencing consumers' brand attitude? Can consumers' perception of symbolic and functional value of the brand play a moderating role in the whole model? The direct effect, mediating effect, and moderating effect of the model will be tested in turn.

First, the direct influence of authenticity perception and character similarity on consumers' brand attitude is examined; secondly, whether imagination fluency and self-brand connection play a mediating role in the effect of story characteristics on brand attitude, as well as the dual mediating role of the two variables in the whole model, are examined; thirdly, the mediating role of story involvement in the influence of brand story characteristics on consumers' brand attitudes is verified; finally, the moderating effects of functional value perception and symbolic value perception in the model are verified successively.

4.2 Experimental materials

4.2.1 Brand story materials

To avoid that audiences have undifferentiated perception of authenticity and character similarity for the same brand story materials, and to make the subjects' perceived value distributed in different ranges as much as possible, $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$ groups of experimental materials are constructed in Table C.20.

In terms of product types, this experiment firstly selected common product types such as laundry detergent, toothbrush, chocolate, sports, mobile phone, and jewelry. Considering factors like the purchasing power of consumers and the differences in functional and symbolic perception of these product types, electric toothbrush and sports brand are selected to make a distinction between functional value and symbolic value. In the interview before questionnaire design, most interviewees said that they chose electric toothbrush because "it can brush tooth more cleanly", and paid more attention to product function parameters, while brand was not a key consideration. When choosing sports products, besides the functional value of the products, interviewees also considered symbolic value factors such as brand grade, self-expression, and identity display. Therefore, after comprehensive consideration, electric toothbrush and sports brand products are selected to design the brand story.

In order to distinguish the subjects' perception of character similarity as far as possible and avoid the distribution of the subjects' perception of character similarity in the same range, the founders who live far away from the subjects and the consumers who live in close proximity to the subjects are selected as the story characters, and the experimental materials are written accordingly. In order to reduce the impact of other interference factors on the subjects to the utmost extent and to ensure the experiment result, all stories are described in the same narrative method and narrative principle as far as possible.

In order to ensure consumers' authenticity perception, the experiment selected Li-Ning and Braun Oral-B as experimental materials, and constructed real founder story materials and real consumer story materials according to the on-line public information and real consumer interview materials. To avoid the interference of other factors to the experiment, on the basis of the real stories, the fictional story materials changed the brand name, the character name, and other sensitive information that might arouse the audience's association with the real brand. During the experiment, the subjects were repeatedly told that "the following is a

fictional brand story”, so as to ensure the difference in the authenticity perception as much as possible.

This study mainly selected college students as experimental subjects, because college students have roughly the same consumption ability and are basically consumers or potential consumers of the experimental materials, which can minimize the interference of individual differences on experimental results as much as possible.

The following are examples of several types of brand story material design, more details see Annex A.

1) Founder × True Brand Story

As one of the most extraordinary athletes in the 20th century, Li Ning won 14 world champions successively in his sport career, created the myth in the global gymnastics history, and was known as the “Prince of Gymnastics”. At the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, Li Ning won three gold medals, two silver models, and one bronze medal, followed by overwhelming flowers and applause. Li Ning recalled that local residents lined the streets to give him a welcome when he returned from Los Angeles to his hometown Liuzhou, and scrambled to touch his models. “At that moment, China just implemented the reform and opening up policy and was in desperate need of inspiration, for which our athletic performance was above the value of sports.”

In contrast to the vigorous joy accompanying his success, Li Ning was later on hit by the endless sadness resulting from failure. At the Seoul Olympic Games four years later, Li Ning suffered setbacks one after another, and failed to obtain any medal. After coming back into the dressing room, his teammates and he cried on each other’s shoulder. What worse is that the unreasoning audiences even sent blaze and rope to him. In the end, he announced his retirement.

In 1990, two years upon his retirement, Li Ning established LI-NING sports brand. When the brand development was in low ebb, Li Ning, due to his confidence in Chinese elements and recognition of home-made quality, frequently appeared at overseas fashion weeks with clothes featuring Chinese classic elements. The same as his excellent performance at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, in the field of sports clothing brands, LI-NING earned the dignity and glory for China and home-made brands again by virtue of the classic and decent Chinese elements.

Throughout the brand development, Li Ning unswervingly holds sport is cheerful and deserves the participation of more people, and what he could do is to provide them with better sports goods. Now, LI-NING has grown into one of the most popular China-chic brands

among young people, and led a new trend of the sportswear industry with the concept of “Chinese styles + fashion”. Li Ning believes that people are of unlimited potential, and sports will make people more confident, dare to show themselves, and unceasingly tap own potential and go beyond themselves. Therefore, the advertising slogan of LI-NING is designed so: Anything is possible, Make the Change.

2) Consumer × Real Brand Story

Zhang is a college student and is fond of jogging, street dance and basketball in spare time. Thus, Zhang needs to purchase sportswear in different scenarios. The core demands of Zhang are as below:

1. The sportswear should play the sport protection effect.
2. The price of the sportswear should be affordable.

Due to the limited living expenses at his disposal when Zhang was a student, it was impossible for him to purchase such sports brands of higher price as adidas and Nike. Upon access to relevant information online and comparison and analysis thereof, Zhang selected LI-NING. First, he purchased a pair of running shoes in LI-NING Yunque series at the price of RMB269. After wearing the shoes to run for one month, Zhang lauded them to the skies, “they are lightweight, ventilate and wearable, and their service life can be two to three years easily as long as I run on synthetic surface track, not cement pavement.” In addition to sneakers, clothes branded LI-NING also surprised Zhang. As a member of the street dance club then, Zhang had to wear eye-catching and fashionable clothes on stage performance, while the price of fashion brands was costly. As a result, hoodies of LI-NING were chosen by their dance teacher as stage clothes. “The stage effect is satisfactory. And that looks good on us due to the unique China-chic style.” Since then, Zhang became a fan of LI-NING, and purchased its basketball shoes, fitness wear, and China-chic clothes.

After graduation in 2019, Zhang has more financial freedom, so he has also purchased products of brands including AJ, adidas, and Fila, in addition to his favored LI-NING. After many overseas brands were reported bringing shame on Xinjiang cotton on 2021, March 25, Zhang further consolidated his support for home-made brands. “Among China-chic sports brands, LI-NING dominates the leading position. In combination with my use experience in recent years, this domestic brand is absolutely worth buying, and LI-NING has registered ongoing progress in its design in recent years. Following the event of Xinjiang cotton, the share price of LI-NING hit limit up, which manifests that most people have confidence in this brand like I do.”

3) Founder × Fictional Brand Story

In 1921, Rob Oran established the brand of “ORAN” in France to manufacture household appliances. After the painstaking operation of Rob Oran for more than twenty years, ORAN was in the ascendant.

However, the luck of Rob Oran elapsed with the outbreak of World War II, which inflicted heavy loss on his career. During the World War II, ORAN was forced to accept the weapon manufacturing contract, especially, the manufacturing of radio and radio control equipment. In 1944, the factory of ORAN was ruined in an air raid, which brought the painstaking efforts of Rob Oran to nothing. Confronted with the heavy losses of ORAN, Rob Oran never encountered the idea of giving up. Although he had only 150 employees then, Rob Oran resolutely determined to rebuild his company and resume production. Thereafter, the development of ORAN was in a difficult situation. However, neither the cruelty of wars nor the difficulty in rebuilding a factory damped down the enthusiasm of Rob for innovation. Instead, Rob Oran insisted on the spirit of seiko. Despite a sea of difficulties arising from his restart of career development, he never abandoned the pursuit for perfect quality of products, and held that design means the perfect combination of innovative technology, high-quality raw materials, and simple design. It was the unique brand philosophy and competitive quality that empowered ORAN to get back on track.

In the 1960s, ORAN and the dentist Dr. Houston cooperated to launch the ORAN electric toothbrush, which made the best of the excellent technologies of ORAN in home appliances and saw the integration of the long-standing oral medical and care experience of Dr. Houston. Absorbing design inspirations from rotation and vibration of pendulum clock, the ORAN electric toothbrush featured the cup-shaped brush head of left and right rotation and back and forth vibration at a rapid speed, and started the era of 3D teeth cleaning.

Following the humanized design concept of “less is more”, products of ORAN are simple and exquisite. Passing on and inheriting the seiko spirit of Rob Oran, the ORAN electric toothbrush comprises hundreds of exquisite crafts and keeps improving, making it one of the most welcomed electric toothbrush brands in the market.

4) Consumer × fictional brand story

For as long as Zhang Yang could remember, her family members were deeply troubled by passive smoking as a result of her father’s addiction to smoking, for which they often quarreled with each other. As a perennial smoker, her father coughed a lot and had his teeth covered with smoke spot. To make her father quit smoking, Zhang Yang went out of her way, and even provoked her father as a result of speaking without thinking, for which Zhang Yang and her father grew apart.

When Zhang Yang was a junior, her father once suffered from breathing difficulties. Thanks to the immediate rescue, her father escaped with bare life, and recovered after treatment. After taking a new lease of life, her father finally determined to cooperate with the professional smoking cessation treatment. After smoking less, her father became in good health, while the smoke spot on his teeth remained as before.

In order to protect her father from the damage caused by smoking, Zhang Yang sent her father a set of ORAN oral cleaning kit on the occasion of a Father's Day, which includes electric toothbrush for polishing and whitening, whitening toothpaste, dental floss, and mouth wash. Therein: whitening toothpaste can whiten the surface of teeth. Electric toothbrush is outfitted with the small round head for polishing, and has the brush head 360° rotating and vibrating in all dimensions to grind and whiten teeth surface and remove dental plaque, and automatically slowing down in response to the hint of pressure red light to prevent bleeding gums, for which it is suitable for Zhang Yang's father, whose teeth are vulnerable yet in need of comprehensive and in-depth cleaning.

After catching sight of the advertising slogan of "Care your teeth and love you more" on the toothbrush set, Zhang Yang's father suddenly got to know the care and thought of his daughter, because this gift is full of the warm love of his daughter, in addition to protecting his teeth. Eventually, they are reconciled. According to the instruction book, Zhang Yang's father uses the ORAN oral cleaning kit every day. Three months later, the smoke smog on his teeth has faded, and dental calculus and dental plaque also faded. It is hardly possible to find that Zhang Yang's father was once a perennial smoker according to his teeth.

ORAN stays focused on the research of oral care, and is dedicated to providing oral care products for consumers including Zhang Yang's father. ORAN pursues innovative design and functions, develops intelligent cloud-based electric toothbrushes with integration of AI technology, and launches brush heads with different functions to make oral hygiene more intelligent and worry free. In light of the consistent product quality and brand philosophy of ORAN, Zhang Yang continuously selects ORAN when replacing oral cleaning products for her family members and has become a loyal fan of this brand. Besides, her friends also favor the brand of ORAN after the recommendation by Zhang Yang.

4.2.2 Variable measurement

First of all, before the brand story reading, the differences in individual perception of brand value were investigated through brand introduction. This study divided brand value perception into functional value perception and symbolic value perception. The value

perception difference was measured by giving the subjects a brand brief description of the material stimulus. Brand value perception was measured by the following maturity scale, as shown in Table 4.1, with a score from 1 to 7 indicating a gradual increase in the degree of agreement.

Table 4.1 Brand value perception measurement scale

Dimension	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
symbolic value perception	(1) Using this brand can reflect my personality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(2) I think it is worth buying this product	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(3) Products of this brand have high popularity in society	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
functional value perception	(1) The product quality of this brand is trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(2) Products of this brand have stable performance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(3) Products of this brand have good effect in use	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In order to test the scientific nature of the materials, this study investigated the subjects' reaction to the stories to test the reliability of the materials, and used them as the measurement data of independent variables. This study focused on brand stories, mainly from the event and character of the story. Therefore, it measured subjects' feelings towards the story, including the similarity between the story characters and the subjects and the perception of the event authenticity in the brand story. Maturity scale was used to measure the character similarity and the perception of event authenticity in the story, as shown in Table 4.2, with a score from 1 to 7 indicating a gradual increase in the degree of agreement.

Table 4.2 Brand story measurement scale

Dimension	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Character similarity	(1) I think there are some similarities between the character in the story and myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(2) I have a soft spot for the character in the story	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Perception of event authenticity	(3) I feel close to the character in the story	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(1) I think the information conveyed by the story is authentic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(2) I think the story plots conform to the routine of everyday life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(3) I think the event described in this brand story could also exist in reality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Based on previous attitude measurement models and the definition of brand attitude in this study, this thesis adopted ABC model to measure brand attitude, and divides brand attitude into cognitive brand attitude, emotional brand attitude and intentional brand attitude. The measurement scale is shown in Table 4.3, with a score from 1 to 7 indicating a gradual increase in the degree of agreement.

Table 4.3 Brand attitude measurement scale

Dimension	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Cognitive attitude	(1) The brand story deepens my impression of this brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(2) The brand story enables me to get more information about products of this brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(3) The brand story enables me to get more information about this brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Emotional attitude	(4) The brand story shortens the distance between me and this brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(5) The brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Intentional attitude	story increases my recognition of this brand (6) The brand story increases my favor for this brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(7) After reading the brand story, I will give priority to this brand among similar brands	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(8) After reading the brand story, I am more likely to buy products of this brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(9) After reading the brand story, I prefer to recommend this brand to the people around me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

For the maturity scale measuring the mediating variable, imagination fluency (Chang, 2013), the subjects' imagination fluency was tested according to the following 7-point LIKERT scale. The measurement scale is shown in Table 4.4, with a score from 1 to 7 indicating a gradual increase in the degree of agreement.

Table 4.4 Imagination fluency measurement scale

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1) It is not difficult for me to imagine the image of the story in my mind	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(2) I can quickly form my imagination of the scene depicted in this story	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(3) I think it is easy for me to get myself immersed into the story scenario	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(4) I feel that the scenes described in the story are easy to appear in life							

The scale of chain-based dual mediating variable, self-brand connection, is very mature, which are mainly developed by J. E. Escalas and Bettman (2003) and Sprott et al. (2009). This study mostly adopts this scale with a total of 7 measurement items. The scale is shown in Table 4.5, with a score from 1 to 7 indicating a gradual increase in the degree of agreement.

Table 4.5 Self-brand connection measurement scale

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1) The brand reflects who I am	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(2) I recognize this brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(3) I think there is a personal connection between me and this brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(4) I rarely use this brand to tell others who I am	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(5) I think this brand can help me become the person I want to be	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(6) I think this brand is "me"	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(7) This brand suits me very well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The single mediating variable, story involvement, belongs to the category of involvement studies. The measurement of story involvement in this study refers to the scale (Green & Brock, 2000) and is adjusted according to the actual needs to form a scale as shown in Table 4.6, with a score from 1 to 7 indicating a gradual increase in the degree of agreement.

Table 4.6 Story involvement measurement scale

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1) I am relatively focused while reading this story	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(2) I like reading this story because it is interesting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(3) I clearly know what this story tells after reading it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(4) I am immersed in this story	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4.3 Experimental process

The experiment took the form of questionnaire to distribute and collect data. Questionnaires were mainly distributed through the website of “wjx.cn”, which was not limited by space and convenient to obtain diversified sample data. A total of eight different experimental questionnaires were designed, and each link of the questionnaire was randomly distributed to different university students. Each experimental questionnaire consisted of two parts:

Part I: Introduction to Experiment. First of all, subjects were welcome to participate in the experiment. They were invited to read the experiment instructions, and informed of the experiment background, relevant matters needing attention, and simple task instructions. They were also told that the data obtained in the experiment was only for academic analysis, and their personal information would not be disclosed.

Part II: Data Collection. The subjects were invited to read the basic information of the brand in text form. After reading the information, the subjects were required to measure the perceived value of the brand products. Then the subjects were presented with the brand story and told that it was a true/fictional brand story. After reading the story materials, the subjects were required to complete the follow-up measurement of authenticity perception, character similarity perception, imagination fluency, self-brand connection, story involvement, and brand attitude. The last part of the questionnaire was demographic variables, including gender, age, education background, and other basic information. At the end of the experiment, the subjects were sincerely thanked for their participation and awarded with red envelopes.

4.4 Descriptive statistics and reliability and validity analysis

4.4.1 Descriptive statistics

The subjects of this study were mainly college students, with a total of 600 participants. After eliminating the questionnaires filled by non-conforming subjects and with incomplete answers, 582 valid questionnaires were collected, with an effective rate of 97%. The descriptive statistics of samples are shown in the Table 4.7 below. Among the 582 valid samples, the proportion of males is slightly higher than that of females, with 332 males accounting for 57.241%, 250 females accounting for 42.955%. In terms of age, most are 17-20 years old and over 29 years old, among which, 288 aged 17-20 years old, accounting for 49.485%. 134 aged above 29 years old, accounting for 23.024%, and other age groups accounted for 27.491%.

Most subjects have master's degree or bachelor's degree, among which 369 have bachelor's degree, accounting for 63.402%, 171 have master's degree, accounting for 29.381%, and participants with other education level accounting for 7.217%. The number of subjects in the eight experimental groups was basically the same, accounting for 12.027% (electric toothbrush × founder × true brand story), 12.715% (electric toothbrush × founder × fictional brand story), 12.887% (electric toothbrush × consumer × true brand story), 12.027% (electric toothbrush × consumer × fictional brand story), 13.230% (sports brand × founder × true brand story), 12.027% (sports brand × founder × fictional brand story), 12.887% (sports brand × consumer × true brand story), and 12.199% (sports brand × consumer × fictional brand story). From the overall sample distribution, the samples collected in this study are reasonable and can be used to represent the research object. The information is listed in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Descriptive statistics

Item		Frequency	Per centum
Sex	Male	332	57.241%
	Female	250	42.955%
Age	17-20	288	49.485%
	20-23	86	14.777%
	23-26	51	8.763%
	26-29	23	3.952%
	>29	134	23.024%
	Senior High School/Technical Secondary School	5	0.859%
Educational Background	College	24	4.124%
	Bachelor	369	63.402%
	Master	171	29.381%
	Doctor	13	2.234%
	Electric toothbrush × founder × true brand story	70	12.027%
Experimental Group	Electric toothbrush × founder × fictional brand story	74	12.715%
	Electric toothbrush × consumer × true brand story	75	12.887%
	Electric toothbrush × consumer × fictional brand story	70	12.027%
	Sports brand × founder × true brand story	77	13.230%
	Sports brand × founder × fictional brand story	70	12.027%
	Sports brand × consumer × true brand story	75	12.887%
	Sports brand × consumer × fictional brand story	71	12.199%

4.4.2 Reliability and validity analysis

Reliability analysis is to test the consistency of experimental tools and results, including internal consistency reliability and combination reliability. The internal consistency reliability generally uses the Cronbach's alpha to measure the reliability and consistency of the measurement results of each item in the questionnaire. It can be seen from the reliability and validity analysis results in Table 4.8 that the α values of each variable scale in this experiment are all higher than 0.8, indicating that the internal consistency reliability of the scale in this

study is good and has high reliability. The combined reliability is tested by CR value. It can be seen from the reliability and validity analysis results in Table 4.8 that the factor loadings after standardization of all observed variables are greater than 0.6, and the CR value of all latent variables are higher than 0.7, indicating that the overall scale has good combined reliability.

Next, the validity test of the questionnaire is conducted to test the measuring tool's accuracy, so as to ensure the effectiveness of the measuring tool, including content validity and structure validity. Firstly, the content validity is tested. The maturity scales adopted in this thesis are verified and used by scholars at home and abroad. The dimensions and items of each scale have been verified repeatedly and are in line with the actual situation in China and meet the requirements of social investigation and research in the field of marketing science. Secondly, the structure validity is tested. KMO Test and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity test are performed on the questionnaire. As shown in the following table, KMO values are all greater than 0.7 and Bartlett was significant at the level of 0.000, which is suitable for factor analysis. There is correlation between variables and the factor analysis is valid. Then, through principal component analysis, according to the principle that the eigenvalue is greater than 1, the factors extracted from each scale are consistent with the dimension design of the scale. The factor loading value of each scale item in the questionnaire is greater than 0.4, and the cumulative variance contribution rate of the factor is 50%, which can cover the vast majority of the scale information. Then, AVE is used to test the convergence validity of the questionnaire. It can be seen from Table 4.8 that AVEs of all latent variables are greater than 0.5, indicating that the overall scale has good convergence validity. In addition, it can be seen from Table 4.8 that the AVE square root of each latent variable is higher than the correlation coefficient of the row and column, which proves that the overall scale has good discrimination validity. All the above conclusions can prove that the structure validity of this scale is good.

Table 4.8 Reliability and validity analysis results

Variable	Item	Factor loading after standardization	Cronbach's alpha	Cumulative Variance Explained	KMO and Bartlett's Test	AVE	CR
Brand Attitude	A1	0.664	0.938	79.163%	KMO=0.911 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approximate Chi-Square=2376.177 Degree of Freedom=36 Significance=0.000	0.632	0.939
	A2	0.780					
	A3	0.826					
	A4	0.671					
	A5	0.799					
	A6	0.805					
	A7	0.863					
	A8	0.878					
	A9	0.840					
Imagination	B1	0.802	0.866	73.233%	KMO=0.743 Bartlett's Test of	0.576	0.844
	B2	0.777					

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Fluency	B3	0.769			Sphericity: Approximate Chi-Square=736.906 Degree of Freedom=6 Significance=0.000 KMO=0.924		
	B4	0.681					
Self-brand Connection	C1	0.738			Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approximate Chi-Square=1730.810 Degree of Freedom=21 Significance=0.000 KMO=0.766		
	C2	0.753					
	C3	0.719					
	C4	0.815	0.942	74.264%		0.55	0.896
	C5	0.779					
	C6	0.736					
	C7	0.659					
Story Involvement	D1	0.805			Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approximate Chi-Square=683.848 Degree of Freedom=6 Significance=0.000 KMO=0.770		
	D2	0.810					
	D3	0.618	0.876	73.321%		0.54	0.825
	D4	0.699					
Perception of Authenticity	E1	0.678			Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approximate Chi-Square=596.866 Degree of Freedom=3 Significance=0.000 KMO=0.708		
	E2	0.898	0.882	81.071%		0.66	0.856
	E3	0.857					
Character Similarity	F1	0.653			Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approximate Chi-Square=496.166 Degree of Freedom=3 Significance=0.000 KMO=0.787		
	F2	0.765	0.802	72.283%		0.52	0.768
	F3	0.751					
symbolic value perception	G1	0.768			Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approximate Chi-Square=543.363 Degree of Freedom=3 KMO=0.768		
	G2	0.809	0.815	74.064%		0.55	0.787
	G3	0.645					
functional value perception	H1	0.906			Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approximate Chi-Square=968.621 Degree of Freedom=3		
	H2	0.940	0.958	92.210%		0.85	0.945
	H3	0.921					

4.5 One-Way ANOVA of story materials with different characteristics

Before testing the hypotheses, it is necessary to clarify whether the subjects have different brand attitudes towards different types of stories, so as to verify whether the control of product types, story authenticity, and story characters in the experimental design process is effective. One-Way ANOVA is used to test the effect of different story types on the brand attitude evaluation scores of the subjects, so as to explore whether different story types affect the brand attitude of the subjects. According to Test of Homogeneity of Variance of Brand Attitude with Story Type as Classification Standard, since the significance of Levene statistics $P=0.112>0.05$. Data meet the hypotheses of homogeneity of variance. No other adjustment is required and subsequent analysis of variance can be carried out.

The results of one-way ANOVA in Table C.1 (See Annex C) show that the intergroup effect is significant ($F=7.708$, $P=0.000<0.05$). Therefore, it can be considered that there is a significant correlation between story types and brand attitudes of subjects, which means that story types have a significant impact on consumers' brand attitudes, and the difference of experimental materials is sufficient.

In order to further analyze whether each specific factor has an impact on brand attitude of the subjects, this section regroups the eight story materials according to factors. One-way ANOVA was conducted for the product type, the event authenticity, and the character identity in the story materials. The results are shown below.

4.5.1 Analysis of the effect of product type on brand attitude

Four electric toothbrush stories of the eight are formed into one group, and four sports brand stories of the eight are divided into one group. The effect of product type on brand attitude of subjects is analyzed based on this. According to Test of Homogeneity of Variance of Brand Attitude with Product Type as Classification Standard, since the significance of Levene statistics $P=0.696>0.05$, which means that data meet the hypotheses of homogeneity of variance. No other adjustment is required, and subsequent analysis of variance can be carried out.

The results of one-way ANOVA in Table C.2 (See Annex C) show that the intergroup effect is not significant ($F=2.196$, $P=0.139>0.05$). Therefore, it can be considered that there is no significant correlation between product types and brand attitudes of subjects, which means that product types have no significant impact on consumers' brand attitudes. Considering the

hypotheses proposed in Chapter III, this result accords with the experimental expectation. Firstly, during the hypotheses deduction, consumers' value perception only acts as a moderating variable in the process of story authenticity perception and character similarity affecting imagination fluency, and does not directly affect consumers' brand attitude. Secondly, in the preparation of experimental materials and the pre-experiment process, the electric toothbrush is considered to be purely functional product, while the sports brand is considered to be both symbolic and functional. The two product types are not mutually exclusive, but overlapped to a certain extent in value positioning. No significant difference in consumers' brand attitudes towards the two types of products meets the expectation. Therefore, it can be considered that the two product types selected for the experimental materials meet the experimental requirements.

4.5.2 Analysis of the effect of story authenticity on brand attitude

Four true stories of the eight are formed into one group, and four fictional stories of the eight are divided into one group. The effect of story authenticity on brand attitude of subjects is analyzed based on this. According to Test of Homogeneity of Variance of Brand Attitude with Story Authenticity as Classification Standard, since the significance of Levene statistics $P=0.381>0.05$, which means that data meet the hypotheses of homogeneity of variance. No other adjustment is required and subsequent analysis of variance can be carried out.

The results of one-way ANOVA in Table C.3 (See Annex C) show that the intergroup effect is significant ($F=25.003$, $P=0.000<0.05$). Therefore, it can be considered that there is a significant correlation between the story authenticity and the brand attitude of subjects, which means that the story authenticity has a significant impact on consumer's brand attitude. This result is in line with experimental expectations. In the process of hypotheses deduction in Chapter III, it is assumed that consumers' perception of authenticity will have a direct impact on brand attitude. In the subsequent process of experimental material design, the true story group and the fictional story group are constructed under the same control of other factors. It is expected that subjects will have different brand attitudes towards the true stories and the fictional stories. The results of one-way ANOVA with story authenticity as the classification standard show that subjects' brand attitudes towards the true story group and the fictional story group are significantly different, which proves that the preparation of experimental materials meets the experiment requirements and effectively controls the factors of story authenticity.

4.5.3 Analysis of the effect of story character on brand attitude

Four consumer stories of the eight are formed into one group, and four founder stories of the eight are divided into one group. The effect of story characters on brand attitudes of subjects is analyzed based on this. According to Test of Homogeneity of Variance of Brand Attitude with Story Character as Classification Standard, since the significance of Levene statistics $P=0.946>0.05$, which means that data meet the hypotheses of homogeneity of variance. No other adjustment is required and subsequent analysis of variance can be carried out.

The results of one-way ANOVA in Table C.4 (See Annex C) show that the intergroup effect is significant ($F=13.229$, $P=0.000<0.05$). Therefore, it can be considered that there is a significant correlation between the story character and the brand attitude of subjects, which means that the story character has a significant impact on consumer's brand attitude. This result is in line with experimental expectation. In the process of hypotheses deduction in Chapter III, it is assumed that similarity between story characters and consumers has a direct impact on brand attitudes. In the subsequent process of experimental material design, the founder's brand story group and the consumer's brand story group are constructed under the same control of other factors. It is expected that subjects will have different brand attitudes towards the founder stories and the consumer stories. The results of one-way ANOVA with story character as the classification standard show that subjects' brand attitudes towards the founder story and the consumer story are significantly different, which proves that the preparation of experimental materials meets the experiment requirements and effectively controls the factors of the story character.

In conclusion, the preparation of experimental materials meets expectations. Under the same control of other factors, the subject group can produce different brand attitudes towards the story materials with different authenticity/different characters, which proves that the control of the two variables of story authenticity and story characters is effective in the experimental design process. To a certain extent, it can ensure that subjects of different groups have significant differences in authenticity perception and character similarity in formal experiments.

4.5.4 Analysis of the effect of story authenticity on subject's perception of authenticity

In order to further verify whether the authenticity of story materials can lead to subjects' different perception of authenticity, the story authenticity is taken as the classification standard, and the conclusion is further verified by one-way ANOVA. To prove that the

difference in authenticity perception is not caused by other factors, the type of story characters is used as a factor to conduct one-way ANOVA on authenticity perception for comparison.

Table C.5 (See Annex C) shows that when the factor is the story authenticity, the significance of Levene statistics $P=0.395>0.05$. When the factor is the type of story characters, the significance of Levene statistics $P=0.141>0.05$, indicating that the data meet the hypotheses of homogeneity of variance. No other adjustment is required and subsequent analysis of variance can be carried out.

The results of one-way ANOVA in Table C.6 (See Annex C) show that when the factor is story authenticity, the intergroup effect is significant ($F=82.677$, $P=0.000<0.05$). Therefore, it can be considered that there is a significant correlation between the story authenticity and the authenticity perception of subjects, which means that the story authenticity has a significant impact on subject's authenticity perception. As a comparison, when the factor is the type of story characters, the intergroup effect is not significant ($F=0.123$, $P=0.726>0.05$), proving that the type of story characters has no significant influence on subject's authenticity perception. Therefore, the preparation of materials meets the requirements of the experiment, and the authenticity discrimination between true stories and fictional stories causes significant differences in subject's authenticity perception.

4.5.5 Analysis of the effect of story characters on subjects' character similarity

In order to further verify whether story materials with different tasks can lead to subjects' different perception of character similarity, the type of story characters is taken as the classification standard, and the conclusion is further verified by one-way ANOVA. To prove that the difference in character similarity is not caused by other factors, the story authenticity is used as a factor to conduct one-way ANOVA on character similarity for comparison.

Table C.7 (See Annex C) shows that when the factor is the type of story characters, the significance of Levene statistics $P=0.068>0.05$. When the factor is the story authenticity, the significance of Levene statistics $P=0.088>0.05$, indicating that the data meet the hypotheses of homogeneity of variance. No other adjustment is required, and subsequent analysis of variance can be carried out.

The results of one-way ANOVA in Table C.8 (See Annex C) show that when the factor is the story character, the intergroup effect is significant ($F=8.669$, $P=0.003<0.05$). Therefore, it can be considered that there is a significant correlation between the story character and the subjects' perception of character similarity, which means that the story character has a significant impact on subjects' perception of character similarity. As a comparison, when the

factor is the story authenticity, the intergroup effect is not significant ($F=5.660$, $P=0.108>0.05$), proving that the story authenticity has no significant influence on subjects' perception of character similarity. Therefore, the preparation of materials meets the requirements of the experiment, and the character discrimination between founder stories and consumer stories causes significant differences in subjects' perception of character similarity.

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Chapter 5: Empirical Analysis

This Chapter refers to experimental results and hypotheses testing, and mainly studies the correlation among such variables of brand stories as authenticity perception of consumers, character similarity in brand stories, imagination fluency, self-brand connection, story involvement, consumers' brand attitudes, symbolic value perception and functional value perception as well as the research hypotheses in light of the foregoing conceptual models and experimental data. This Chapter is mainly arranged as below:

(1) Part I comprises the descriptive statistical analysis and the correlation analysis of research variables, among which the fundamental purpose of descriptive statistical analysis is to gain a basic understanding of subjects' authenticity perception, character similarity, imagination fluency, self-brand connection, story involvement, brand attitudes, symbolic value perception and functional value perception in the experimental process, and that of correlation analysis is to test whether there is a significant correlation between two variables and whether variables are mutually independent.

(2) Part II tests the overall effect of the research, which aims to verify whether consumers' authenticity perception of story materials and character similarity have a significant impact on their brand attitude, which is the test of H1.

(3) Part III is the hypotheses testing of the single and dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection on authenticity perception → brand attitude and character similarity → brand attitude, which is the test of H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, and H8.

(4) Part IV tests the single mediating effect of story involvement on authenticity perception → brand attitude and character similarity → brand attitude, which is the test of H9, H10, and H11.

(5) Part V tests the moderating effect of symbolic value perception and functional value perception on two routes, namely, authenticity perception → imagination fluency and character similarity → imagination fluency, which is the test of H12.

(6) Part VI tests the moderating effect of symbolic value perception and functional value perception on two dual mediation models, namely, authenticity perception → imagination fluency → self-brand connection → brand attitude and character similarity → imagination fluency → self-brand connection → brand attitude (the test of H13).

5.1 Descriptive statistical analysis and correlation analysis of research variables

5.1.1 Descriptive statistics of research variables

The item data corresponding to the scale of each variable underwent a packaged processing to gain a basic understanding of subjects' authenticity perception, character similarity, imagination fluency, self-brand connection, story involvement, brand attitudes, symbolic value perception, and functional value perception. The results of the reliability and validity analysis in Section 4.4 show that, Cronbach's alpha of each variable's scale and the global scale is larger than 0.7, thus meeting the unit and homogeneity condition for the packaged processing of data. On this basis, the item data of each scale experienced packaged processing respectively to gain eight variables likely to reveal subjects' authenticity perception, character similarity, imagination fluency, self-brand connection, story involvement, brand attitudes, symbolic value perception, and functional value perception. Given that all the items in the formal questionnaire adopt the LIKERT 7-point scoring method, the theoretically average value of above-mentioned variables is 4.

Table 5.1 shows that the average value of all research variables is larger than 4, indicating that subjects' perception of all variables is above the medium level. The average value of authenticity perception is up to 5.008, which attests that the authenticity of brand stories in experimental materials is highly recognized by subjects, which means that there are stories similar to those in experimental materials in the real life. The average value of subjects' character similarity perception is 4.673, which attests that subjects correlate themselves with story characters due to the similarity in certain aspects.

Table 5.1 Descriptive statistical table of research variables

Variable	Number of Cases	Average	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval of Average		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit		
Perception of Authenticity	582	5.008	1.206	0.05	4.905	5.112	0.7	7
Character Similarity	582	4.673	1.124	0.047	4.575	4.768	1	7
Imagination Fluency	582	4.863	1.079	0.045	4.773	4.953	1	7
Self-brand Connection	582	4.494	1.213	0.05	4.394	4.592	1	7
Story	582	4.916	1.091	0.045	4.826	5.01	1	7

Involvement								
Brand Attitude	582	5.074	1.016	0.042	4.991	5.157	0.7	7
symbolic value perception	582	4.946	1.096	0.045	4.853	5.041	1	7
functional value perception	582	4.407	1.261	0.052	4.301	4.515	1	7

The average value of subjects' imagination fluency, self-brand connection, and story involvement is 4.863, 4.494, and 4.916 respectively, which attests that the plots of story materials may enable subjects to enter the story scenario, form the conception of said story in their mind, and build, express and reinforce themselves through brand, and that most subjects take the initiative to get to and comprehend stories in the experimental process.

The average value of subjects' brand attitude is 5.074, which manifests that most subjects have a positive attitude towards the brands mentioned in brand stories, and that brand stories have a positive impact on the brand attitude of consumers in combination with the prior research results.

The average value of subjects' symbolic value perception and functional value perception is 4.946 and 4.407 respectively, which attests that the products involved in story materials not only make subjects become aware of such symbolic value as identity expression and personality manifestation, but also deliver to subjects the functional value of those products as satisfying their use demands.

5.1.2 Correlation analysis of research variables

To study the correlation among variables, all variables involved in the research were gathered to form the correlation analysis matrix, and Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test the correlation among variables. Table 5.2 shows that event authenticity, character similarity, imagination fluency, self-brand connection, story involvement, and brand attitude are correlated at the level of 0.001. The correlation coefficient between any two variables involved in the research is less than 0.7, which means that the above-mentioned variables are mutually independent to some extent and follow-up path analysis can be carried out.

Table 5.2 Correlation analysis table of research variables

	Event Authenticity	Character Similarity	Imagination Fluency	Self-brand Connection	Story Involvement	Brand Attitude	symbolic value perception	functional value perception
Event Authenticity	0.817							
Character Similarity	.504**	0.725						
Imagination Fluency	.604***	.373***	0.759					
Self-brand Connection	.423***	.689***	.586***	0.744				
Story Involvement	.528***	.642***	.680***	.678***	0.738			
Brand Attitude	.619***	.630***	.622***	.612***	.689***	0.795		
symbolic value perception	.421	.547*	0.0462	.470*	.331	.444*	0.744	
functional value perception	.370	.360*	0.0370	.376*	.296	.412*	.493**	0.922

Note: *** means $p < 0.001$, ** means $p < 0.01$, * means $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test) and boldface figures on the diagonal line means the square root of AVE

Functional value perception and symbolic value perception are correlated with event authenticity, character similarity, and self-brand connection at the level of 0.05, and correlated with brand attitude at the level of 0.01 with correlation coefficient less than 0.7. Besides, there is no significant correlation of functional value perception and symbolic value perception with imagination fluency and story involvement. Given that functional value perception and symbolic value perception are added into the experimental model as moderating variables, their low correlation with other experimental variables accords with the research expectations; thus, the follow-up experiment can be carried out.

5.2 Influence of brand story characteristics on brand attitude

5.2.1 Influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude

With brand attitude as the dependent variable, SPSS software was used to test the influence of consumers' authenticity perception on brand attitude through simple linear regression. The regression results are shown in the following Table C.9 and Table C.10 (See Annex C), and the regression effect of the model is better according to the changes in R squared. In the regression model so obtained, the standardized coefficient of the independent variable is positive and t value is significant at the level of 0.001, which attest that consumers' authenticity perception has an obviously positive impact on the dependent variable, which means that H1b is supported. That means brand stories viewed by consumers as authentic have a positive impact on consumers' brand attitude, and contribute to consumers' good brand attitude.

5.2.2 Influence of story character similarity on brand attitude

With brand attitude as the dependent variable, SPSS software was used to test the influence of story character similarity on brand attitude through simple linear regression. The regression results are shown in the following Table C.11 and Table C.12 (See Annex C), and the regression effect of the model is better according to the changes in R squared. In the regression model so obtained, the standardized coefficient of the independent variable is positive and t value is significant at the level of 0.001, which attest that character similarity of brand stories has an obviously positive impact on the dependent variable, which means that H1a is supported. That means brand stories with "main character highly similar to consumers" have a positive impact on consumers' brand attitude, and contribute to consumers' good brand attitude.

5.3 Mediating and dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection

5.3.1 Testing process of mediating effect and dual mediating effect

According to the suggestions offered by Z. L. Wen and Ye(2014)and in combination with the

following Figure, the mediating effect may be tested in three steps with details as below:

- (1) First, test the significance of c (overall effect).
- (2) Second, test the significance of a and b , among which $a*b$ is the mediating effect.
- (3) Finally, test the significance of c' (direct effect).

In the model, X is the independent variable, Y is the dependent variable, and M is the mediating variable. According to the test results of the above-mentioned three steps, if a , b and c' are significant, the mediating effect is significant and it is partial mediation; if a and b are significant but c' is not significant, it is complete mediation.

In light of the testing process of single mediating effect, W. S. Jia (2020) launched the testing steps of chain-based dual mediating effect as shown in the following Figure 5.1:

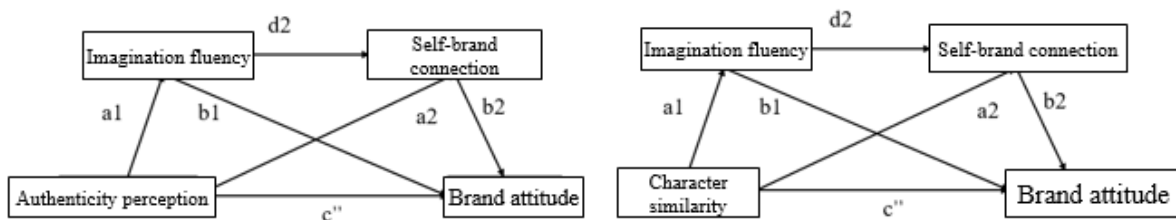


Figure 5.1 Schematic diagram of dual mediating model in the research

- (1) First, test the significance of c (overall effect).

(2) Second, test the significance of a_1 , d_2 and b_2 in the longest link, among which $a_1*d_2*b_2$ is the dual mediating effect, a_1*b_1 is the single mediating effect of M_1 , and a_2*b_2 is the single mediating effect of M_2 .

- (3) Finally, test the significance of c'' (direct effect).

In the model, X is the independent variable, Y is the dependent variable, M_1 is the first mediating variable–variable in the influence of mediation X on M_2 , and M_2 is the second mediating variable–variable in the influence of mediation M_1 on Y . If a_1 , d_2 , b_2 and c'' are significant, the dual mediating effect is significant and it is partial mediation; if a_1 , d_2 and b_2 are significant but c'' is not significant, it is complete mediation.

It is worth noting that throughout the test of chain-based dual mediating effect, both dual mediating effect of the two mediating variables and their respectively single mediating effect in the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable are tested. It can be seen that in the dual mediating model, the overall mediating effect of the two mediating variables in the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable is the sum of 3 mediating effects.

To study the mediating and dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection, in this study, the direct effect of authenticity perception and character similarity

on brand attitude, the mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection and the dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection were tested respectively with reference to the above-mentioned testing process of mediating and dual mediating effect and through Model 6 in SPSS Macro.

According to the above-mentioned testing process of dual mediating effect, it can be observed that in the dual mediating model, the overall mediating effect of the two mediating variables in the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable is the sum of 3 mediating effects. Therefore, the research in this section had 2 dual mediating models (as shown in Figure 5.1) built in light of the number of independent variables and used Process plug-in in SPSS to test those 2 dual mediating models respectively. Therein: 5,000 times of Bootstrap sampling were carried out to establish 95% confidence interval for correction without bias. To display and describe the 3 mediating effects in the dual mediating model in a clearer manner, partition and combination were carried out in this study, with the mediating effect testing process of imagination fluency shown in Section 5.3.2, the mediating effect testing process of self-brand connection shown in Section 5.3.3, and the dual mediating effect testing process of imagination fluency and self-brand connection shown in Section 5.3.4.

The results of overall effect testing in Section 5.2 show that authenticity perception and character similarity have a significant role in consumers' brand attitude, with the overall effect value as 0.522 and 0.750 respectively.

5.3.2 Test of mediating effect of imagination fluency

Table 5.3 shows the regression data of Process Model 6. For the first mediating model with authenticity perception as the independent variable and imagination fluency as the dependent variable, the regression effect is good, the coefficient of authenticity perception is positive, and the significance level is $0.000 < 0.001$, which attest the significant influence of authenticity perception on consumers' imagination fluency, which means that high story authenticity perceived by consumers indicates that probably consumers will imagine the story scenarios in their mind. Therefore, H2b is supported.

Table 5.3 Regression results of H2a, H2b, and H3

Independent Variable	Route	Effect Value	Standard Error	Significance	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Perception of Authenticity	Authenticity Perception →	.5404	.0296	.0000	.4823	.5986
	Imagination Fluency →	.3128	.0310	.0000	.2519	.3737
Character Similarity	Brand Attitude Character Similarity →	.7167	.0265	.0000	.6646	.7688
	Imagination Fluency →	.1812	.0302	.0000	.1219	.2406

For the second mediating model with character similarity as the independent variable and imagination fluency as the dependent variable, the regression effect is good, and the coefficient of character similarity is positive and significant, which attest the significant influence of character similarity on consumers' imagination fluency, which means that the high similarity between story characters and consumers means that consumers will probably imagine the story scenarios in their mind. Therefore, H2a is supported.

In the two mediating models, when imagination fluency is the independent variable and consumers' brand attitude is the dependent variable, the coefficient of imagination fluency is positive and significant at the level of 0.001, which attests the significant influence of imagination fluency on consumers' brand attitude in both models. It suggests that consumers probably imagine the story scenarios in their mind, and they may have higher brand attitude. Therefore, H3 is supported.

After the influence of authenticity perception on imagination fluency, character similarity on imagination fluency, and imagination fluency on consumers' brand attitude is verified, it is imperative to further verify the mediating role of imagination fluency in the influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude and the mediating role of imagination fluency in the influence of character similarity on brand attitude.

Table 5.4 shows that according to the regression results of Process Model 6, in the route with authenticity perception as the independent variable, the direct effect value of authenticity perception on brand attitude upon introduction of imagination fluency is 0.2052 and the significance is 0.000, and 95% confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the significant direct effect of authenticity perception on consumers' brand

attitude. In the process of testing indirect effect, besides, the influence relation of authenticity perception → imagination Fluency → Brand attitude passes the significance test and the confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the significant mediating effect of imagination fluency in the influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude and it is partial mediation with partial mediating effect value as 0.1690 (0.5404×0.3128) and proportion to overall effect (0.522) as 0.3237. Therefore, H4b is attested.

Table 5.4 Test of mediating effect of imagination fluency

Route	Effect Value	Significance	Direct Effect		Effect Value	Significance	Indirect Effect	
			95% Confidence Interval				95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit			Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Authenticity Perception → imagination Fluency → Brand Attitude	.2052	.000	.1565	.2539	.1690	.000	.1260	.2154
Character Similarity → imagination Fluency → Brand Attitude	.4709	.000	.4072	.5346	.1299	.000	.0716	.1889

In addition, Table 5.4 shows that in the route with character similarity as the independent variable, the direct effect value of character similarity on brand attitude upon introduction of imagination fluency is 0.4709 and the significance is 0.0000, and 95% confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the directly positive impact of character similarity on consumers' brand attitude. In the process of testing indirect effect, besides, the influence relation of character similarity → imagination Fluency → Brand attitude passes the significance test and the confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the significant mediating effect of imagination fluency in the influence of character similarity on brand attitude and it is partial mediation with partial mediating effect value as 0.1299 (0.7167×0.1812) and its proportion to overall effect (0.750) is 0.172. Therefore, H4a is attested, and the mediating effect of imagination fluency in the two routes was verified.

In combination with the above-mentioned testing process, the impact of authenticity perception on imagination fluency (H2b), the impact of character similarity on imagination fluency (H2a), the impact of imagination fluency on brand attitude (H3), the mediating effect of imagination fluency in the influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude (H4b), and

the mediating effect of imagination fluency in the influence of character similarity on brand attitude (H4a) have been tested with the specific effect value shown in Figure C.1 (See Annex C).

5.3.3 Test of mediating effect of self-brand connection

According to the regression data of Process Model 6, for the first dual mediating model with authenticity perception as the independent variable and self-brand connection as the dependent variable, the regression effect is good, the coefficient of authenticity perception is positive, and the significance level is $0.000 < 0.001$, which attest the significant influence of authenticity perception on consumers' self-brand connection. It indicates that high story authenticity perceived by consumers brings stronger connection between consumers and brands. Therefore, H5b is supported.

For the second dual mediating model with character similarity as the independent variable and self-brand connection as the dependent variable, the regression effect is good, and the coefficient of character similarity is positive and significant, which attest the significant influence of character similarity on consumers' self-brand connection. It suggests that high similarity between story characters and consumers means stronger connection between consumers and brands. Therefore, H5a is supported.

In the two dual mediating models, when self-brand connection is the independent variable and consumers' brand attitude is the dependent variable, the coefficient of self-brand connection is positive and significant at the level of 0.001, which attests the significant influence of self-brand connection on consumers' brand attitude in both models. It means that stronger connection between consumers and brands can bring about higher brand attitude. Therefore, H6 is supported. See Table C.13 (See Annex C) for specific statistical characteristic index.

After the influence of authenticity perception on self-brand connection, character similarity on self-brand connection, and self-brand connection on consumers' brand attitude is verified, it needs to further verify the mediating role of self-brand connection in the influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude and the mediating role of self-brand connection in the influence of character similarity on brand attitude.

Table 5.10 shows that according to the regression results of Process Model 6, in the route with authenticity perception as the independent variable, the direct effect value of authenticity perception on brand attitude upon introduction of self-brand connection is 0.2052 and the significance 0.000, and 95% confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test,

which manifest the significant direct effect of authenticity perception on consumers' brand attitude; in the process of testing indirect effect, besides, the influence relation of authenticity Perception → Self-brand connection → brand attitude passes the significance test and the confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the significant mediating effect of self-brand connection in the influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude and it is partial mediation with partial mediating effect value as 0.0377 (0.1086×0.3472) and its proportion to overall effect (0.522) is 0.3237. Therefore, H7b is attested.

In addition, Table 5.5 shows that in the route with character similarity as the independent variable, the direct effect value of character similarity on brand attitude upon introduction of self-brand connection is 0.4709 and the significance 0.0000, and 95% confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the directly positive impact of character similarity on consumers' brand attitude. In the process of testing indirect effect, besides, the influence relation of character Similarity → Self-brand connection → brand attitude passes the significance test and the confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the significant mediating effect of self-brand connection in the influence of character similarity on brand attitude and it is partial mediation with partial mediating effect value as 0.1234 (0.6129×0.2013) and proportion to overall effect (0.750) as 0.172. Therefore, H7a is attested.

Table 5.5 Test of mediating effect of self-brand connection

Route	Direct Effect				Indirect Effect			
	Effect Value	Significance	95% Confidence Interval		Effect Value	Significance	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit			Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Authenticity Perception → Self-brand Connection → brand Attitude	.2052	.0000	.1565	.2539	.0377	.0000	.0069	.0703
Character Similarity → Self-brand Connection → brand Attitude	.4709	.0000	.4072	.5346	.1234	.0000	.0820	.1674

In combination with the above-mentioned testing process, the impact of authenticity perception on self-brand connection (H5b), the impact of character similarity on self-brand connection (H5a), the impact of self-brand connection on brand attitude (H6), the mediating effect of self-brand connection in the influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude

(H7b), and the mediating effect of self-brand connection in the influence of character similarity on brand attitude (H7a) have been tested with the specific effect value shown in Figure C.2 (See Annex C).

5.3.4 Test of dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection

According to the regression data of Process Model 6, for the two dual mediating models with different independent variables, when imagination fluency is the independent variable and self-brand connection is the dependent variable, the regression effect is good, the coefficient of imagination fluency in the two models is positive, and the significance level is $0.000 < 0.001$, which attest the significant influence of imagination fluency on consumers' self-brand connection. It also means that if consumers probably imagine the story scenarios in their mind, the connection between consumers and brands will be stronger. See Table C.14 (See Annex C) for specific statistical characteristic index.

After the influence of imagination fluency on self-brand connection in the two dual mediating models is verified, it needs to carry out the last step of the test, namely, verifying the dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection in the influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude and the dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection in the influence of character similarity on brand attitude.

Table 5.6 shows that upon introduction of imagination fluency and self-brand connection, the direct effect significance of authenticity perception on brand attitude is 0.000 and 95% confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the directly positive impact of authenticity perception on consumers' brand attitude.

Besides, the influence relation between authenticity perception and imagination fluency, between imagination fluency and self-brand connection, between self-brand connection and consumers' brand attitude passes the significance test and the confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the significant dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection in the influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude, and it is partial mediation with partial mediating effect value as 0.1099 ($0.5404 \times 0.5855 \times 0.3472$) and proportion to overall effect (0.522) as 0.2105. Therefore, H8b is attested.

Table 5.6 Test of dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection

Route	Direct Effect				Indirect Effect			
	Effect Value	Significance	95% Confidence Interval		Effect Value	Significance	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit			Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Authenticity Perception → imagination Fluency → self-brand connection → brand Attitude	.2052	.000	.1565	.2539	.1099	.000	.0824	.1416
Character Similarity → imagination Fluency → self-brand connection → brand Attitude	.4709	.000	.4072	.5346	.0263	.000	.0085	.0471

Table 5.12 also shows that upon introduction of imagination fluency and self-brand connection, the direct effect significance of character similarity on brand attitude is 0.000 and 95% confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the directly positive impact of character similarity on consumers' brand attitude.

Besides, the influence relation between character similarity and imagination fluency, between imagination fluency and self-brand connection, between self-brand connection and consumers' brand attitude passes the significance test and the confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the significant dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection in the influence of character similarity on brand attitude, and it is partial mediation with partial mediating effect value as 0.0263 (0.7167×0.1822×0.2013) and proportion to overall effect as 0.0351. Therefore, H8a is attested.

In combination with the above-mentioned testing process, the impact of imagination fluency on self-brand connection, the dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection in the influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude (H8b), and the dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection in the influence of character similarity on brand attitude (H8a) have been tested with the specific effect value shown in Figure C.3 (See Annex C).

5.4 Test of mediating effect of story involvement

To study the mediating effect of story involvement in the influence of authenticity perception on consumers' brand attitude and in the influence of character similarity on consumers' brand

attitude respectively, the direct effect of authenticity perception and character similarity on brand attitude and the mediating effect of story involvement were tested with reference to the mediating effect testing process in Section 5.1 and through Model 4 (Simple Mediation Model) in SPSS Macro.

According to the testing process of mediating effect, in the mediating model, the overall effect of independent variable on dependent variable, the influence of independent variable on mediating effect, the influence of mediating variable on dependent variable, and the direct effect of independent variable on dependent variable should be tested one by one. Therefore, the research in this section had 2 mediating models (as shown in Figure C.4 (See Annex C)) built in light of the number of independent variables and used Process plug-in in SPSS to test those 2 mediating models respectively. Therein: 5,000 times of Bootstrap sampling were carried out to establish 95% confidence interval for correction without bias.

According to the regression data of Model 4, when authenticity perception is the independent variable and story involvement is the dependent variable, the regression effect is good, and the standardized coefficient of the independent variable is positive and significant, which attest the significant influence of authenticity perception on consumers' story involvement. It means that high story authenticity perceived by consumers suggests that consumers will proactively strive to comprehend and involve in stories. Therefore, H9b is supported.

When character similarity is the independent variable and story involvement is the dependent variable, the regression effect is good, and the standardized coefficient of the independent variable is positive and significant, which attest the significant influence of character similarity on consumers' story involvement. It suggests that high similarity between story characters and consumers makes consumers strive to comprehend and involve in stories more proactively. Therefore, H9a is supported.

In the two models with different independent variables, when story involvement is the independent variable and consumers' brand attitude is the dependent variable, the standardized coefficient of the independent variable is positive and significant, which attests the significant influence of story involvement on consumers' brand attitude. Therefore, when consumers strive to comprehend and involve in stories proactively, they will have higher brand attitude is. Therefore, H10 is supported. See Table C.15 (See Annex C) for specific statistical characteristic index.

After the influence of authenticity perception on story involvement, character similarity on story involvement, and story involvement on consumers' brand attitude is verified, it needs

to further verify the mediating role of story involvement in the influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude and the mediating role of story involvement in the influence of character similarity on brand attitude.

Table 5.7 shows that upon introduction of story involvement, the direct effect significance of authenticity perception on brand attitude is 0.000 and 95% confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the directly positive impact of authenticity perception on consumers' brand attitude.

Besides, the influence relation between authenticity perception and story involvement, between story involvement and brand attitude passes the significance test and the confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the significant mediating effect of story involvement in the influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude, and it is partial mediation with partial mediating effect value as 0.2231 (0.4771×0.4677) and proportion to overall effect as 0.4275.

Therefore, H11b is attested. Table 5.7 also shows that upon introduction of story involvement, the direct effect significance of character similarity on brand attitude is 0.000 and 95% confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the directly positive impact of character similarity on consumers' brand attitude.

Besides, the influence relation between character similarity and story involvement, and between story involvement and brand attitude passes the significance test and the confidence interval excludes 0 in the Bootstrap interval test, which manifest the significant mediating effect of story involvement in the influence of character similarity on brand attitude, and it is partial mediation with partial mediating effect value as 0.1540 (0.6226×0.2474) and proportion to overall effect as 0.2054. Therefore, H11a is attested.

Table 5.7 Test of mediating effect of story involvement

Route	Effect Value	Significance	Direct Effect		Effect Value	Significance	Indirect Effect	
			95% Confidence Interval Lower Limit	95% Confidence Interval Upper Limit			95% Confidence Interval Lower Limit	95% Confidence Interval Upper Limit
Authenticity Perception → Story Involvement → Brand Attitude	.2986	.000	.2452	.3520	.2231	.000	.1789	.2727
Character Similarity → Story Involvement → Brand Attitude	.5964	.000	.5464	.6464	.1540	.000	.1119	.1973

In combination with the above-mentioned testing process, the impact of authenticity perception on story involvement (H9b), the impact of character similarity on story involvement (H9a), the impact of story involvement on brand attitude (H10), the mediating effect of story involvement in the influence of authenticity perception on brand attitude (H11b), and the mediating effect of story involvement in the influence of character similarity on brand attitude (H11a) have been tested with the specific effect value shown in Figure C.5 (See Annex C).

5.5 Test of moderating effect of consumers' value perception

5.5.1 Test of the moderating effect of consumers' symbolic value perception on story character similarity and imagination fluency

According to the correlation analysis on independent variables in Chapter V, it can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation ($r=0.373$, $p<0.001$) between the independent variable—story character similarity (X) and the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M1), and the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W) is significantly uncorrelated ($r=0.0462$, $p>0.05$) with the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M1). The results of variable correlation test lay a foundation for the further discussion about the moderating effect of consumer's symbolic value perception on the relationship between story character similarity and imagination fluency.

In combination with the moderating effect test method developed by Z. L. Wen(2005), the hierarchical regression method was used in this study to test the moderating effect of consumer's symbolic value perception (W) on the relationship between story character similarity and imagination fluency. To lower multicollinearity, standardized processing was carried out to generate the moderating item of story character similarity * symbolic value perception (X*W) before adding the independent variable—story character similarity (X) and the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W) into the regression equation.

In the regression analysis, the first step was to establish the equation of linear regression with story character similarity (X) as the independent variable and imagination fluency (M1) as the dependent variable; the second step was to add the standardized variable—story character similarity (X) and the mediating variable—symbolic value perception (W) into the regression equation; the third step was to add the standardized moderating item of story character similarity * symbolic value perception (X*W) into the regression equation, and

judge whether the moderating effect of consumers' symbolic value perception (W) is significant by examining whether the effect of the product of story character similarity (X) and symbolic value perception (W) (X*W) is significant or whether R² of the two regression equations is significant.

According to the results shown in Table 5.8, in regression equation 1, there is a significant direct effect ($\beta=0.747$, $t=27.022$, $p<0.001$) of the independent variable—character similarity (X) on the variable—imagination fluency (M1). It suggests that higher similarity between character setting of brand stories and story audiences is associated with stronger imagination fluency of story in reading brand stories will be.

In regression equation 2, there is a significant main effect of the independent variable—character similarity (X) ($\beta=0.705$, $t=23.444$, $p<0.001$) and the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W) ($\beta=0.116$, $t=3.973$, $p<0.05$) on the variable—imagination fluency (M1). In regression equation 3, there is a significantly positive predictive effect of the independent variable—character similarity (X) ($\beta=0.705$, $t=24.061$, $p<0.001$) and the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W) ($\beta=0.116$, $t=3.970$, $p<0.05$) on the imagination fluency of story audiences, while the moderating item of story character similarity * symbolic value perception (X*W) ($\beta=-0.003$, $t=-1.113$, $p>0.05$) has insignificantly negative predictive effect on imagination fluency to some extent. $\Delta R^2=0.000$ and $p>0.05$ mean that there is no significant change in the goodness of fit of the regression equation following the addition of the moderating item.

Therefore, the moderating effect of consumers' symbolic value perception on the relationship between character similarity and imagination fluency of brand stories is insignificant, which means H12a is supported.

Table 5.8 Test of the moderating effect of symbolic value perception on the relationship between character similarity and imagination fluency

	Imagination Fluency (N=582)					
	Regression Equation 1		Regression Equation 2		Regression equation 3	
Character Similarity (X)	0.747***	27.022	0.705***	23.444	0.705***	24.061
Symbolic Value Perception (W)			0.116*	3.973	0.116*	3.970
Character Similarity * Symbolic Value Perception (X*W)					-0.003	-1.113
F	730.169***		382.283***		254.425***	
R ²	0.557		0.569		0.569	
ΔR^2	0.557***		0.011		0.000	

Note: *** means $p<0.001$, ** means $p<0.01$ and * means $p<0.05$ (two-tailed test)

To manifest the moderating effect of symbolic value perception on the relationship between character similarity and imagination fluency in a more intuitive manner, Model 1 in SPSS microprogram PROCESS3.4 was used to analyze the independent variable–story event authenticity perception, the dependent variable–imagination fluency and the moderating variable–symbolic value perception, and to obtain the independent variable’s predictive degree of the dependent variable at different moderating levels.

Based on the above-mentioned results, a simple slope test was carried out and the moderating effect diagram was drawn with results shown in Figure 5.2. Figure 5.2 shows that there is a significantly positive predictive effect of story character similarity on imagination fluency at both high and low symbolic value perception levels. There is no significant difference (almost parallel moderating effect lines and identical slope) between the positive predictive effect of story character similarity on imagination fluency at the high symbolic value perception level (effect=0.771, $t=11.171$, $p<0.001$) and that at the low symbolic value perception level (effect=0.719, $t=8.291$, $p<0.001$). Therefore, there is a positive correlation between story character similarity and imagination fluency, which means that high similarity between character setting of brand stories and story audiences can bring about stronger audiences’ imagination fluency of stories. As a result of the different symbolic value perception levels obtained by story audiences from brand introduction, their symbolic value perception levels vary, which exerts insignificant impact on the positive prediction of imagination fluency based on the similarity between story characters and audiences.

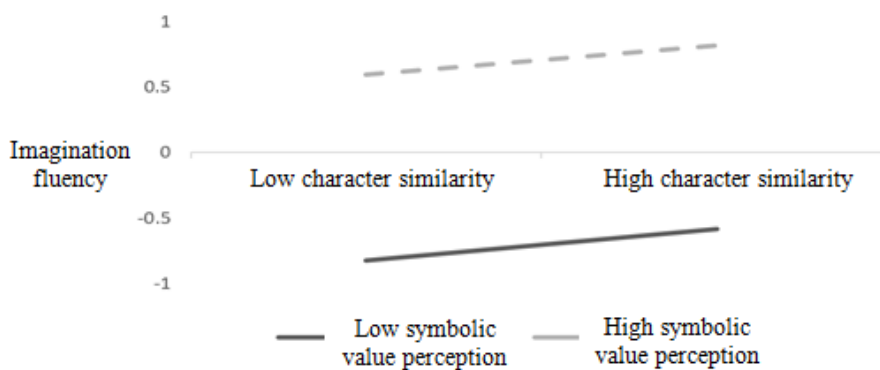


Figure 5.2 Moderating effect of symbolic value perception on the relationship between story character similarity and imagination fluency

5.5.2 Test of the moderating effect of consumers’ functional value perception on story character similarity and imagination fluency

According to the results of variable correlation analysis shown in Table 5.9, there is a significant positive correlation ($r=0.373$, $p<0.001$) between the independent variable–story

character similarity (X) and the mediating variable–imagination fluency (M1), and the moderating variable–functional value perception is significantly uncorrelated ($r=0.0370$, $p>0.05$) with the mediating variable–imagination fluency (M1). The results of variable correlation test lay a foundation for the further discussion about the moderating effect of consumer's functional value perception on the relationship between story character similarity and imagination fluency.

In combination with the moderating effect test method developed by Z. L. Wen(2005), the hierarchical regression method was used in this study to test the moderating effect of consumer's functional value perception (W) on the relationship between story character similarity and imagination fluency. To lower multicollinearity, standardized processing was carried out to generate the moderating item of story character similarity * functional value perception (X*W) before adding the independent variable–story character similarity (X) and the moderating variable–functional value perception (W) into the regression equation.

In the regression analysis, the first step was to establish the equation of linear regression with story character similarity (X) as the independent variable and imagination fluency (M1) as the dependent variable; the second step was to add the standardized variable–story character similarity (X) and the mediating variable–functional value perception (W) into the regression equation; the third step was to add the standardized moderating item of story character similarity * functional value perception (X*W) into the regression equation, and judge whether the moderating effect of consumers' functional value perception (W) is significant by examining whether the effect of the product of story character similarity (X) and functional value perception (W) (X*W) is significant or whether R^2 of the two regression equations is significant.

According to the results shown in Table 5.9, in regression equation 1, there is a significant direct effect ($\beta=0.747$, $t=27.022$, $p<0.001$) of the independent variable–character similarity (X) on the variable–imagination fluency (M1). It implies that higher similarity between character setting of brand stories and story audiences is associated with stronger imagination fluency of story audiences in reading brand stories.

In regression equation 2, there is a significant main effect of the independent variable–character similarity (X) ($\beta=0.730$, $t=23.444$, $p<0.001$) and the moderating variable–functional value perception (W) ($\beta=0.360$, $t=1.15$, $p<0.05$) on the variable–imagination fluency (M1). In regression equation 3, there is a significantly positive predictive effect of the independent variable–character similarity (X) ($\beta=0.638$, $t=23.216$, $p<0.001$), the moderating variable - functional value perception (W) ($\beta=0.190$, $t=0.583$, $p<0.05$) and the moderating item of

character similarity * functional value perception (X*W) ($\beta=0.062$, $t=2.191$, $p<0.05$) on the imagination fluency of story audiences. $\Delta R^2=0.004$ and $p<0.05$ mean that the goodness of fit of the regression equation is significantly improved following the addition of the moderating item.

Therefore, the moderating effect of consumers' functional value perception on character similarity and imagination fluency of brand stories is significant, which means that H12b is supported.

Table 5.9 Test of the moderating effect of functional value perception on the relationship between character similarity and imagination fluency

	Imagination Fluency (N=582)					
	Regression Equation 1		Regression Equation 2		Regression Equation 3	
Character Similarity (X)	0.747***	27.022	0.730***	23.444	0.638***	23.216
Functional Value Perception (W)			0.360*	1.15	0.190*	0.583
Character Similarity * Functional Value Perception (X*W)					0.062*	2.191
F	730.169***		365.959***		247.174***	
R ²	0.557		0.558		0.562	
ΔR^2	0.557***		0.001		0.004*	

Note: *** means $p<0.001$, ** means $p<0.01$ and * means $p<0.05$ (two-tailed test)

To manifest the moderating effect of functional value perception on the relationship between character similarity and imagination fluency in a more intuitive manner, Model 1 in SPSS microprogram PROCESS3.4 was used to analyze the independent variable–story event authenticity perception, the dependent variable–imagination fluency, and the moderating variable–functional value perception, and to obtain the independent variable's predictive degree of the dependent variable at different moderating levels.

Based on the above-mentioned results, the simple slope test was carried out and the moderating effect diagram drawn with results shown in Figure 5.3. Figure 5.3 shows that there is a significantly positive predictive effect of story character similarity on imagination fluency at both high and low functional value perception levels. However, the positive predictive effect of story character similarity on imagination fluency at the high functional value perception level (effect=0.8489, $t=19.4085$, $p<0.001$) is significantly higher than that at the low functional value perception level (effect=0.7428, $t=18.9891$, $p<0.001$).

Therefore, there is a positive correlation between story character similarity and imagination fluency, which means that high similarity between character setting of brand

stories and story audiences is associated with stronger audiences' imagination fluency of stories. As a result of the different functional value perception levels obtained by story audiences from brand introduction, however, audiences' imagination fluency of story scenarios is easier to be affected by the similarity between story characters and themselves at a higher functional value perception level. Therefore, H12b is supported by the above-mentioned results.

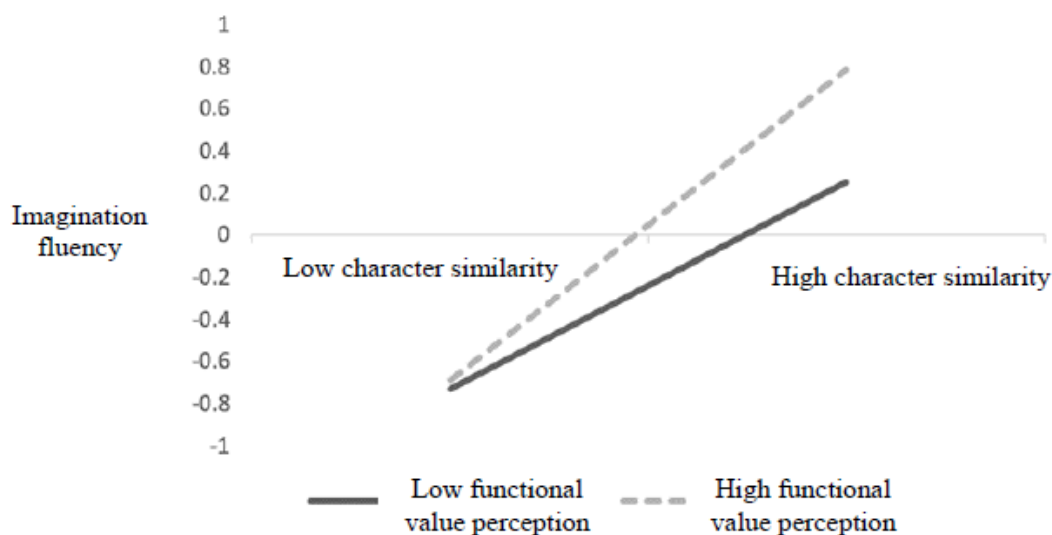


Figure 5.3 Diagram of the moderating effect of functional value perception on the relationship between story character similarity and imagination fluency

5.5.3 Test of the moderating effect of consumers' symbolic value perception on story event authenticity perception and imagination fluency

According to the results of variable correlation analysis shown in Table 5.10, there is a significant positive correlation ($r=0.604$, $p<0.001$) between the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X) and the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M1), and the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W) is significantly uncorrelated ($r=0.0462$, $p>0.05$) with the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M1). The results of variable correlation test lay a foundation for the further discussion about the moderating effect of consumer's symbolic value perception on the relationship between story event authenticity perception and imagination fluency.

Table 5.10 Test of the moderating effect of symbolic value perception on the relationship between event authenticity perception and imagination fluency

	Imagination Fluency (N=582)					
	Regression Equation 1		Regression Equation 2		Regression Equation 3	
Event Authenticity Perception (X)	0.604**	18.250	0.541***	15.519	0.541***	15.507
Symbolic Value Perception (W)			0.172*	4.933	0.172*	4.925
Event Authenticity Perception * Symbolic Value Perception (X*W)					0.019	0.581
F	333.059***		185.500		123.571***	
R ²	0.364		0.388		0.388	
ΔR ²	0.364***		0.024*		0.000	

Note: *** means p<0.001, ** means p<0.01 and * means p<0.05 (two-tailed test)

The hierarchical regression method in Section 5.5.1 was used to test the moderating effect of consumer's symbolic value perception (W) on the relationship between story event authenticity perception and imagination fluency. To lower multicollinearity, standardized processing was carried out to generate the moderating item of story event authenticity perception * symbolic value perception (X*W) before adding the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X) and the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W) into the regression equation.

In the regression analysis, the first step was to establish the equation of linear regression with story event authenticity perception (X) as the independent variable and imagination fluency (M1) as the dependent variable; the second step was to add the standardized variable—story event authenticity perception (X) and the mediating variable—symbolic value perception (W) into the regression equation; the third step was to add the standardized moderating item of story event authenticity perception * symbolic value perception (X*W) into the regression equation, and judge whether the moderating effect of consumers' symbolic value perception (W) is significant by examining whether the effect of the product of story event authenticity perception (X) and symbolic value perception (W) (X*W) is significant or whether R² of the two regression equations is significant.

According to the results shown in Table 5.10, in regression equation 1, there is a significant direct effect ($\beta=0.604$, $t=18.250$, $p<0.001$) of the independent variable—event authenticity perception (X) on the variable—imagination fluency (M1). It implies that higher similarity between character setting of brand stories and story audiences can bring about stronger imagination fluency of story audiences in reading brand stories.

In regression equation 2, there is a significant main effect of the independent variable—event authenticity perception (X) ($\beta=0.541$, $t=15.519$, $p<0.001$) and the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W) ($\beta=0.172$, $t=4.933$, $p<0.05$) on the variable—imagination fluency (M1). In regression equation 3, there is a significantly positive predictive effect of the independent variable—event authenticity perception (X) ($\beta=0.541$, $t=15.507$, $p<0.001$), the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W) ($\beta=0.172$, $t=4.925$, $p<0.05$) and the moderating item of event authenticity perception * symbolic value perception (X*W) ($\beta=0.019$, $t=0.581$, $p>0.05$) on the imagination fluency of story audiences. $\Delta R^2=0.000$ and $p>0.05$ mean that there is no significant change in the goodness of fit of the regression equation following the addition of the moderating item.

Therefore, the moderating effect of consumers' symbolic value perception on the relationship between event authenticity perception and imagination fluency of brand stories is insignificant, which means that H12c is supported.

To manifest the moderating effect of symbolic value perception on the relationship between event authenticity perception and imagination fluency in a more intuitive manner, Model 1 in SPSS microprogram PROCESS3.4 was used to analyze the independent variable—story event authenticity perception, the dependent variable—imagination fluency, and the moderating variable—symbolic value perception, and to obtain the independent variable's predictive degree of the dependent variable at different moderating levels.

Based on the above-mentioned results, a simple slope test was carried out and the moderating effect diagram was drawn with results shown in Figure 5.4. Figure 5.4 shows that there is a significantly positive predictive effect of audiences' story event authenticity perception on imagination fluency at both high and low symbolic value perception levels. There is no significant difference (almost parallel moderating effect lines) between the positive predictive effect of story event authenticity perception on imagination fluency at the high symbolic value perception level (effect=0.696, $t=5.882$, $p<0.001$) and that at the low symbolic value perception level (effect=0.545, $t=3.975$, $p<0.001$).

Therefore, there is a positive correlation between story event authenticity perception and imagination fluency, which means that high similarity between story character setting and story audiences can enhance the audiences' imagination fluency of stories. As a result of the different symbolic value perception levels obtained by story audiences from brand introduction, their symbolic value perception levels vary, which exerts insignificant impact on the positive prediction of imagination fluency based on audiences' story event authenticity perception.

Therefore, H12c is supported by the above-mentioned results, which means that story audiences' symbolic value perception of a brand exerts insignificant impact on the relationship between brand story event and audiences' imagination fluency.

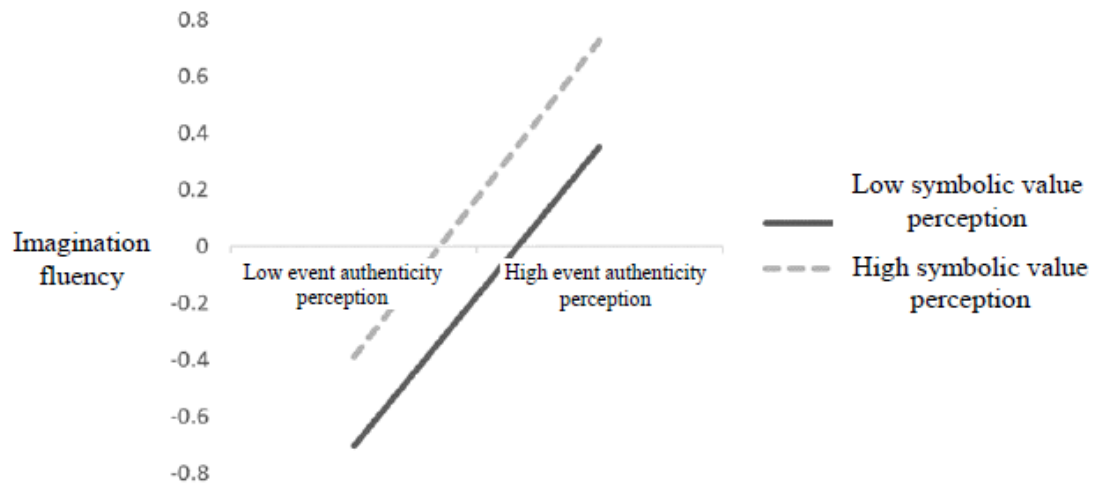


Figure 5.4 Diagram of the moderating effect of symbolic value perception on the relationship between event authenticity perception and imagination fluency

5.5.4 Test of the moderating effect of consumers' functional value perception on story event authenticity perception and imagination fluency

According to the results of variable correlation analysis shown in Table 5.11, there is a significant positive correlation ($r=0.604$, $p<0.001$) between the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X) and the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M1), and the moderating variable—functional value perception is significantly uncorrelated ($r=0.0370$, $p>0.05$) with the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M1). The results of variable correlation test lay a foundation for the further discussion about the moderating effect of consumer's functional value perception on the relationship between story event authenticity perception and imagination fluency.

In combination with the moderating effect test method developed by Z. L. Wen(2005), the hierarchical regression method was used in this study to test the moderating effect of consumer's functional value perception (W) on the relationship between story event authenticity perception and imagination fluency. To lower multicollinearity, standardized processing was carried out to generate the moderating item of story event authenticity perception * functional value perception ($X*W$) before adding the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X) and the moderating variable—functional value perception (W) into the regression equation.

In the regression analysis, the first step was to establish the equation of linear regression with story event authenticity perception (X) as the independent variable and imagination fluency (M1) as the dependent variable; the second step was to add the standardized variable—story event authenticity perception (X) and the mediating variable—functional value perception (W) into the regression equation; the third step was to add the standardized moderating item of story event authenticity perception * functional value perception (X*W) into the regression equation, and judge whether the moderating effect of consumers' functional value perception (W) is significant by examining whether the effect of the product of story event authenticity perception (X) and functional value perception (W) (X*W) is significant or whether R^2 of the two regression equations is significant.

According to the results shown in Table 5.11, in regression equation 1, there is a significant direct effect ($\beta=0.604$, $t=18.250$, $p<0.001$) of the independent variable—event authenticity perception (X) on the variable—imagination fluency (M1). It suggests that if audiences' event authenticity perception of brand stories is high, they tend to have stronger imagination fluency of story audiences in reading brand stories.

In regression equation 2, there is a significant main effect of the independent variable—event authenticity perception (X) ($\beta=0.559$, $t=15.306$, $p<0.001$) and the moderating variable—functional value perception (W) ($\beta=0.144$, $t=3.993$, $p<0.05$) on the variable—imagination fluency (M1). In regression equation 3, there is a significantly positive predictive effect of the independent variable—event authenticity perception (X) ($\beta=0.543$, $t=15.078$, $p<0.001$), the moderating variable -functional value perception (W) ($\beta=0.122$, $t=3.291$, $p<0.05$) and the moderating item of event authenticity perception * functional value perception (X*W) ($\beta=0.079$, $t=2.3281$, $p<0.05$) on the imagination fluency of story audiences. $\Delta R^2=0.005$ and $p<0.05$ mean that the goodness of fit of the regression equation is significantly improved following the addition of the moderating item.

Therefore, the moderating effect of consumers' functional value perception on event authenticity perception and imagination fluency of brand stories is significant, which means that H12d is supported.

Table 5.11 Test of the moderating effect of functional value perception on the relationship between event authenticity perception and imagination fluency

Imagination Fluency (N=582)						
	Regression Equation 1		Regression Equation 2		Regression Equation 3	
Event Authenticity Perception (X)	0.604**	18.250	0.559***	15.306	0.543***	15.078
Functional Value Perception (W)			0.144*	3.993	0.122*	3.291
Event Authenticity Perception * Functional Value Perception (X*W)					0.079*	2.3281
F	333.059***		178.793***		121.912***	
R ²	0.364		0.380		0.385	
ΔR ²	0.364***		0.016*		0.005*	

Note: *** means $p < 0.001$, ** means $p < 0.01$ and * means $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test)

To manifest the moderating effect of functional value perception on the relationship between event authenticity perception and imagination fluency in a more intuitive manner, Model 1 in SPSS microprogram PROCESS3.4 was used to analyze the independent variable—story event authenticity perception, the dependent variable—imagination fluency and the moderating variable—functional value perception, and to obtain the independent variable’s predictive degree of the dependent variable at different moderating levels.

Based on the above-mentioned results, a simple slope test was carried out and the moderating effect diagram was drawn with results shown in Figure 5.5. Figure 5.5 shows that there is a significantly positive predictive effect of story event authenticity perception on imagination fluency at both high and low functional value perception levels. However, the positive predictive effect of story event authenticity perception on imagination fluency at the high functional value perception level (effect=0.5019, $t=12.5275$, $p < 0.001$) is significantly higher than that at the low functional value perception level (effect=0.6258, $t=12.4049$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, there is a positive correlation between story event authenticity perception and imagination fluency, which means that high audiences’ story event authenticity perception can enhance audiences’ imagination fluency of stories. As a result of the different functional value perception levels obtained by story audiences from brand introduction, however, audiences’ imagination fluency of story scenarios is easier to be affected by the story event authenticity perception at a higher functional value perception level. Therefore, H12d is supported by the above-mentioned results, which means that audiences’ functional value perception of a brand can cause significant interference with the relationship between

brand story event authenticity perception and imagination fluency.

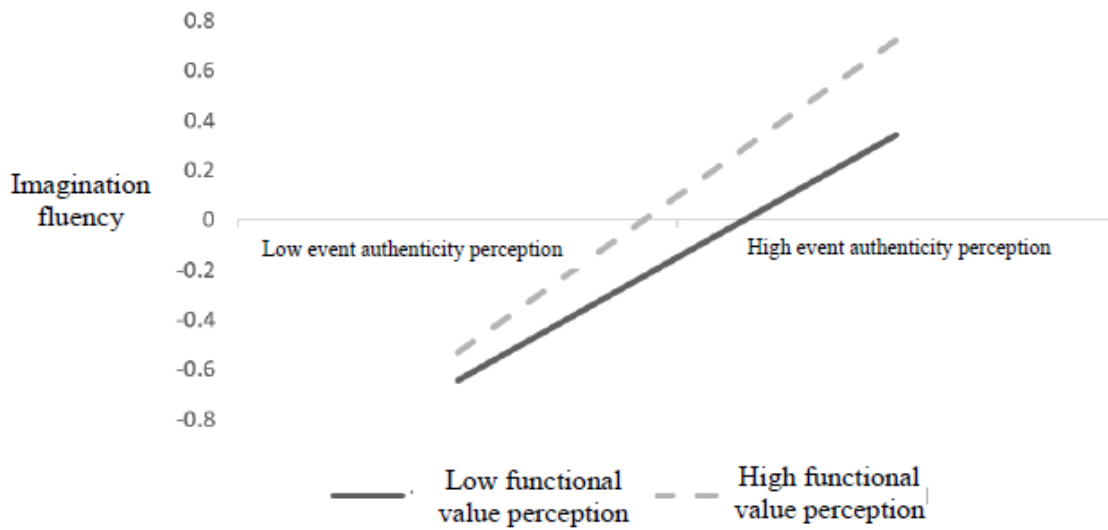


Figure 5.5 Diagram of the moderating effect of functional value perception on the relationship between event authenticity perception and imagination fluency

5.6 Test of moderated mediating model

According to the above-mentioned research results imagination fluency and self-brand connection exert a chain-based dual mediating effect on the relationship between brand stories' character similarity and event authenticity perception and consumers' brand attitude. The change in consumers' brand attitude hinges on the degree that they get immersed into the virtual scenarios created by brand stories as well as their brand value judgment and perception. In order to analyze the mediating effect with moderating variables, therefore, the moderating chain-based mediating model—Model 83 (In Model 83, it is hypothesized that the first half of the chain-based dual mediating model is moderated, which is consistent with the hypotheses model in this study in SPSS microprogram PROCESS3.4 and SPSS Macro was used in this study for the hypotheses verification of the moderated mediating effect). Model 83 in PROCESS3.4 mainly tests the following three regression models, and judges whether the moderated mediating effect is significant according to the coefficient significance of data results and confidence interval of mediating effect.

$$M_1 = a_{01} + a_1X + a_3W + a_4XW \quad (5.1)$$

$$M_2 = a_{02} + a_2X + d_1M_1 \quad (5.2)$$

$$Y = b + b_1M_1 + b_2M_2 + c'X \quad (5.3)$$

5.6.1 Moderating effect of symbolic value perception on brand story character similarity and brand attitude

According to the Bootstrap method developed by Z. L. Wen, and Ye (2014) to judge the moderated mediating effect, Model 83 in SPSS microprogram PROCESS3.4 was used to carry out parameter estimation, which saw the addition of the independent variable—story character similarity (X), the dependent variable—brand attitude (Y), the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W) and dual mediating variables—imagination fluency (M1) and self-brand connection (M2) successively, and the setting of sampling times as 5,000 and confidence interval as 95%.

First, Model 1 establishes the regression of the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M1) for the independent variable – story character similarity (X), the moderating variable – symbolic value perception (W) and the interaction item of independent variable and moderating variable (X*W). Results show that there is a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.7046$, $t=25.499$, $p<0.001$) of brand story character similarity (X) on imagination fluency of story audiences (M1). It suggests that the similarity between brand story characters and story audiences can increase audiences' imagination fluency of story scenarios which further verifies H2a. There is a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.1165$, $t=1.859$, $p<0.05$) of the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W) on imagination fluency of story audiences, while the interaction item (X*W) has insignificantly negative predictive effect ($\beta=-0.024$, $t=-0.1133$, $p>0.05$) on imagination fluency of story audiences, which means that the symbolic brand value perceived by consumers from brand introduction exerts insignificant moderating effect on the relationship between brand story character similarity and consumers' imagination fluency, which means that H12a is supported.

Second, Model 2 establishes the regression of the mediating variable—self-brand connection (M2) for the independent variable—story character similarity (X) and the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M2). Results show that there is a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.613$, $t=11.156$, $p<0.001$) of the independent variable—story character similarity (X) on the mediating variable—self-brand connection (M2), and a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.182$, $t=3.060$, $p<0.01$) of the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M2) on self-brand connection (M2). In other words, high similarity between brand story characters and story audiences helps to enhance audiences' imagination fluency of story scenarios and the degree of self-brand connection.

Third, Model 3 establishes the regression of brand attitude (Y) for the independent

variable – story character similarity (X) and mediating variables – imagination fluency (M2) and self-brand connection (M2). Results show that there is a significantly positive effect of the independent variable – story character similarity (X) and mediating variables – imagination fluency (M2) and self-brand connection (M2) on brand attitude (Y), which means that the chain-based dual mediating model is supported, which further verifies H8a. The results of Model 1, Model 2, and Model 3 are shown in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12 Test of moderated mediating model (N=582)

Variable	Model1		Model2		Model3	
	Dependent Variable: Imagination Fluency		Dependent Variable: Self-brand Connection		Dependent Variable: Brand Attitude	
	β	t	β	T	β	t
Character Similarity (X)	0.7046***	25.499	0.613***	11.156	0.5208***	14.514
Imagination Fluency (M1)			0.182**	3.060	0.1925***	5.9965
Self-brand Connection (M2)					0.2402***	8.1515
Symbolic Value Perception (W)	0.1165*	1.859				
Character Similarity * Symbolic Value Perception (X*W)	-0.059**	-2.574				
F	254.4249***		274.2968***		347.133***	
R ²	0.5691		0.4865		0.749	

Note: *** means $p < 0.001$, ** means $p < 0.01$ and * means $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test)

According to the results of Bootstrap sampling inspection (as shown in Table C.15 (See Annex C)), in the mediating route of $X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2$, the Bootstrap 95% confidence interval of the mediating effect of imagination fluency (M1) excludes 0, no matter consumers' symbolic value perception of a brand (W) is one standard deviation higher or lower than the average, which means the mediating effect of imagination fluency is significant. When consumers' symbolic value perception of a brand is one standard deviation lower than the average, the mediating effect value of imagination fluency is 0.1361; when consumers' symbolic value perception of a brand is one standard deviation higher than the average, the mediating effect value of imagination fluency is 0.1351. It can be seen that there is no significant difference in the mediating effect of imagination fluency at high and low symbolic value perception levels, which means that consumers' symbolic value perception exerts insignificant moderating effect on the mediating effect of imagination fluency. Therefore, H12a is supported.

In the mediating route of $X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y$, the Bootstrap 95% confidence interval of the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency (M1) and self-brand connection (M2) excludes 0, no matter consumers' symbolic value perception of a brand (W) is one standard deviation higher or lower than the average, which means the chain-based dual mediating

effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection is significant. When consumers' symbolic value perception of a brand is one standard deviation lower than the average, the chain-based dual mediating effect value is 0.0275. When consumers' symbolic value perception of a brand is one standard deviation higher than the average, the chain-based dual mediating effect value is 0.0274. It can be seen that there is no significant difference in the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection at high and low symbolic value perception levels, which means that consumers' symbolic value perception exerts insignificant moderating effect on the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection. Therefore, H13a is supported.

5.6.2 Moderating effect of functional value perception on brand story character similarity and brand attitude

Model 83 in microprogram PROCESS3.4 was used according to the test method in Section 5.6.1, which saw the addition of the independent variable—story character similarity (X), the dependent variable – brand attitude (Y), the moderating variable – functional value perception (W) and dual mediating variables – imagination fluency (M1) and self-brand connection (M2) successively, and the setting of sampling times as 5,000 and confidence interval as 95.

First, Model 1 establishes the regression of the mediating variable – imagination fluency (M1) for the independent variable – story character similarity (X), the moderating variable – functional value perception (W) and the interaction item of independent variable and moderating variable (X*W). Results show that there is a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.7380$, $t=23.6157$, $p<0.001$) of brand story character similarity (X) on imagination fluency of story audiences (M1). It suggests that the similarity between brand story characters and story audiences can enhance the audiences' imagination fluency of story scenarios, which supports the establishment of H2a and is consistent with the mediation test results in Section 5.2. There is a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.0187$, $t=0.5832$, $p<0.01$) of the moderating variable—functional value perception (W) on imagination fluency of story audiences, and a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.0492$, $t=2.1909$, $p<0.05$) of the interaction item (X*W) on imagination fluency of story audiences, which mean that the functional value perceived by consumers from brand introduction can facilitate the brand story character similarity. Therefore, H12b is supported.

Second, Model 2 establishes the regression of the mediating variable – self-brand connection (M2) for the independent variable – story character similarity (X) and the

mediating variable – imagination fluency (M2). Results show that there is a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.6429$, $t=12.6914$, $p<0.001$) of the independent variable – story character similarity (X) on the mediating variable – self-brand connection (M2), and a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.0966$, $t=3.6233$, $p<0.05$) of the mediating variable – imagination fluency (M2) on self-brand connection (M2). In other words, high similarity between brand story characters and story audiences improves the audiences' imagination fluency of story scenarios will be and the degree of self-brand connection.

Third, Model 3 establishes the regression of brand attitude (Y) for the independent variable – story character similarity (X) and mediating variables – imagination fluency (M2) and self-brand connection (M2). Results show that there is a significantly positive effect of the independent variable–story character similarity (X) and mediating variables – imagination fluency (M2) and self-brand connection (M2) on brand attitude (Y), which means that the chain-based dual mediating model is supported, which further verifies H8a. The results of Model 1, Model 2, and Model 3 are shown in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13 Test of moderated mediating model (N=582)

Variable	Model1		Model2		Model3	
	Dependent Variable: Imagination Fluency		Dependent Variable: Self-brand Connection		Dependent Variable: Brand Attitude	
	β	t	β	T	β	t
Character Similarity (X)	0.7380***	23.6157	0.6429***	12.6914	0.7920***	15.6739
Imagination Fluency (M1)			0.0966*	3.6233	-0.0766***	-1.6994
Self-brand Connection (M2)					0.2202***	5.9583
Functional Value Perception (W)	0.0187**	0.5832				
Character Similarity * Functional Value Perception (X*W)	0.0492*	2.1909				
F	247.1741***		160.2933***		417.3395***	
R ²	0.5620		0.5250		0.7432	

Note: *** means $p<0.001$, ** means $p<0.01$ and * means $p<0.05$ (two-tailed test)

According to the results of Bootstrap sampling inspection (as shown in Table C.17 (See Annex C)), in the mediating route of $X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2$, the Bootstrap 95% confidence interval of the mediating effect of imagination fluency (M1) excludes 0, no matter consumers' functional value perception of a brand (W) is one standard deviation higher or lower than the average, which means the mediating effect of imagination fluency is significant. However, the mediating effect value of imagination fluency is 0.1326 when consumers' functional value perception of a brand is one standard deviation lower than the average, and is 0.1515 when consumers' functional value perception of a brand is one standard deviation higher than the

average. It can be seen that the mediating effect of imagination fluency at high functional value perception level is greater than that at low functional value perception level, which means that consumers' functional value perception exerts significant moderating effect on the mediating effect of imagination fluency.

In the mediating route of $X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y$, the Bootstrap 95% confidence interval of the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency (M1) and self-brand connection (M2) excludes 0, no matter consumers' functional value perception of a brand (W) is one standard deviation higher or lower than the average, which means the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection is significant. However, the chain-based dual mediating effect value is 0.268 when consumers' functional value perception of a brand is one standard deviation lower than the average, and is 0.307 when consumers' functional value perception of a brand is one standard deviation higher than the average. It can be seen that the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection moderated at high functional value perception level is greater than that moderated at low functional value perception level, which means that consumers' functional value perception exerts significant moderating effect on the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection. Therefore, H13b is supported.

5.6.3 Moderating effect of symbolic value perception on brand story authenticity perception and brand attitude

According to the Bootstrap method for parameter estimation in Section 5.6.1, Model 83 in SPSS microprogram PROCESS3.4 was used, which added the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X), the dependent variable—brand attitude (Y), the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W) and dual mediating variables—imagination fluency (M1) and self-brand connection (M2) successively, and set sampling times as 5,000 and confidence interval as 95%.

First, Model 1 establishes the regression of the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M1) for the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X), the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W), and the interaction item of independent variable and moderating variable ($X*W$). Results show that there is a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.5409$, $t=15.6070$, $p<0.001$) of brand story event authenticity perception (X) on imagination fluency of story audiences (M1). It means that the authenticity perception of story consumers in reading brand stories can increase the audiences' imagination fluency of story scenarios, which supports the hypothesis H2b and is consistent with the mediation test results

in Section 5.2. There is a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.1720$, $t=4.9252$, $p<0.01$) of the moderating variable—symbolic value perception (W) on imagination fluency of story audiences, and the interaction item (X*W) has insignificantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.0156$, $t=0.5809$, $p>0.05$) on imagination fluency of story audiences, which means that the symbolic brand value perceived by consumers from brand introduction exerts insignificant moderating effect on the relationship between brand story event authenticity perception and consumers' imagination fluency, which means that H12c is supported.

Second, Model 2 establishes the regression of the mediating variable—self-brand connection (M2) for the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X) and the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M2). Results show that there is a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.1080$, $t=2.5708$, $p<0.05$) of the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X) on the mediating variable—self-brand connection (M2), and a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.5210$, $t=12.4039$, $p<0.001$) of the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M2) on self-brand connection (M2). In other words, if the authenticity perception of story consumers in reading brand stories is strong, the audiences' imagination fluency of story scenarios will be high, so the self-brand connection degree of consumers will also be high.

Third, Model 3 establishes the regression of brand attitude (Y) for the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X) and mediating variables—imagination fluency (M2) and self-brand connection (M2). Results show that there is a significantly positive effect of the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X) and mediating variables—imagination fluency (M2) and self-brand connection (M2) on brand attitude (Y), which means that the chain-based dual mediating model is supported, which further verifies H8b. The results of Model 1, Model 2, and Model 3 are shown in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14 Test of moderated mediating model (N=582)

Variable	Model1		Model2		Model3	
	Dependent Variable: Imagination Fluency		Dependent Variable: Self-brand Connection		Dependent Variable: Brand Attitude	
	β	t	β	T	β	t
Event Authenticity Perception (X)	0.5409***	15.5070	0.1080*	2.5708	0.231***	7.347
Imagination Fluency (M1)			0.5210***	12.4039	0.3329**	10.001
Self-brand Connection (M2)					0.407***	13.795
Symbolic Value Perception (W)	0.1720***	4.9252			0.043	1.582
Character Similarity *	0.0156	0.5809			-0.017	-0.622

Symbolic Perception (X*W)	Value		
F	123.5710***	156.6256***	420.0432***
R ²	0.3908	0.3511	0.6855

Note: *** means $p < 0.001$, ** means $p < 0.01$ and * means $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test)

According to the results of Bootstrap sampling inspection (as shown in Table C.18 (See Annex C)), in the mediating route of $X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2$, the Bootstrap 95% confidence interval of the mediating effect of imagination fluency (M1) excludes 0, no matter consumers' symbolic value perception of a brand (W) is one standard deviation higher or lower than the average, which means the mediating effect of imagination fluency is significant. When consumers' symbolic value perception of a brand is one standard deviation lower than the average, the mediating effect value of imagination fluency is 0.1745. When consumers' symbolic value perception of a brand is one standard deviation higher than the average, the mediating effect value of imagination fluency is 0.1849. It can be seen that there is no significant difference in the mediating effect of imagination fluency at high and low symbolic value perception levels, which means that consumers' symbolic value perception exerts insignificant moderating effect on the mediating effect of imagination fluency. Therefore, H12c is supported.

In the mediating route of $X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y$, the Bootstrap 95% confidence interval of the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency (M1) and self-brand connection (M2) excludes 0, no matter consumers' symbolic value perception of a brand (W) is one standard deviation higher or lower than the average, which means the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection is significant. When consumers' symbolic value perception of a brand is one standard deviation lower than the average, the chain-based dual mediating effect value is 0.1134. When consumers' symbolic value perception of a brand is one standard deviation higher than the average, the chain-based dual mediating effect value is 0.1201. It can be seen that there is no significant difference in the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection at high and low symbolic value perception levels, which means that consumers' symbolic value perception exerts insignificant moderating effect on the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection. Therefore, H13c is supported.

5.6.4 Moderating effect of functional value perception on brand story authenticity perception and brand attitude

According to the Bootstrap method for parameter estimation in Section 5.6.1, Model 83 in SPSS microprogram PROCESS3.4 was used, which added the independent variable—story

event authenticity perception (X), the dependent variable—brand attitude (Y), the moderating variable—functional value perception (W) and dual mediating variables—imagination fluency (M1) and self-brand connection (M2) successively, and set sampling times as 5,000 and confidence interval as 95%.

First, Model 1 establishes the regression of the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M1) for the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X), the moderating variable—functional value perception (W), and the interaction item of independent variable and moderating variable ($X*W$). Results show that there is a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.5589$, $t=15.3059$, $p<0.001$) of brand story event authenticity perception (X) on imagination fluency of story audiences (M1). It means that if the authenticity perception of story consumers in reading brand stories is strong, then the audiences' imagination fluency of story scenarios will be high, which supports the hypothesis H2b and is consistent with the mediation test results in Section 5.2. There is a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.1222$, $t=3.2909$, $p<0.01$) of the moderating variable—functional value perception (W) on imagination fluency of story audiences, and a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.0670$, $t=2.3280$, $p<0.05$) of the interaction item ($X*W$) on imagination fluency of story audiences, which mean that high functional value perceived by consumers from brand introduction can increase the facilitation of consumers' brand story event authenticity perception for consumers' imagination fluency will be. Therefore, H12d is supported.

Second, Model 2 establishes the regression of the mediating variable—self-brand connection (M2) for the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X) and the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M2). Results show that there is a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.1080$, $t=2.5708$, $p<0.05$) of the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X) on the mediating variable—self-brand connection (M2), and a significantly positive predictive effect ($\beta=0.5210$, $t=12.4039$, $p<0.001$) of the mediating variable—imagination fluency (M2) on self-brand connection (M2). In other words, if the = authenticity perception of story consumers in reading brand stories is strong, the audiences' imagination fluency of story scenarios and the self-brand connection degree of consumers will be high.

Third, Model 3 establishes the regression of brand attitude (Y) for the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X) and mediating variables—imagination fluency (M2) and self-brand connection (M2). Results show that there is a significantly positive effect of the independent variable—story event authenticity perception (X) and mediating variables—imagination fluency (M2) and self-brand connection (M2) on brand attitude (Y), which means

that the chain-based dual mediating model is supported, which further verifies H8b. The results of Model 1, Model 2, and Model 3 are shown in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15 Test of moderated mediating model (N=582)

Variable	Model1		Model2		Model3	
	Dependent Variable: Imagination Fluency		Dependent Variable: Self-brand Connection		Dependent Variable: Brand Attitude	
	β	t	β	T	β	t
Event Authenticity Perception (X)	0.5589***	15.3059	0.1080*	2.5708	0.228***	8.2725
Imagination Fluency (M1)			0.5210***	12.4039	0.331***	10.0881
Self-brand Connection (M2)					0.4143***	14.3090
Functional Value Perception (W)	0.1222**	3.2909			0.043	1.5820
Character Similarity * Functional Value Perception (X*W)	0.0670*	2.3280			-0.015	-0.6220
F	121.9117***		156.6256***		252.794***	
R ²	0.3875		0.3511		0.684	

Note: *** means $p < 0.001$, ** means $p < 0.01$ and * means $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test)

According to the results of Bootstrap sampling inspection (as shown in Table C.19 (See Annex C)), in the mediating route of $X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2$, the Bootstrap 95% confidence interval of the mediating effect of imagination fluency (M1) excludes 0, no matter consumers' functional value perception of a brand (W) is one standard deviation higher or lower than the average, which means the mediating effect of imagination fluency is significant. However, the mediating effect value of imagination fluency is 0.1634 when consumers' functional value perception of a brand is one standard deviation lower than the average, and is 0.2079 when consumers' functional value perception of a brand is one standard deviation higher than the average. It can be seen that the mediating effect of imagination fluency at high functional value perception level is greater than that at low functional value perception level, which means that consumers' functional value perception exerts significant moderating effect on the mediating effect of imagination fluency.

In the mediating route of $X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y$, the Bootstrap 95% confidence interval of the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency (M1) and self-brand connection (M2) excludes 0, no matter consumers' functional value perception of a brand (W) is one standard deviation higher or lower than the average, which means the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection is significant. However, the chain-based dual mediating effect value is 0.1062 when consumers' functional value perception of a brand is one standard deviation lower than the average, and is 0.1351 when consumers'

functional value perception of a brand is one standard deviation higher than the average. It can be seen that the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection moderated at high functional value perception level is greater than that moderated at low functional value perception level, which means that consumers' functional value perception exerts significant moderating effect on the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection. Therefore, H13d is supported.

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Chapter 6: Research Conclusions and Implications

6.1 Research conclusions

6.1.1 Influence of brand story characteristics on consumers' brand attitude

In combination with the analyses in Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 of Chapter V, it can be observed that brand story characteristics have a significantly positive influence on consumers' brand attitude. Specifically, brand stories enabling consumers to generate stronger authenticity perception can facilitate consumers to have a more positive brand attitude. Brand stories enabling consumers to perceive higher similarity between story characters and themselves can facilitate consumers to have a positive brand attitude.

Consumers' authenticity perception refers to their subjective perception of experimental materials. As to the design of experimental materials, real and fictional materials were selected and issued to the subjects randomly. Through one-way ANOVA in Section 4.5, the significant difference in consumers' authenticity perception and brand attitude between the group of real materials and the group of fictional materials was attested, from which the positive influence of authenticity perception on consumers' brand attitude may be explored to some extent. In combination with prior research conclusions, in response to the information conveyed by a brand story, when consumers try to associate the incoming information with the story in memory, narrative processing may create a link between the brand and self, leading to a more positive brand attitude (J. Escalas, 2004). Therefore, if the information conveyed by the brand story is considered by consumers as true, they are prone to generate higher authenticity perception, invoke cognitive resources to extract the events in memory and connect plots in the story with the elements in memory, so as to deepen their immersion and understanding of the story and hold a more positive brand attitude.

Consumers' character similarity perception refers to their subjective perception of the similarity between characters in experimental materials and themselves. During the process of experimental design, story materials of the consumers who are relatively similar to the subjects in multiple respects and of the founders who are significantly different from the

subjects in multiple respects were selected and issued to the subjects randomly. Through one-way ANOVA in Section 4.5, the significant difference in consumers' character similarity perception and brand attitude between groups of different story materials was attested, from which the influence of character similarity on consumers' brand attitude may be explored to some extent. Character similarity perception refers to the subjects' perception of the similarity between story characters and themselves in terms of personality, identity, and quality. Higher level suggests that consumers are more similar to story characters in those traits.

In combination with prior research conclusions, L. Xu (2020) proved in the research that when consumers feel that they have similar characteristics with the main character in a brand story, consumers will actively draw on their experience and memory to process the story to obtain experience and to form a more positive brand attitude accordingly. It suggests that if the audience is similar to the characters in the brand story, they are more likely to be immersed into the characters to experience the situations experienced by the characters in the story. This hypothesis was attested in this study, which means that the similarity perception between consumers and brand story characters can enhance their brand attitude.

6.1.2 Mediating and dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection

In combination with the analysis in Section 5.3.2 of Chapter V, it can be found that imagination fluency plays a mediating effect in the influence of brand story characteristics on consumers' brand attitude. Specifically, imagination fluency plays a mediating effect in the positive influence of story authenticity perception on consumers' brand attitude, and plays a mediating effect in the positive influence of consumers' story character similarity perception on their brand attitude.

In this regard, if the information conveyed by a story of higher authenticity is perceived by consumers as authentic and reasonable, they have a higher motivation to obtain personal experience through understanding real information (J. Escalas, 2004), in which case it is relatively easy to establish connections to help consumers easily imagine the scene of the brand story (W. Huang, 2010), namely, generating imagination fluency of higher level. When the similarity between characters of a story and consumers is higher, there is a stronger connection with the story as perceived by consumers, which enables them to imagine the scene of the brand story and generate imagination fluency of higher level. If consumers can easily conceive and describe a product, namely, have a stronger imagination fluency, they will actively evaluate the product by taking into account relevant information, form a favorable

purchase intention, and generate higher brand attitude. When individuals have relatively high imagination fluency, they can better get themselves immersed into the virtual world created by the story (X. Chen et al., 2019), and the route that brand stories exert impact on consumers' brand attitude is more likely to occur. Therefore, imagination fluency plays a mediating effect in the influence of brand story characteristics on consumers' brand attitude.

In combination with the analysis in Section 5.3.3 of Chapter V, it can be found that self-brand connection plays a mediating effect in the influence of brand story characteristics on consumers' brand attitude. Specifically, self-brand connection plays a mediating effect in the positive influence of story authenticity perception on consumers' brand attitude, and plays a mediating effect in the positive influence of consumers' story character similarity perception on their brand attitude. In this regard, a brand story of more authentic plots may result in higher authenticity perception of consumers. When plots of a story are perceived by consumers as authentic and reasonable, they have a higher motivation to obtain personal experience through understanding real information, and further establish closer connections with the story to get higher self-brand connection. When characters of a story are highly similar to consumers, the connection with the story as perceived by consumers is stronger. In invoking cognitive resources to extract the events in memory, they are able to connect plots in the story with elements in their memory to get higher self-brand connection. As self-brand connection means consumers' self-extension of a brand, consumers, as individuals, are bound to maintain internal consistency. In other words, self-brand connection can cause significant interference with their brand attitudes and behavioral intentions. Higher the self-brand connection level can bring higher consumers' brand attitude. Therefore, self-brand connection plays a mediating effect in the positive influence of brand story characteristics on consumers' brand attitude.

In combination with the analysis in Section 5.3.4 of Chapter V, it can be found that imagination fluency and self-brand connection play a dual mediating effect in the influence of brand story characteristics on consumers' brand attitude. Specifically, imagination fluency and self-brand connection play a dual mediating effect in the positive influence of story authenticity perception on consumers' brand attitude, and play a dual mediating effect in the positive influence of consumers' story character similarity perception on their brand attitude. Specifically, the single mediating effect of imagination fluency and that of self-brand connection in the two main effect routes have been attested according to the above-mentioned conclusions.

According to the prior research conclusions, story audiences may associate the subject

and plots in a brand story with themselves by virtue of fluent self-imagination, which will convert the positive relationship between story characters and the brand in the story to the relationship between consumers and the brand and promote consumers to perceive the degree of connection between themselves and the brand. In other words, higher imagination fluency of consumers can bring about higher the self-brand connection. When plots in a story are perceived by consumers as highly authentic, they can easily imagine the scenarios and characters of the story, and further associate events of the story with themselves in the virtual world created in the story to form self-brand connection and affect their brand attitude. When characters in a story are perceived by consumers as highly similar to themselves, they are likely to get immersed into the characters to experience the situations experienced by the characters in the story and imagine the scene of the brand story, thus resulting in higher self-brand connection and forming a more positive brand attitude. Therefore, imagination fluency and self-brand connection play a dual mediating effect in the positive influence of brand story characteristics on consumers' brand attitude.

6.1.3 Mediating effect of story involvement

In combination with the analysis in Section 5.3.5 of Chapter V, it can be found that story involvement plays a mediating effect in the influence of brand story characteristics on consumers' brand attitude. Specifically, story involvement plays a mediating effect in the positive influence of story authenticity perception on consumers' brand attitude, and plays a mediating effect in the positive influence of consumers' story character similarity perception on their brand attitude.

In this regard, when the authenticity of a story is higher, consumers' authenticity perception of story materials is higher. According to the prior research, consumers' involvement in brand stories is significantly correlated with the value perceived by them, for which consumers, in perceiving a brand story of higher authenticity, are more willing to invest energy and attention to comprehend the story, thus triggering higher story involvement.

Similarly, when consumers perceive higher similarity between story characters and themselves, they are prone to obtain higher story involvement. Consumers' involvement in products may be reflected in actively processing information about products, leading to more positive consumption decisions. Therefore, when consumers have higher involvement in brand stories, which means that consumers pay much attention and attach great significance to brand stories, they have more understanding of relevant brand information, and then generate a more positive brand attitude. In this connection, brand stories triggering higher authenticity

and character similarity perception of consumers may help consumers to generate higher story involvement—manifestation of consumers' concern extent and processing efforts of story information. For consumers of higher story involvement, the story attitude—brand recognition and understanding—brand attitude route is more likely to occur because of the mediating effect of story involvement in the positive influence of brand story characteristics on consumers' brand attitude.

6.1.4 Moderating effect of consumers' value perception on the relationship between brand stories and imagination fluency

In combination with the analyses in Sections from 5.5.1 to 5.5.4, it can be found that the moderating effect of story audiences' functional value perception of a brand on the relationship between brand stories and imagination fluency is significant, so does the moderating effect of their symbolic value perception of a brand on the relationship between brand stories and imagination fluency.

Specifically, functional value perception positively promotes the effect of independent variables—story similarity and event authenticity perception on imagination fluency of story audiences. Higher the consumers' functional value perception of a brand means stronger positive effect of independent variables—story similarity and event authenticity perception on imagination fluency. Consumers' functional value perception refers to their perception of the functional value available to be provided by a brand by virtue of such core information as brand, products, and services. In this study, some brief brand introduction materials were issued to the subjects to stimulate them and measure their value perception level of specific brands prior to the commencement of formal story materials.

When the functional value perception level of consumers is higher, it means they pay more attention to pragmatic information of brands. In this regard, if the products or services provided by a specific brand are to meet given functional needs as considered by audiences, brand stories originating from real events or stories marked with higher likelihood of occurrence in reality and higher reduction degree are easier to make audiences generate higher event authenticity perception.

Given that consumers, as audiences, are likely to encounter similar conditions, they have a higher motivation to obtain personal experience through understanding real experience of others (J. Escalas, 2004), and further reduce risks in the future by acquiring guidance for action. Therefore, the functional perception of a brand can enhance the facilitation of story event authenticity perception for audiences' comprehension and imagination of story plots and

scenarios.

When the symbolic value perceived by audiences from a story varies, however, there is no significant difference in the influence of audiences' perception of story character similarity and event authenticity on imagination fluency. The reason probably lies in that in this study, priority is given to the role of story characteristics (such as character similarity and even authenticity) in the model, while less attention is paid to story emotion, significance and other elements revealing consumers' identity and image. In this connection, the moderating effect of symbolic value perception level on the relationship between brand story characteristics and imagination fluency is insignificant.

6.1.5 Moderated mediating effect

According to the analysis on the mediating effect moderated by consumers' value perception in Section 5.6, it can be seen that there is no significant difference in the effect of the mediating and dual mediating routes at different symbolic value perception levels, which means that symbolic value perception does not cause significant interference with the mediating effect of $X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2$ and $X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y$. In essence, symbolic value perception refers to the information other than of material or functional level including brand significance and image obtained by audiences from brand introduction. When audiences' symbolic value perception of a brand is higher, it means that consumers think the brand can meet their value demand of reflecting their identity and image.

As this study focuses on the influence resulting from difference in character and event of story characteristics, the moderating effect of symbolic value perception that works through brand significance, emotion and other symbolic variables in the whole model is insignificant. Even if the symbolic value perception levels of audiences for a specific brand vary, there is no significant difference in the influence on the chain-based dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection.

In the research on the moderating effect of consumers' value perception, it is found that functional value perception has a moderating effect in the influence of brand story characteristics on brand attitude through chain-based dual mediating route of imagination fluency and self-brand connection. The moderating effect occurs in the first section of the chain-based dual mediating route, which means that when the functional value perception level is higher, the positive facilitation of brand story characteristics (such as story character similarity and event authenticity perception) for audiences' imagination fluency is stronger.

When audiences have higher functional value perception of a brand, they are inclined to

obtain authentic and referential information. Such reliable information further reinforces their willingness and fluency of getting immersed into the virtual world created by the brand story, helps them experience the story scenarios experienced by characters in the story and connect themselves with story characters, and enables audiences to feel that they are story characters, thus generating stronger self-brand connection and becoming more familiar with and in favor of the brand. In this way, the attitude of audiences towards a specific brand is improved.

6.2 Research inspirations

Focusing on the Influence of Brand Story Characteristics on Brand Attitude, this thesis mainly studied the effect of consumers' authenticity perception and character similarity perception resulting from brand stories on consumers' brand attitude, and further explored the action mechanism. In the meantime, it took into account the moderating effect of consumers' symbolic and functional value perception in the whole model, and carried out in-depth research. In this study, experimental questionnaires were designed to empirically verify the single mediating effect of imagination fluency, self-brand connection and story involvement as well as the dual mediating effect of imagination fluency and self-brand connection in the influence of brand story characteristics on consumers' brand attitude. Theoretically, the research conclusions obtained in this thesis have enriched relevant research conclusions in the story-based marketing field. When it comes to the social practice, they can be used to guide enterprises to expand the brand communication scope and uplift the social influence by designing story modes and making the best of brand stories as a marketing tool.

The prior research achievements in the brand story field mainly orient at the influence path of brand stories for consumers' brand attitude and the influence of brand stories in different types on consumers' brand attitude. By extending the research field of brand stories, this study centered on "what brand stories may lead to favorable brand attitude of consumers", took brand story characteristics as research subject, and laid emphasis on the acting path of the influence of story event and character characteristics on consumers' brand attitude. Compared with the prior research achievements, this study answered the question "how to tell stories" rather than "what stories should be told".

Aside from brand story characteristics, variables involved in this study are based on the perception of consumers, namely, story audiences, which verified the positive influence of different story characteristics on consumers' imagination fluency, attention degree and self-brand connection established through stories, and answered the question "what brand stories

are attractive for consumers”.

The priority of story-based marketing is to create appealing brand stories. As story-based marketing is drawing more attention in recent years, a growing number of enterprises have attached great significance to the creation and spreading of their brand stories. In creating brand stories, however, they invest their financial resources and energies in material selection merely, ignoring the significant influence of story design modes on consumers' perception. As shown by prior research conclusions, not all the stories can exert relatively stronger positive influence on consumers' brand attitude, and only sufficiently appealing stories are able to yield the greatest return.

Therefore, enterprises are encouraged to highlight the design mode of stories in creating their brand stories, so as to yield the greatest return on their investment. According to research achievements of this thesis, the authenticity of stories and the similarity between story characters and consumers exert significantly positive influence on consumers' imagination fluency, story involvement, self-brand connection, and brand attitude that are based on the self-perception of consumers. In designing brand stories, therefore, enterprises should work to make the selection of story characters and story events and processing of story plots be real, vivid and close to life, which then will cause consumers to resonate with stories and get immersed into their stories. When consumers are willing to get immersed into stories created by enterprises, they will extend their preference for stories to corresponding brands, and have good impression on such brands.

In the Internet-dominated era, especially, there are a wide array of channels for consumers to obtain resources and information. As a result of the overwhelming false information and exaggerated propaganda online, consumers now strongly dislike and reject grandiloquent and unrealistic brand marketing and consulting. In this context, real and amiable brand stories can empower enterprises to win the trust and preference of consumers, and further contribute to their more extensive social influence.

Therefore, in practice, enterprises should put themselves in the position of consumers, and treat consumers with empathy. And the priority of story-based marketing is starting from the perspective of consumers, using real stories close to the life of consumers to attract and move consumers, and making consumers joyful due to those stories, rather than resort to exaggerated and windy marketing means.

In addition, this thesis took into account the role of consumers' value perception in brand story marketing. According to the research conclusions, no matter for products of higher symbolic value (such as diamond, watch, and handbag) or for products of higher functional

value (such as toothbrush and daily necessities), stories should be designed in a way that accurately transfers the product value to consumers. Only in this way can consumers have a higher brand attitude while accepting brand stories. In designing stories, enterprises should convey the value meeting differentiated demands of consumers in light of the product types. For products of higher symbolic value, story content should convey to consumers such additional symbolic functions out of product use value as “highlighting identity” and “expressing own attitude” for the purpose of uplifting consumers’ symbolic value perception level. For products of higher functional value, stories should be designed to convey such product use value as “excellent quality”, “powerful functions” and “contribution to life convenience” with a view to improving consumers’ functional value perception level. Only stories enabling consumers to generate the value perception of different priorities based on product types may win the everlasting favor of consumers.

6.3 Research limitations and expectations

In accordance with the research purposes, this thesis strictly complies with the scientific research paradigm, has research questionnaires designed based on the sorting and arrangement of relevant literature and in combination with the experimental purposes, and ensures the compliance with due standards during the experimental process. As most research hypotheses are supported by the empirical results, the anticipated experimental objectives are fundamentally realized. Restricted by objective conditions, however, there are some inevitable limitations. First, most experimental subjects are college students and aged younger than 30. Given their limited consumption ability, sports brands were selected at the beginning of experimental design, whose symbolic value is relatively low compared with that of products of extremely high symbolic value including watch and diamond ring. Therefore, the measurement of subjects’ symbolic value perception may deviate from the actualities. Second, although the experimental condition was designed close to realities as much as possible, it is inevitable that some college students may fill out the questionnaires out of good faith, which further resulted in errors of experimental results.

Generally, in the context where the marketing based on brand stories is drawing more and more attention of enterprises, this study explored the influencing mechanism of brand story characteristics for consumers’ brand attitude, attested the role of imagination fluency, self-brand connection and story involvement in the entire route from the perspective of consumers’ perception, and simultaneously took into account the moderating effect of consumers’

functional value perception and symbolic value perception of products. Although this study is innovative in some aspects and has some meaningful conclusions, it is a tip of the iceberg in the brand story research field. In the future, the research on brand stories may be carried out in the following aspects:

(1) Aside from the similarity between brand story characters and consumers and the event authenticity of brand stories involved in this study, we may also consider the influence of plot clarity and other characteristics of brand stories on consumers' brand attitude.

(2) In this study, the experimental subjects are mainly college students, so the future research may study the brand attitude of consumers in enterprise environment and social environment.

(3) As consumers' perception of stories of the same brand varies because of different modes of publicity, the future research may focus on the changes in consumers' perception resulting from different modes of publicity including text messages and video images, and whether the effect of brand stories on consumers' brand attitude is affected.

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Annexes A: Story Materials of Sports Brands

I. Stories of Sports Brands

1. Founder × True Brand Story

As one of the most extraordinary athletes in the 20th century, Li Ning won 14 world champions successively in his sport career, created the myth in the global gymnastics history, and was known as the “Prince of Gymnastics”. At the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, Li Ning won three gold medals, two silver models, and one bronze medal, followed by overwhelming flowers and applause. Li Ning recalled that local residents lined the streets to give him a welcome when he returned from Los Angeles to his hometown Liuzhou, and scrambled to touch his models. “At that moment, China just implemented the reform and opening up policy and was in desperate need of inspiration, for which our athletic performance was above the value of sports.”

In contrast to the vigorous joy accompanying his success, Li Ning was later on hit by the endless sadness resulting from failure. At the Seoul Olympic Games four years later, Li Ning suffered setbacks one after another, and failed to obtain any medal. After coming back into the dressing room, his teammates and he cried on each other's shoulder. Unreasoning audiences even sent blaze and rope to him. In the end, he announced his retirement.

In 1990, two years upon his retirement, Li Ning established LI-NING sports brand. When the brand development was in low ebb, Li Ning, due to his confidence in Chinese elements and recognition of home-made quality, frequently appeared at overseas fashion weeks with clothes featuring Chinese classic elements. The same as his excellent performance at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, in the field of sports clothing brands, LI-NING earned the dignity and glory for China and home-made brands again by virtue of the classic and decent Chinese elements.

Throughout the brand development, Li Ning unswervingly holds that sport is cheerful and deserves the participation of more people, and what he could do is to provide them with better sports goods. Now, LI-NING has grown into one of the most popular China-chic brands among young people, and led a new trend of the sportswear industry with the concept of “Chinese styles + fashion”. Li Ning believes that, people are of unlimited potential, and sports will make people more confident, dare to show themselves, and unceasingly tap own potential

and go beyond themselves. Therefore, the advertising slogan of LI-NING is designed so:

Anything is possible

Make the Change

2. Founder × Fictional Brand Story

As one of the most extraordinary tennis players in the 20th century, Wang Qiuqian won 14 world champions successively in his sport career, created the myth in the global history, and was known as the “Prince of Tennis”. At an Olympic Games, he won the gold medal of men’s singles and that of men’s doubles, and later on was surrounded by flowers and applause. Wang Qiuqian recalled that, he was warmly welcomed by neighbors and friends after returning to his hometown, and the medals hung on the wall of his home were viewed by friends visiting him. “At that moment, China just implemented the reform and opening up policy and was in desperate need of inspiration, for which our athletic performance was above the value of sports.”

In contrast to the vigorous joy accompanying his success, Li Ning was later on hit by the endless sadness resulting from failure. At the Olympic Games four years later, Wang Qiuqian failed in men’s singles and men’s doubles without obtaining any medal as a result of his achilles’ tendon injury. After coming back into the dressing room, his teammates and he cried on each other’s shoulder. Unreasoning audiences even sent blaze and rope to him. As a result, he announced his retirement.

Two years upon his retirement, Wang Qiuqian established the sports brand TENNIS. When the brand development was in low ebb, Wang Qiuqian, with his confidence in Chinese elements and recognition of home-made quality, frequently appeared at overseas fashion weeks with clothes featuring Chinese classic elements. The same as the excellent performance of Wang Qiuqian at the Olympic Games, in the field of sports clothing brands, TENNIS also earned the dignity and glory for China and home-made brands again by virtue of the classic and decent Chinese elements.

Throughout the brand development, Wang Qiuqian unswervingly holds that, sport is cheerful and deserves the participation of more people, and what he could do is to provide them with better sports goods. Now, TENNIS has grown into one of the most popular China-chic brands among young people, and led a new trend of the sportswear industry with the concept of “Chinese styles + fashion”. Wang Qiuqian believes that, people are of unlimited potential, and sports will make people more confident, dare to show themselves, and unceasingly tap own potential and go beyond themselves.

3. Consumer × Real Brand Story

Zhang is a college student and is fond of jogging, street dance and basketball in spare time. Thus, Zhang needs to purchase sportswear in different scenarios. The core demands of Zhang are as below:

1. The sportswear should play the sport protection effect.
2. The price of the sportswear should be affordable.

Due to the limited living expenses at his disposal when Zhang was a student, it was impossible for him to purchase such sports brands of higher price as adidas and Nike. Upon access to relevant information online and comparison and analysis thereof, Zhang selected LI-NING. First, he purchased a pair of running shoes in LI-NING Yunque series at the price of RMB269. After wearing the shoes to run for one month, Zhang lauded them to the skies, “they are lightweight, ventilate and wearable, and their service life can be two to three years easily as long as I run on synthetic surface track, not cement pavement.” In addition to sneakers, clothes branded LI-NING also surprised Zhang. As a member of the street dance club then, Zhang had to wear eye-catching and fashionable clothes on stage performance, while the price of fashion brands was costly. As a result, hoodies of LI-NING were chosen by their dance teacher as stage clothes. “The stage effect is satisfactory. And that looks good on us due to the unique China-chic style.” Since then, Zhang became a fan of LI-NING, and purchased its basketball shoes, fitness wear, and China-chic clothes.

After graduation in 2019, Zhang has more financial freedom, so he has also purchased products of brands including AJ, adidas, and Fila, in addition to his favored LI-NING. After many overseas brands were reported bringing shame on Xinjiang cotton on 2021, March 25, Zhang further consolidated his support for home-made brands. “Among China-chic sports brands, LI-NING dominates the leading position. In combination with my use experience in recent years, this domestic brand is absolutely worth buying, and LI-NING has registered ongoing progress in its design in recent years. Following the event of Xinjiang cotton, the share price of LI-NING hit limit up, which manifests that most people have confidence in this brand like I do.”

4. Consumer × fictional brand story

Zhang is a college student and is fond of jogging, street dance and basketball in spare time. Thus, Zhang needs to purchase sportswear in different scenarios. The core demands of Zhang are as below:

1. The sportswear should play the sport protection effect.
2. The price of the sportswear should be affordable.

Due to the limited living expenses at his disposal when Zhang was a student, it was

impossible for Zhang to purchase sports brands of high price. Upon access to relevant information online and comparison and analysis thereof, Zhang selected EASTLINK. First, he purchased a pair of running shoes of EASTLINK at the price of RMB269. After wearing the shoes to run for one month, Zhang lauded them to the skies, “they are lightweight, ventilate and wearable, and their service life can be two to three years easily as long as I run on synthetic surface track, not cement pavement.” In addition to sneakers, clothes branded EASTLINK also surprised Zhang. As a member of the street dance club then, Zhang had to wear eye-catching and fashionable clothes on stage performance, while the price of fashion brands was costly. In this connection, hoodies of EASTLINK were chosen by him as stage clothes upon discussion with other members of the street dance club given their high performance-cost ratio. “The stage effect is satisfactory. And that looks good on us due to the unique Chinese style.” Since then, Zhang became a fan of EASTLINK, and purchased its basketball shoes, fitness wear, and other casual wear.

After graduation in 2019, Zhang has more financial freedom, so he has also purchased products of other sports brands, in addition to his favored EASTLINK. After many overseas brands were reported bringing shame on Xinjiang cotton on 2021, March 25, Zhang further consolidated his support for home-made brands. “In combination with my use experience in recent years, this domestic brand is absolutely worth buying, and EASTLINK has registered ongoing progress in its design in recent years. It can be observed that, a growing number of people now have preference for this brand, which manifests that most people have confidence in this brand like I do.”

II. Brand Stories of Electric Toothbrush

5. Founder × True Brand Story

In 1921, Max Braun established the brand of “BRAUN” in Frankfurt, Germany to manufacture household appliances. After the painstaking operation of Max Braun for more than twenty years, BRAUN was in the ascendant.

However, the luck of Max Braun elapsed with the outbreak of World War II, which inflicted heavy loss on his career. During the World War II, BRAUN was forced to accept the weapon manufacturing contract, especially, the manufacturing of radio and radio control equipment. In 1944, the factory of BRAUN in Frankfurt was ruined in an air raid, which almost brought the painstaking efforts of Max Braun to nothing. Confronted with the heavy losses of BRAUN, Max Braun never encountered the idea of giving up. Although he had only 150 employees then, Max Braun resolutely determined to rebuild his company and resume production. Thereafter, the development of BRAUN was in a difficult situation. However,

neither the cruelty of wars nor the difficulty in rebuilding a factory damped down the enthusiasm of Max for innovation. Instead, Max Braun insisted on the spirit of seiko typical of Germany. Despite a sea of difficulties arising from his restart of career development, he never abandoned the pursuit for perfect quality of products, and held that design means the perfect combination of innovative technology, high-quality raw materials, and simple design. It was the unique brand philosophy and competitive quality that empowered BRAUN to get back on track.

In the 1960s, BRAUN and Oral-B cooperated to launch the BRAUN & Oral-B electric toothbrush, which made the best of the excellent technologies of BRAUN in home appliances and saw the perfect combination with the long-term experience of Oral-B in oral care. Absorbing design inspirations from rotation and vibration of pendulum clock and from dental surgeons, the BRAUN & Oral-B electric toothbrush featured the cup-shaped brush head of left and right rotation and back and forth vibration at a rapid speed, and started the era of 3D teeth cleaning.

Following the humanized design concept of “less is more”, products of BRAUN are simple and exquisite. Passing on and inheriting the seiko spirit of Max Braun, the BRAUN & Oral-B electric toothbrush comprises hundreds of exquisite crafts and keeps improving, making it one of the most welcomed electric toothbrush brands in the market.

6. Founder × Fictional Brand Story

In 1921, Rob Oran established the brand of “ORAN” in France to manufacture household appliances. After the painstaking operation of Rob Oran for more than twenty years, ORAN was in the ascendant.

However, the luck of Rob Oran elapsed with the outbreak of World War II, which inflicted heavy loss on his career. During the World War II, ORAN was forced to accept the weapon manufacturing contract, especially, the manufacturing of radio and radio control equipment. In 1944, the factory of ORAN was ruined in an air raid, which brought the painstaking efforts of Rob Oran to nothing. Confronted with the heavy losses of ORAN, Rob Oran never encountered the idea of giving up. Although he had only 150 employees then, Rob Oran resolutely determined to rebuild his company and resume production. Thereafter, the development of ORAN was in a difficult situation. However, neither the cruelty of wars nor the difficulty in rebuilding a factory damped down the enthusiasm of Rob for innovation. Instead, Rob Oran insisted on the spirit of seiko. Despite a sea of difficulties arising from his restart of career development, he never abandoned the pursuit for perfect quality of products, and held that design means the perfect combination of innovative technology, high-quality

raw materials, and simple design. It was the unique brand philosophy and competitive quality that empowered ORAN to get back on track.

In the 1960s, ORAN and the dentist Dr. Houston cooperated to launch the ORAN electric toothbrush, which made the best of the excellent technologies of ORAN in home appliances and saw the integration of the long-standing oral medical and care experience of Dr. Houston. Absorbing design inspirations from rotation and vibration of pendulum clock, the ORAN electric toothbrush featured the cup-shaped brush head of left and right rotation and back and forth vibration at a rapid speed, and started the era of 3D teeth cleaning.

Following the humanized design concept of “less is more”, products of ORAN are simple and exquisite. Passing on and inheriting the seiko spirit of Rob Oran, the ORAN electric toothbrush comprises hundreds of exquisite crafts and keeps improving, making it one of the most welcomed electric toothbrush brands in the market.

7. Consumer × True Brand Story:

For as long as Zhang Yang could remember, her family members were deeply troubled by passive smoking as a result of her father's addiction to smoking, for which they often quarrelled with each other. As a perennial smoker, her father coughed a lot and had his teeth covered with smoke spot. To make her father quit smoking, Zhang Yang went out of her way, and even provoked her father as a result of speaking without thinking, for which Zhang Yang and her father grew apart.

When Zhang Yang was a junior, her father once suffered from breathing difficulties. Thanks to the immediate rescue, her father escaped with bare life, and recovered after treatment. After taking a new lease of life, her father finally determined to cooperate with the professional smoking cessation treatment. After smoking less, her father became in good health, while the smoke spot on his teeth remained as before.

In order to protect her father from the damage caused by smoking, Zhang Yang sent her father a set of BRAUN & Oral-B oral cleaning kit on the occasion of a Father's Day, which includes electric toothbrush for polishing and whitening, whitening toothpaste, dental floss, and mouth wash. Therein: whitening toothpaste can whiten the surface of teeth. Electric toothbrush is outfitted with the small round head for polishing, and has the brush head 360° rotating and vibrating in all dimensions to grind and whiten teeth surface and remove dental plaque, and automatically slowing down in response to the hint of pressure red light to prevent bleeding gums, for which it is suitable for Zhang Yang's father, whose teeth are vulnerable yet in need of comprehensive and in-depth cleaning.

After catching sight of the advertising slogan of “Care your teeth and love you more” on

the toothbrush set, Zhang Yang's father suddenly got to know the care and thought of his daughter, because this gift is full of the warm love of his daughter, in addition to protecting his teeth. Eventually, they are reconciled. According to the instruction book, Zhang Yang's father uses the BRAUN & Oral-B oral cleaning kit every day. Three months later, the smoke smog on his teeth has faded, and dental calculus and dental plaque also faded. It is hardly possible to find that Zhang Yang's father was once a perennial smoker according to his teeth.

BRAUN & Oral-B stays focused on the research of oral care, and is dedicated to providing oral care products for consumers including Zhang Yang's father. BRAUN pursues innovative design and functions, develops intelligent cloud-based electric toothbrushes with integration of AI technology, and launches brush heads with different functions to make oral hygiene more intelligent and worry free. In light of the consistent product quality and brand philosophy of BRAUN, Zhang Yang continuously selects BRAUN & Oral-B when replacing oral cleaning products for her family members and has become a loyal fan of this brand. Besides, her friends also favor the brand of BRAUN after the recommendation by Zhang Yang.

8. Consumer × fictional brand story

For as long as Zhang Yang could remember, her family members were deeply troubled by passive smoking as a result of her father's addiction to smoking, for which they often quarreled with each other. As a perennial smoker, her father coughed a lot and had his teeth covered with smoke spot. To make her father quit smoking, Zhang Yang went out of her way, and even provoked her father as a result of speaking without thinking, for which Zhang Yang and her father grew apart.

When Zhang Yang was a junior, her father once suffered from breathing difficulties. Thanks to the immediate rescue, her father escaped with bare life, and recovered after treatment. After taking a new lease of life, her father finally determined to cooperate with the professional smoking cessation treatment. After smoking less, her father became in good health, while the smoke spot on his teeth remained as before.

In order to protect her father from the damage caused by smoking, Zhang Yang sent her father a set of ORAN oral cleaning kit on the occasion of a Father's Day, which includes electric toothbrush for polishing and whitening, whitening toothpaste, dental floss, and mouth wash. Therein: whitening toothpaste can whiten the surface of teeth. Electric toothbrush is outfitted with the small round head for polishing, and has the brush head 360° rotating and vibrating in all dimensions to grind and whiten teeth surface and remove dental plaque, and automatically slowing down in response to the hint of pressure red light to prevent bleeding

gums, for which it is suitable for Zhang Yang's father, whose teeth are vulnerable yet in need of comprehensive and in-depth cleaning.

After catching sight of the advertising slogan of "Care your teeth and love you more" on the toothbrush set, Zhang Yang's father suddenly got to know the care and thought of his daughter, because this gift is full of the warm love of his daughter, in addition to protecting his teeth. Eventually, they are reconciled. According to the instruction book, Zhang Yang's father uses the ORAN oral cleaning kit every day. Three months later, the smoke smog on his teeth has faded, and dental calculus and dental plaque also faded. It is hardly possible to find that Zhang Yang's father was once a perennial smoker according to his teeth.

ORAN stays focused on the research of oral care, and is dedicated to providing oral care products for consumers including Zhang Yang's father. ORAN pursues innovative design and functions, develops intelligent cloud-based electric toothbrushes with integration of AI technology, and launches brush heads with different functions to make oral hygiene more intelligent and worry free. In light of the consistent product quality and brand philosophy of ORAN, Zhang Yang continuously selects ORAN when replacing oral cleaning products for her family members and has become a loyal fan of this brand. Besides, her friends also favor the brand of ORAN after the recommendation by Zhang Yang.

Annex B: Experimental Questionnaires

Experimental Group I: Sports brand × founder × true brand story

Thanks for your participation in this survey. This survey is used for academic research only, and due efforts will be made to protect your individual privacy. As to the options under the questionnaire, there are no right or wrong answers, and you are expected to make selection in light of your own actualities and real thoughts. Thanks for your cooperation again!

Please answer the accompanying questions according to the following introduction to the sports brand–LI-NING:

Following the mission of “burning your passion with exercise”, LI-NING is dedicated to developing professional sports goods, works to change life through exercise, and strives for the breakthrough at a higher level. Upholding such core values as “realizing dreams”, “consumer-orientation”, “our culture” and “breakthrough”, it stays focused on becoming an internationally first-class fashionable and professional sports brand originating from China and recognized by other countries.

1. What is your impression on the brand of LI-NING according to its brand introduction?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Using this brand can reflect my personality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think it is worth buying this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Products of this	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

brand have high popularity in society							
The product quality of this brand is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Products of this brand have stable performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Products of this brand have good effect in use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Sometimes, brand concepts are delivered to consumers in the way of storytelling. Please read the following **true** brand story (Annex - Story Material 1) carefully, and answer questions according to your feelings:

2. After reading the brand story of LI-NING, what is your impression on the brand story character therein [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think there are some	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

similarities between the character in the story and myself							
I have a soft spot for the character in the story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the character in the story is close to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. After reading the brand story of LI-NING, what is your story authenticity perception? [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think there are similar characters in the real life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the events described in this brand story exist in reality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the information conveyed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

by the story is authentic							
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4. After reading the brand story of LI-NING, what is your brand attitude toward LI-NING?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The brand story deepens my impression of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story enables me to get more information about products of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story enables me to get more information about this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story shortens the distance between me and this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story increases my recognition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

of this brand							
The brand story increases my favor for this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After reading the brand story, I will give priority to this brand among similar brands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After reading the brand story, I am more likely to buy products of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After reading the brand story, I prefer to recommend this brand to the people around me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. While reading the brand story of LI-NING, what is your feeling about this story? [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is not difficult for me to imagine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

the image of the story in my mind							
I can quickly form my imagination of the scene depicted in this story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that the scenes described in the story are easy to appear in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think it is easy for me to get myself immersed into the story scenario	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. After reading the brand story of LI-NING, how do you feel about the brand LI-NING? [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand can reflect my personalit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

y							
I am willing to use this brand to identify myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am emotionally connected with this brand, the same as the interpersonal relationship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to use this brand to express my personality to others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this brand can help me become who I want	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this brand is "me"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

positioning of this brand suits me very well							
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7. While reading the brand story of LI-NING, what is your experience? [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am relatively focused while reading this story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like reading this story because it is interesting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I clearly know what this story tells after reading it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am even immersed into this story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. What is your gender: [Single Choice] *

- Male
- Female

9. What is your age: [Single Choice] *

- ≤17
- 17~20
- 20~23
- 23~26
- 26~29
- ≥29

10. What is your education background (including in school): [Single Choice] *

Doctor

Master

Bachelor

College

Senior High School/Technical Secondary School

Others

Experimental Group II: Sports brand × founder × fictional brand story

Thanks for your participation in this survey. This survey is used for academic research only, and due efforts will be made to protect your individual privacy. As to the options under the questionnaire, there are no right or wrong answers, and you are expected to make selection in light of your own actualities and real thoughts. Thanks for your cooperation again!

Please answer the accompanying questions according to the following introduction to the sports brand - TENNIS:

Following the mission of “burning your passion with exercise”, TENNIS is dedicated to developing professional sports goods, works to change life through exercise, and strives for the breakthrough at a higher level. Upholding such core values as “realizing dreams”, “consumer-orientation”, “our culture” and “breakthrough”, it stays focused on becoming an internationally first-class fashionable and professional sports brand originating from China and recognized by other countries.

1. What is your impression on the brand of TENNIS according to its brand introduction?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Using this brand can reflect my personality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think it is worth buying this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Products of this brand have high popularity in society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The product quality of this brand is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Products of this brand have stable performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Products of this brand have good effect in use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Sometimes, brand concepts are delivered to consumers in the way of storytelling. Please read the following **fictional** brand story (Annex - Story Material 2) carefully, and answer questions according to your feelings:

2. After reading the brand story, what is your impression on the brand story character therein [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think there are some similarities between the character in the story and myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a soft spot for the character in the story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the character in the	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

story is close to me							
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3. After reading the brand story of TENNIS, what is your story authenticity perception?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think there are similar characters in the real life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the events described in this brand story exist in reality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the information conveyed by the story is authentic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. After reading the brand story of TENNIS, what is your brand attitude toward TENNIS?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The brand story deepens my impressio	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

n of this brand							
The brand story enables me to get more information about products of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story enables me to get more information about this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story shortens the distance between me and this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story increases my recognition of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story increases	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

my favor for this brand							
After reading the brand story, I will give priority to this brand among similar brands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After reading the brand story, I am more likely to buy products of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After reading the brand story, I prefer to recommen d this brand to the people around me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. While reading the brand story of TENNIS, what is your feeling about this story?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly	Disagree	Slightly	Generally	Slightly	Agree	Strongl
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	Disagree		Disagree	Agree	Agree		y Agree
It is not difficult for me to imagine the image of the story in my mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can quickly form my imagination of the scene depicted in this story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that the scenes described in the story are easy to appear in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think it is easy for me to get myself immersed into the story scenario	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. After reading the brand story of TENNIS, how do you feel about the brand TENNIS?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand can reflect my personality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am willing to use this brand to identify myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am emotionally connected with this brand, the same as the interpersonal relationship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to use this brand to express my personality to others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this brand can help me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

become who I want							
I think this brand is "me"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the positioning of this brand suits me very well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. While reading the brand story of TENNIS, what is your experience? [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am relatively focused while reading this story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like reading this story because it is interesting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I clearly know what this story tells after reading it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I am even immersed into this story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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8. What is your gender: [Single Choice] *

- Male
- Female

9. What is your age: [Single Choice] *

- ≤17
- 17~20
- 20~23
- 23~26
- 26~29
- ≥29

10. What is your education background (including in school): [Single Choice] *

- Doctor
- Master
- Bachelor
- College
- Senior High School/Technical Secondary School
- Others

Experimental Group III: Sports brand × consumer × true brand story

Thanks for your participation in this survey. This survey is used for academic research only, and due efforts will be made to protect your individual privacy. As to the options under the questionnaire, there are no right or wrong answers, and you are expected to make selection in light of your own actualities and real thoughts. Thanks for your cooperation again!

Please answer the accompanying questions according to the following introduction to the sports brand - LI-NING:

Following the mission of “burning your passion with exercise”, LI-NING is dedicated to developing professional sports goods, works to change life through exercise, and strives for the breakthrough at a higher level. Upholding such core values as “realizing dreams”, “consumer-orientation”, “our culture” and “breakthrough”, it stays focused on becoming an internationally first-class fashionable and professional sports brand originating from China and recognized by other countries.

1. What is your impression on the brand of LI-NING according to its brand introduction?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Using this brand can reflect my personality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think it is worth buying this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Products of this brand have high popularity in society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The product quality of this brand is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Products of this brand have stable performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Products of this brand have good effect in use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Sometimes, brand concepts are delivered to consumers in the way of storytelling. Please read the following **true** brand story carefully, and answer questions according to your feelings:

2. After reading the brand story of LI-NING, what is your impression on the brand story character therein [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think there are some similarities between the character	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

r in the story and myself							
I have a soft spot for the character in the story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the character in the story is close to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. After reading the brand story of LI-NING, what is your story authenticity perception?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think there are similar characters in the real life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the events described in this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

story exist in reality							
I think the information conveyed by the story is authentic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. After reading the brand story of LI-NING, what is your brand attitude toward LI-NING?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The brand story deepens my impression of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story enables me to get more information about products of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The brand story enables me to get more information about this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story shortens the distance between me and this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story increases my recognition of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story increases my favor for this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After reading the brand story, I will give priority to this brand among similar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

brands							
After reading the brand story, I am more likely to buy products of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After reading the brand story, I prefer to recommend this brand to the people around me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. While reading the brand story of LI-NING, what is your feeling about this story?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is not difficult for me to imagine the image of the story in my mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

quickly form my imagination of the scene depicted in this story							
I feel that the scenes described in the story are easy to appear in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think it is easy for me to get myself immersed into the story scenario	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. After reading the brand story of LI-NING, how do you feel about the brand LI-NING?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand can reflect my personality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am willing to use this	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

brand to identify myself							
I am emotionally connected with this brand, the same as the interpersonal relationship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to use this brand to express my personality to others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this brand can help me become who I want	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this brand is "me"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the positioning of this brand suits me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

very well							
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7. While reading the brand story of LI-NING, what is your experience? [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am relatively focused while reading this story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like reading this story because it is interesting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I clearly know what this story tells after reading it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am even immersed into this story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. What is your gender: [Single Choice] *

- Male
- Female

9. What is your age: [Single Choice] *

- ≤17

- 17~20
- 20~23
- 23~26
- 26~29
- ≥ 29

10. What is your education background (including in school): [Single Choice] *

- Doctor
- Master
- Bachelor
- College
- Senior High School/Technical Secondary School
- Others

Experimental Group IV: Sports brand × consumer × fictional brand story

Thanks for your participation in this survey. This survey is used for academic research only, and due efforts will be made to protect your individual privacy. As to the options under the questionnaire, there are no right or wrong answers, and you are expected to make selection in light of your own actualities and real thoughts. Thanks for your cooperation again!

Please answer the accompanying questions according to the following introduction to the sports brand - EASTLINK:

Following the mission of “burning your passion with exercise”, EASTLINK is dedicated to developing professional sports goods, works to change life through exercise, and strives for the breakthrough at a higher level. Upholding such core values as “realizing dreams”, “consumer-orientation”, “our culture” and “breakthrough”, it stays focused on becoming an internationally first-class fashionable and professional sports brand originating from China and recognized by other countries.

1. What is your impression on the brand of EASTLINK according to its brand introduction? [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Using this brand can reflect my personality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think it is worth buying this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Products of this brand have high popularity in society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The product quality of	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
this brand is trustworthy							
Products of this brand have stable performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Products of this brand have good effect in use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Sometimes, brand concepts are delivered to consumers in the way of storytelling. Please read the following **fictional** brand story carefully, and answer questions according to your feelings:

2. After reading the brand story, what is your impression on the brand story character therein [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think there are some similarities between the character in the story and myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a soft spot for the character in the story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

character in the story is close to me							
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3. After reading the brand story of EASTLINK, what is your story authenticity perception?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think there are similar characters in the real life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the events described in this brand story exist in reality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the information conveyed by the story is authentic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. After reading the brand story of EASTLINK, what is your brand attitude toward EASTLINK? [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The brand story deepens my	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

impression of this brand							
The brand story enables me to get more information about products of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story enables me to get more information about this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story shortens the distance between me and this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story increases my recognition of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

increases my favor for this brand							
After reading the brand story, I will give priority to this brand among similar brands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After reading the brand story, I am more likely to buy products of this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After reading the brand story, I prefer to recommend this brand to the people around me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. While reading the brand story of EASTLINK, what is your feeling about this story?

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
is not difficult for me to imagine the image of the story in my mind							
can quickly form my imagination of the scene depicted in this story							
believe that the scenes described in the story are easy to appear in life							
think it is easy for me to get myself immersed into the story scenario							

6. After reading the brand story of EASTLINK, how do you feel about the brand EASTLINK? [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Does this brand can reflect my personality							
Am I willing to use this brand to identify myself							
Am I emotionally connected with this brand, the							

same as the interpersonal relationship							
would like to use this brand to express my personality to others							
think this brand can help me become who I want							
think this brand is "me"							
think the positioning of this brand suits me very well							

7. While reading the brand story of EASTLINK, what is your experience? [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
is relatively focused while reading this story							
like reading this story because it is interesting							
early know what this story tells after reading it							
am even immersed into this story							

8. What is your gender: [Single Choice] *

- Male
- Female

9. What is your age: [Single Choice] *

- ≤ 17
- 17~20
- 20~23
- 23~26
- 26~29
- ≥ 29

10. What is your education background (including in school): [Single Choice] *

- Doctor
- Master
- Bachelor
- College
- Senior High School/Technical Secondary School
- Others

Experimental Group V: Electric toothbrush × founder × true brand story

Hello! We are sorry for taking up your valuable time. Thanks for your participation in our survey. This survey is used for academic research only, and due efforts will be made to protect your privacy. As to the questions under the questionnaire, there are no right or wrong answers, and you are expected to respond thereto in light of your own actualities and real thoughts. Thanks for your cooperation again!

Prior to the commencement of the experiment, please answer the accompanying questions according to the following brief introduction to BRAUN & Oral-B only.

As a globally renowned brand of oral health care, BRAUN & Oral-B has been long dedicating to improving the oral health level of mankind. Dominating the leading position in the oral care field, BRAUN & Oral-B is well versed in how to protect teeth. Owing to the unremitting efforts of more oral care experts, it has applied AI, pressure sensing, and other cutting-edge technologies for products, and developed BRAUN & Oral-B electric toothbrushes outfitted with round brush heads of different functions to cater to the demands of different groups. By virtue of its consistent product quality and brand philosophy, BRAUN & Oral-B now has grown into a leader in the electric toothbrush market.

1. What is your impression on the brand of BRAUN & Oral-B according to its brand introduction: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
product quality of this brand is trustworthy							
products of this brand have stable performance							
products of this brand have good effect in use							
using this brand can reflect my personality							
do you think it is worth buying this product							
products of this brand have							

high popularity in in society							
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Sometimes, brand concepts are delivered to consumers in the way of storytelling. Please read the following true brand story carefully, and answer related questions according to your feelings: (Annex - Story Material 5)

2. After reading the brand story of BRAUN & Oral-B, what is your impression on the brand story character therein [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
think there are some similarities between the character in the story and myself							
have a soft spot for the character in the story							
feel the character in the story is close to me							

3. After reading the brand story of BRAUN & Oral-B, what is your authenticity perception of the events therein: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
think the events described in this brand story exist in reality							
think there are similar characters in the real life							
think the information conveyed by the story is authentic							

4. After reading the brand story of BRAUN & Oral-B, what is your brand attitude towards BRAUN & Oral-B: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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brand story deepens my impression of this brand							
brand story enables me to get more information about products of this brand							
brand story enables me to get more information about this brand							
brand story shortens the distance between me and this brand							
brand story increases my recognition of this brand							
brand story increases my favor for this brand							
er reading the brand story, I will give priority to this brand among similar brands							
er reading the brand							

story, I am more likely to buy products of this brand							
er reading the brand story, I prefer to recommend this brand to the people around me							

5. After reading the brand story of BRAUN & Oral-B, what is your feeling about the following questions: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
is not difficult for me to imagine the image of the story in my mind							
can quickly form my imagination of the scene depicted in this story							
feel that the scenes described in the story are easy to appear in life							
think it is easy for me to get myself immersed into the story scenario							

6. While reading the brand story of BRAUN & Oral-B, what is your feeling of this story:

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am relatively focused while reading this story							
I like reading this story because it is interesting							
I clearly know what this story tells after reading it							
I am immersed in this story							

7. After reading the brand story of BRAUN & Oral-B, what is your impression on the brand BRAUN & Oral-B: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand can reflect my personality							
I am willing to use this brand to identify myself							
I am emotionally connected with this brand, the same as the interpersonal relationship							
I would like to use this brand to express my personality to others							
I think this brand can help me become							

who I want							
think this brand is "me"							
think the positioning of this brand suits me very well							

8. What is your gender: [Single Choice] *

- Male
- Female

9. What is your age: [Single Choice] *

- ≤17
- 17~20
- 20~23
- 23~26
- 26~29
- ≥29

10. What is your education background (including in school): [Single Choice] *

- Doctor
- Master
- Bachelor
- College
- Senior High School/Technical Secondary School
- Others

Experimental Group VI: Electric toothbrush × founder × fictional brand story

Hello! We are sorry for taking up your valuable time. Thanks for your participation in our survey. This survey is used for academic research only, and due efforts will be made to protect your privacy. As to the questions under the questionnaire, there are no right or wrong answers, and you are expected to respond thereto in light of your own actualities and real thoughts. Thanks for your cooperation again!

Prior to the commencement of the experiment, please answer the accompanying questions according to the following brief introduction to BRAUN & Oral-B only.

As a renowned brand of oral health care, ORAN has been long dedicating to improving the oral health level of mankind. ORAN is well versed in how to protect teeth. Owing to the unremitting efforts of more oral care experts, it has applied AI, pressure sensing, and other cutting-edge technologies for products, and developed ORAN electric toothbrushes outfitted with round brush heads of different functions to cater to the demands of different groups. By virtue of its consistent product quality and brand philosophy, ORAN has become one of the most popular electric toothbrush brands.

1. What is your impression on the brand of ORAN according to its brand introduction:
[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
product quality of this brand is trustworthy							
products of this brand have stable performance							
products of this brand have good effect in use							
using this brand can reflect my personality							
I think it is							

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
worth buying this product							
products of this brand have high popularity in society							

Sometimes, brand concepts are delivered to consumers in the way of storytelling. Please read the following *fictional* brand story of assumed brand and character names (Annex - Story Material 6) carefully, and answer relevant questions according to your feelings:

2. After reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your impression on the brand story character therein [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
think there are some similarities between the character in the story and myself							
have a soft spot for the character in the story							
feel the character in the story is close to me							

3. After reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your authenticity perception of the events therein: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
think the events described in this brand story may							

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
also exist in reality							
think the information conveyed by the story is authentic							
think there are similar characters in the real life							

4. After reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your brand attitude towards ORAN:

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
brand story deepens my impression of this brand							
brand story enables me to get more information about products of this brand							
brand story enables me to get more information about this brand							
brand story shortens the distance between me and this brand							
brand story increases my recognition of this brand							
brand story increases my favor for this brand							
after reading							

the brand story, I will give priority to this brand among similar brands							
After reading the brand story, I am more likely to buy products of this brand							
After reading the brand story, I prefer to recommend this brand to the people around me							

5. After reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your feeling about the following questions: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is not difficult for me to imagine the image of the story in my mind							
I can quickly form my imagination of the scene depicted in this story							
I feel that the scenes described in the story are easy to appear in life							
I think it is easy for me to get myself immersed into the							

story scenario							
----------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

6. While reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your feeling of this story: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am relatively focused while reading this story							
I like reading this story because it is interesting							
I clearly know what this story tells after reading it							
I am immersed in this story							

7. After reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your impression on this brand: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand can reflect my personality							
I am willing to use this brand to identify myself							
I am emotionally							

connected with this brand, the same as the interpersonal relationship							
would like to use this brand to express my personality to others							
think this brand can help me become who I want							
think this brand is "me"							
think the positioning of this brand suits me very well							

8. What is your gender: [Single Choice] *

- Male
 Female

9. What is your age: [Single Choice] *

- ≤17
 17~20
 20~23
 23~26
 26~29
 ≥29

10. What is your education background (including in school): [Single Choice] *

- Doctor
 Master
 Bachelor

- College
- Senior High School/Technical Secondary School
- Others

Experimental Group VII: Electric toothbrush × consumer × true brand story

Hello! We are sorry for taking up your valuable time. Thanks for your participation in our survey. This survey is used for academic research only, and due efforts will be made to protect your privacy. As to the questions under the questionnaire, there are no right or wrong answers, and you are expected to respond thereto in light of your own actualities and real thoughts. Thanks for your cooperation again!

Prior to the commencement of the experiment, please answer the accompanying questions according to the following brief introduction to BRAUN & Oral-B only.

As a globally renowned brand of oral health care, BRAUN & Oral-B has been long dedicating to improving the oral health level of mankind. Dominating the leading position in the oral care field, BRAUN & Oral-B is well versed in how to protect teeth. Owing to the unremitting efforts of more oral care experts, it has applied AI, pressure sensing, and other cutting-edge technologies for products, and developed BRAUN & Oral-B electric toothbrushes outfitted with round brush heads of different functions to cater to the demands of different groups. By virtue of its consistent product quality and brand philosophy, BRAUN & Oral-B now has grown into a leader in the electric toothbrush market.

1. What is your impression on the brand of BRAUN & Oral-B according to its brand introduction: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Generally Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
product quality of this brand is trustworthy							
products of this brand have stable performance							
products of this brand have good effect in use							
using this brand can reflect my personality							

think it is worth buying this product							
products of this brand have high popularity in society							

Sometimes, brand concepts are delivered to consumers in the way of storytelling. Please read the following true brand story (Annex - Story Material 7) carefully, and answer relevant questions according to your feelings. *(This story comes from the real experience of a BRAUN & Oral-B consumer but is written under assumed character name.)*

2. After reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your impression on the brand story character therein [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
think there are some similarities between the character in the story and myself							
have a soft spot for the character in the story							
feel the character in the story is close to me							

3. After reading the brand story of BRAUN & Oral-B, what is your authenticity perception of the events therein: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
think the events described in this brand story exist in reality							
think there are							

similar characters in the real life							
think the information conveyed by the story is authentic							

4. After reading the brand story of BRAUN & Oral-B, what is your brand attitude towards BRAUN & Oral-B: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
the brand story deepens my impression of this brand							
the brand story enables me to get more information about products of this brand							
the brand story enables me to get more information about this brand							
the brand story shortens the distance between me and this brand							
the brand story increases my recognition of this brand							
the brand story increases my favor for this brand							
after reading the brand story, I will give priority to this brand among similar brands							
after reading the brand story, I am more likely to buy							

products of this brand							
After reading the brand story, I prefer to recommend this brand to the people around me							

5. After reading the brand story of BRAUN & Oral-B, what is your feeling about the following questions: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is not difficult for me to imagine the image of the story in my mind							
I can quickly form my imagination of the scene depicted in this story							
I feel that the scenes described in the story are easy to appear in life							
I think it is easy for me to get myself immersed into the story scenario							

6. While reading the brand story of BRAUN & Oral-B, what is your feeling of this story: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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	Disagree		Disagree	Agree			Agree
is relatively focused while reading this story							
like reading this story because it is interesting							
early know what this story tells after reading it							
is immersed in this story							

7. After reading the brand story of BRAUN & Oral-B, what is your impression on the brand BRAUN & Oral-B: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Does this brand can reflect my personality							
Am I willing to use this brand to identify myself							
Am I emotionally connected with this brand, the same as the interpersonal relationship							
Would like to use this brand to express my personality to others							
Do I think this brand can							

help me become who I want							
think this brand is "me"							
think the positioning of this brand suits me very well							

8. What is your gender: [Single Choice] *

- Male
- Female

9. What is your age: [Single Choice] *

- ≤17
- 17~20
- 20~23
- 23~26
- 26~29
- ≥29

10. What is your education background (including in school): [Single Choice] *

- Doctor
- Master
- Bachelor
- College
- Senior High School/Technical Secondary School
- Others

Experimental Group VIII: Electric toothbrush × consumer × fictional brand story

Hello! We are sorry for taking up your valuable time. Thanks for your participation in our survey. This survey is used for academic research only, and due efforts will be made to protect your privacy. As to the questions under the questionnaire, there are no right or wrong answers,

and you are expected to respond thereto in light of your own actualities and real thoughts. Thanks for your cooperation again!

Prior to the commencement of the experiment, please answer the accompanying questions according to the following brief introduction to BRAUN & Oral-B only.

As a renowned brand of oral health care, ORAN has been long dedicating to improving the oral health level of mankind. ORAN is well versed in how to protect teeth. Owing to the unremitting efforts of more oral care experts, it has applied AI, pressure sensing, and other cutting-edge technologies for products, and developed ORAN electric toothbrushes outfitted with round brush heads of different functions to cater to the demands of different groups. By virtue of its consistent product quality and brand philosophy, ORAN has become one of the most popular electric toothbrush brands.

1. What is your impression on the brand of ORAN according to its brand introduction:

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
product quality of this brand is trustworthy							
products of this brand have stable performance							
products of this brand have good effect in use							
using this brand can reflect my personality							
think it is worth buying this product							
products of this brand have high							

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
popularity in society							

Sometimes, brand concepts are delivered to consumers in the way of storytelling. Please read the following fictional brand story of assumed brand and character names (Annex - Story Material 8) carefully, and answer relevant questions according to your feelings:

2. After reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your impression on the brand story character therein [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
think there are some similarities between the character in the story and myself							
have a soft spot for the character in the story							
feel the character in the story is close to me							

3. After reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your authenticity perception of the events therein: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
think the events described in this brand story may also exist in reality							
think there are similar characters in the real life							
think the information conveyed by the story is authentic							

4. After reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your brand attitude towards ORAN:

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
After reading the brand story, I feel that the brand story deepens my impression of this brand							
After reading the brand story, I feel that the brand story enables me to get more information about products of this brand							
After reading the brand story, I feel that the brand story enables me to get more information about this brand							
After reading the brand story, I feel that the brand story shortens the distance between me and this brand							
After reading the brand story, I feel that the brand story increases my recognition of this brand							
After reading the brand story, I feel that the brand story increases my favor for this brand							
After reading the brand story, I will give priority to this brand among similar brands							
After reading the brand story, I am more likely to buy products of this brand							
After reading the brand story, I prefer to recommend this brand to the people around me							

5. After reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your feeling about the following questions: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
is not difficult for me to imagine the image of the story in my mind							
can quickly form my imagination of the scene depicted in this story							
feel that the scenes described in the story are easy to appear in life							
think it is easy for me to get myself immersed into the story scenario							

6. While reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your feeling of this story: [Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
am relatively focused while reading this story							
like reading this story because it is interesting							
clearly know what this story tells after reading it							
am immersed in this story							

7. After reading the brand story of ORAN, what is your impression on this brand:

[Questions in the form of matrix scale] *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Generally Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Does this brand reflect my personality							
Am I willing to use this brand to identify myself							
Am I emotionally connected with this brand, the same as the interpersonal relationship							
Would I like to use this brand to express my personality to others							
Do I think this brand can help me become who I want							
Do I think this brand is "me"							
Do I think the positioning of this brand suits me very well							

8. What is your gender: [Single Choice] *

- Male
- Female

9. What is your age: [Single Choice] *

- ≤17
- 17~20
- 20~23
- 23~26
- 26~29
- ≥29

10. What is your education background (including in school): [Single Choice] *

Doctor

Master

Bachelor

College

Senior High School/Technical Secondary School

Others

Annex C: Other Tables and Figures

Table C.1 One-Way ANOVA table of brand attitude

	Square sum	df	Square of the average value	F	Significance
Inter-group	51.577	7	7.368	7.708	0.000
Intra-group	548.698	574	0.956		
Total	600.275	581			

Table C.2 One-Way ANOVA of brand attitude with product type as classification standard

	Square sum	df	Square of the average value	F	Significance
Inter-group	2.264	1	2.264	2.196	0.139
Intra-group	598.012	580	1.031		
Total	600.275	581			

Table C.3 One-Way ANOVA of brand attitude with story authenticity as classification standard

	Square sum	df	Square of the average value	F	Significance
Inter-group	24.808	1	24.808	25.003	0.000
Intra-group	575.467	580	0.992		
Total	600.275	581			

Table C.4 One-Way ANOVA of brand attitude with story character as classification standard

	Square sum	df	Square of the average value	F	Significance
Inter-group	13.387	1	13.387	13.229	0.000
Intra-group	586.889	580	1.012		
Total	600.275	581			

Table C.5 Test of homogeneity of variance of different factors on authenticity perception

Factors	Levene Statistics	df1	df2	Significance
Authenticity of the Story	0.726	1	580	0.395
Type of Characters	2.176	1	580	0.141

Table C.6 One-Way ANOVA of different factors on authenticity perception

Factors		Square sum	df	Square of the average value	F	Significance
Authenticity of the Story	Inter-group	105.468	1	105.468	82.677	0
	Intra-group	739.891	580	1.276		
	Total	845.359	581			
Story Character	Inter-group	0.179	1	0.179	0.123	0.726
	Intra-group	845.181	580	1.457		
	Total	845.359	581			

Table C.7 Test of homogeneity of variance of different factors on character similarity

Factors	Levene Statistics	df1	df2	Significance
Type of Characters	3.354	1	580	0.068
Authenticity of the Story	2.918	1	580	0.088

Table C.8 One-Way ANOVA of different factors on character similarity

Factors		Square sum	df	Square of the average value	F	Significance
Story Character	Inter-group	10.814	1	10.814	8.669	0.003
	Intra-group	723.504	580	1.247		
	Total	734.318	581			

Authenticity of the Story	Inter-group	6.541	1	6.541	5.660	0.108
	Intra-group	670.316	580	1.156		
	Total	676.856	581			

Table C.9 Overall effect testing - H1b integral goodness-for-fit

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Squared	Error of Standard Estimation
H1b	.619a	.383	.382	.79885

a. Predictive variable: (constant), authenticity perception

Table C.10 Overall effect testing - H1b regression model coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	t	Significance
	B	Standard Error			
(Constant)	2.461	.142		17.389	.000
H1b Perception of Authenticity	.522	.027	.619	18.990	.000

a. Dependent variable: brand attitude

Table C.11 Overall effect testing - H1a integral goodness-for-fit of model

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Squared	Error of Standard Estimation
H1a	.830a	.689	.688	.56741

a. Predictive variable: (constant), character similarity

Table C.12 Overall effect testing - H1a regression model coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	t	Significance
	B	Standard Error			
H1a (Constant)	1.567	.101		15.575	.000
Character Similarity	.750	.021	.830	35.840	.000

a. Dependent variable: brand attitude

Table C.13 Regression results of H5a, H5b, and H6

Independent Variable	Route	Effect Value	Standard Error	Significance	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Perception of Authenticity	Authenticity Perception → Self-brand Connection	.1086	.0422	.0000	.0256	.1915
	Self-brand Connection → brand Attitude	.3472	.0243	.0000	.2995	.3949
Character Similarity	Character Similarity → Self-brand Connection	.6129	.0483	.0000	.5180	.7077
	Self-brand Connection → brand Attitude	.2013	.0247	.0000	.1528	.2498

Table C.14 Regression results of the influence of imagination fluency on self-brand connection

Independent Variable of Dual Mediating Model	Route	Effect Value	Standard Error	Significance	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Perception of Imagination Fluency	→	.5855	.0472	.0000	.4928	.6782

Authenticity Character Similarity	self-brand connection Imagination Fluency → self-brand connection	.1822	.0503	.0000	.0835	.2810
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Table C.15 Regression results of H9a, H9b, and H10

Independent Variable	Route	Effect Value	Standard Error	Significance	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Perception of Authenticity	Authenticity Perception → Story Involvement	.4771	.0319	.0000	.4145	.5397
	Story Involvement → Brand Attitude	.4677	.0301	.0000	.4086	.5267
Character Similarity	Character Similarity → Story Involvement	.6226	.0309	.0000	.5619	.6833
	Story Involvement → Brand Attitude	.2474	.0262	.0000	.1959	.2989

Table C.16 Mediating effect and confidence interval at different moderating levels

Mediating Route	Symbolic value perception	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
X→M1→M2	M-SD	0.1361	0.0315	0.0755	0.1966
	M	0.1356	0.0303	0.0765	0.1933
	M+SD	0.1351	0.0298	0.0754	0.1921
X→M1→M2→Y	M-SD	0.0275	0.0106	0.0089	0.0508
	M	0.0274	0.0103	0.0090	0.0498
	M+SD	0.0274	0.0101	0.0091	0.0489

Table C.17 Mediating effect and confidence interval at different moderating levels

Mediating Route	functional value perception	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
X→M1→M2	M-SD	0.1326	0.0313	0.0737	0.1951
	M	0.1420	0.0324	0.0800	0.2048
	M+SD	0.1515	0.0342	0.0848	0.2182
X→M1→M2→Y	M-SD	0.268	0.0104	0.0082	0.0494
	M	0.287	0.0108	0.0088	0.0517
	M+SD	0.307	0.0113	0.0095	0.0544

Table C.18 Mediating effect and confidence interval at different moderating levels

Mediating Route	Symbolic value perception	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
X→M1→M2	M-SD	0.1745	0.0268	0.1226	0.2287
	M	0.1797	0.0246	0.1321	0.2310
	M+SD	0.1849	0.0262	0.1353	0.2384
X→M1→M2→Y	M-SD	0.1134	0.0177	0.0808	0.1494
	M	0.1168	0.0157	0.0873	0.1481
	M+SD	0.1201	0.0162	0.0903	0.1532

Table C.19 Mediating effect and confidence interval at different moderating levels

Mediating Route	Functional value perception	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
X→M1→M2	M-SD	0.1634	0.0265	0.1126	0.2180
	M	0.1856	0.0262	0.1377	0.2406
	M+SD	0.2079	0.0306	0.1527	0.2721
X→M1→M2→Y	M-SD	0.1062	0.0165	0.0745	0.1391
	M	0.1206	0.0166	0.0900	0.1550
	M+SD	0.1351	0.0198	0.0986	0.1761

Table C.20 Types of experimental materials

Product Category	Story Character	Authenticity	Story Type
Electric toothbrush brand–functional product	Brand founder	Real	Electric toothbrush × founder × true brand story
		Fictional	Electric toothbrush × founder × fictional brand story
	Brand Consumer	Real	Electric toothbrush × consumer × true brand story
		Fictional	Electric toothbrush × consumer × fictional brand story
Sports brand–symbolic+functional product	Brand founder	Real	Sports brand × founder × true brand story
		Fictional	Sports brand × founder × fictional brand story
	Brand Consumer	Real	Sports brand × consumer × true brand story
		Fictional	Sports brand × consumer × fictional brand story

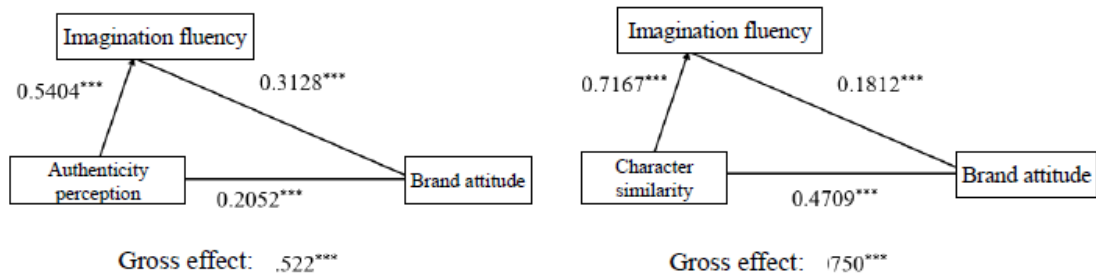


Figure C.1 Schematic diagram of mediating effect model of imagination fluency

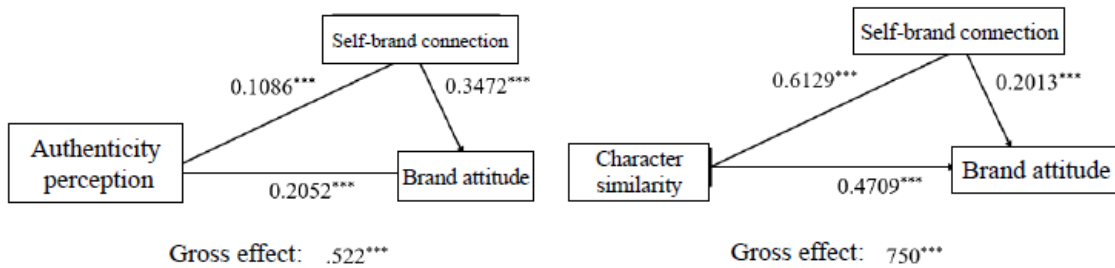


Figure C.2 Schematic diagram of mediating effect model of self-brand connection

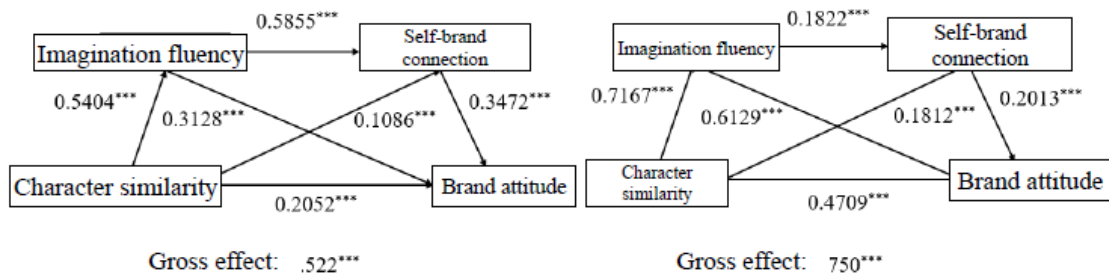


Figure C.3 Schematic diagram of dual mediating effect model of imagination fluency and self-brand connection

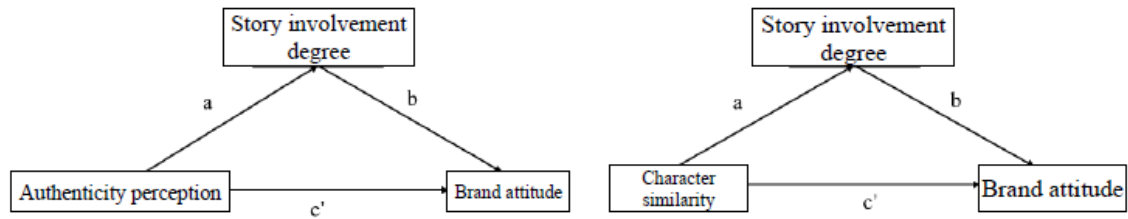


Figure C.4 Schematic diagram of model with story involvement as mediation

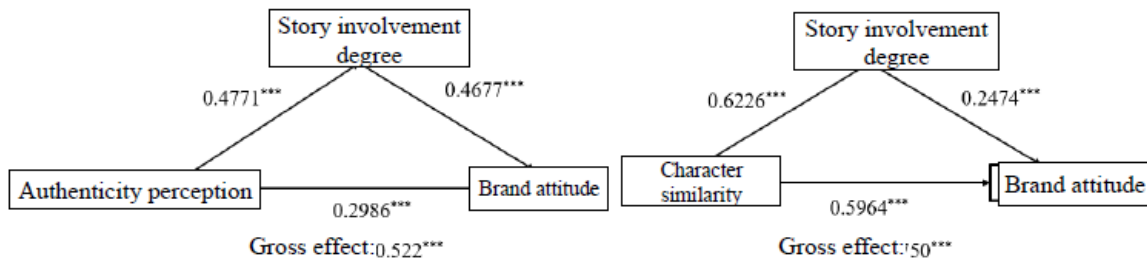


Figure C.5 Schematic diagram of mediating effect model of story involvement