

**HOW TO BLUEPRINT STORIES –  
NARRATOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO STRUCTURE STORYTELLING  
IN MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT**

*Jan C. L. König  
Yorck von Borcke  
(Fresenius University of Hamburg)*

The importance of storytelling has become remarkably important to marketing as well as numerous other areas in the discipline of management. While the interest is still growing and though stories have been of scholarly interest for centuries, current research can be considered as surprisingly tame regarding approaches and studies. Especially for the field of narrations, academics of the humanities provide a large scale of different perspectives on story and narration collected in the field of narratology. While recent studies only focus on details, those approaches offer the chance to observe storytelling as a systematic phenomenon depending on specific rules. These basic rules can be combined in a step-by-step blueprint which allows to create and advance stories with respect to the needed reference of marketing and management.

In our research, we compiled traditional narratological approaches with modern ideas of screenwriting, archetype characters, and references to brand management. The compilation is eventually summed up in a concept allowing to create or advance stories with respect to the needs of both professional story design and marketing and management demands.

The results reflect the need to develop a concept which allows to detect the major problems of coherent storytelling. From the core dimensions we collected in a nutshell – plot, character, and style – we offer a step-by-step approach for story creation, basing on the fundamental academic knowledge represented in the narratological discourse. Thus our findings allow to create a story as a medium for messages and values to enhance brand identity, organised on the basic step of our blueprint concept. While our study uses approaches of the humanities we left out quantitative methods. However, our findings will leave room for further research in both quantitative and qualitative sectors.

**Keywords:** Storytelling, Brand Management, Brand Identity, Archetypes, Brand Communication

**Article Classification:** Concept Paper

*11:55, almost midnight. Enough time for one more story.  
One more story before 12:00, just to keep us warm.  
(John Carpenter, The Fog)*

## **1 Introduction**

The phenomenon of *storytelling* as a matter for brands, marketing, and business has become surprisingly important to both professionals and researchers in the past years (cf. Fog et al. 2010: 17) which eventually lead to a new definition of marketing, postulated by Seth Godin: “Marketing is no longer about the stuff you make, but about the stories you tell” (cf. Cohen 2011 and Rangel/Rosso 2015: 1). Even special issues of journals (such as *Psychology & Marketing*; cf. Woodside 2010) proof the importance of discussing the subject from various perspectives and with different research methods. The more researchers try to observe the phenomenon and to approach methods of analysing, elucidating, and operationalising – hence qualitative and quantitative methods and methodologies –, the more it becomes obvious that storytelling is to be discussed in various scientific disciplines. As a matter of fact, publications on storytelling in marketing and management seem to come from rather practical oriented writers. Works like these cannot stand expectations of both marketing researchers and professionals, for they are ignoring researching that has been done for decades or even centuries. This becomes obvious when considered that storytelling is an original interest of literature and hence narratology and must be essentially reflected from this perspective, as well as it is also met by other disciplines such as linguistic and psychology. All those perspective have in common that they have a rather different background than those which deal with brands and business mainly. Nevertheless, if we assume that stories that we refer to with the terminus technicus of *storytelling* (stories as a tool of marketing and management by all means) created a literary genre of their own, researching must not only deal with qualitative methods from the humanities but will also have to face theories and academic criticism behind them to meet contemporary standards.

This paper seeks to localise storytelling in the field of philology and therefore narratology first, providing established and proven theories and techniques of literature and linguistic to build a conceptual frame for the specific characteristics that stories in the field of business storytelling deal with. For this concept we call a blueprint for storytelling in Marketing and Management, it is a mandatory need to ask where and how meaning is produced in a story, which obviously requires also a linguistic and semiotic approach from the beginning. The intended frame will offer both: an overview of the needed and reliable theoretical background of contemporary humanities and other disciplines as well as feasible methods to analyse stories with the specific demand of meaning, concentrating on the core elements of storytelling from a narrative point of view.

## **2 Storytelling – Narratological Backgrounds**

To collect the main modules for blueprinting the phenomenon of stories it is necessary to take a look the original background and observe the main approaches of storytelling first. Consequently, this leads to theories and concepts of the humanities such as literary studies first, followed by the frame of logic and effect, which can be found in the surroundings of rhetoric and semiotics.

### **2.1 A (Mainly) Philological Approach**

While the interest for storytelling in marketing and management is growing, the phenomenon is surprisingly usually discussed in an empirical context though its roots can be naturally detected in the field of the humanities. However, the qualitative-analytical perspective remains so unreflecting that often references to rather popular and just easy-access structuring are chosen (e.g. Fog et al. 2010), missing all the numerous profound approaches and

reflections of literary studies and others which can be subsumed in the philosophy of narratology.

With respect to earlier discussions, a story's medium is definitely linked to the context it appears in. This means that the traditional assumption of narrative prose is neither sufficient for business storytelling nor is the traditional definition of storytelling itself: "Storytelling is usually referred to as the telling of a story without the aid of the printed page, pictures, or any properties which would break the magnetic flow between the listener and the teller" (Chesin 1966: 212). This statement cannot stand with regarding storytelling in marketing and management, and it marks a notable indication: the term *storytelling*, meaning composed stories as a tool in marketing and management, is a metonym for a range of narrative texts in, from, and about the specific field of business including marketing, management, brands, and other related areas as well as for their production. Storytelling in this sense surely contains aspects of the (once oral) tradition, but in fact, storytelling in the field of business comes with the possibility of quite different media options: a story told with a commercial spot refers to the moving image, a company's history to written narrative that may be published in a printed document as well as virtually on the internet, and a story as a management tool can be an oral production. This leads to the necessity of including theories and methods of different disciplines: literature and linguistic as well as film, media, and other appropriate schools of narratology. It is obvious that fundamental approaches like these will need some effort and certainly several studies, and they cannot be simplified without lacking major fields of academic research.

Without ignoring this conclusion but for a profound beginning, we recommend finding the major shapes that allow a grounded approach for stories in business storytelling. These shapes can be found in the linking elements of the major aspects that all stories of business storytelling have in common: firstly, there is a narrative hitch which differs all other texts from narrative stories and which is surrounded by narrative characters and narrative elements of style. Secondly, these Messages in this sense contain characteristics, attributes, or intentions – briefly: issues – that are illustrated and transported with a story and that are eventually meant to cause a specific effect, i.e. a persuasion in the sense of rhetoric. Thirdly, these composed narrative stories are created within specific institutions (i.e. business corporations) with the intention to illustratively delineate specific issues regarding this institution with the help of narration. As we are seeking to present a grounded philological approach to storytelling in marketing and management, we will start to discuss the first major link, a narrated event of change that leads a character to a problem which solution is challenged by a conflict. This determination differs narrative stories from all other forms of texts (cf. Abbott 2010: 43, Bal 2009: 189-201, Abbott 2013: 20-24), and that we may hence call the first core element of story. It is followed by characters and motives as well as by wording and style. The graphical framework below illustrates the idea that we support: a narrative story in the context of business storytelling is a nutshell, a tool to transmit issues which are related to a specific business corporation or an aspect of it (cf. figure 1).

--- Insert Figure 1 about here ---

The phenomenon of story can hence be described as a medium for messages and, in this sense, as a complex semantic structure (cf. Volli 2002: 93-147), the observed elements create a nutshell which dimensions produce a detailed semantic meaning, eventually transmitting issues. Therefore, the task of any philological approach is to enable analysing and identifying the elements which arrange the semantic frame for the specific issues. Consequently, if we want to establish the assumption of stories in business storytelling being a semantic frame for specific issues, we will have to legitimate this approach from an aesthetic point of view first.

## **2.2 Effects and Aesthetics: Storytelling from a Rhetorical Point of View**

Whenever we propose that storytelling may be used to transmit specific issues (which can be interpreted), on the purpose of producing specific effects (which can be predicted), we will immediately face various established theories of the humanities which challenge our assumptions. Even if they were short, narrative (and hence poetic) stories would be complex semantic structures with broad meanings and codes and a distinctive “aesthetical function”, which is used to “manipulate the surface of expression of a text on purpose to rupture the automatism of reception as well as the referential meaning” (Volli 2002: 97; own translation). Thus, interpretations as well as predictions depend on hermeneutic processes that are neither exact nor generally valid. This is even more true due to the fact that a teller is author and therefore encoder, but the reader (or listener) is the one who decodes with her or his specific abilities to do so: “If the construction of meaning of the text demands for the participation of the reader who has to realise the provided structure for generating the meaning, one may not forget that the reader is always outside the text” (Iser 1994: 246; own translation). A story has to influence this position *outside the text* to lead the reader’s point of view into specific directions. For the problem of readers’ different abilities and capabilities, a story as a complex semantic frame cannot be interpreted and its effects cannot be predicted with universal validation. This conclusion reveals the dilemma if we only have the text – the narrative story – for our analysis. The solution can be found in aesthetic theory regarding narrative texts: “The aesthetic of effect determines reception from the point of view of the text” (Turk 1976: 7; own translation). If we assume that the author uses different elements to equip a text on purpose to create a narrative story containing a conflict, characters, and other elements of “aesthetic function” (v.s.), we can determine all those elements in the text itself, connect them semantically (with respect to our framework), and we may also describe them as the story’s *intended reception* (cf. König 2011: 26). If we want to analyse stories concerning those intended elements, these assumptions lead to a combination of standard methods of narration on the one hand, and the aesthetic approach and method of rhetorical text analysis on the other hand (cf. e.g. Abbott 2013: 40-54, Phelan 2010: 203-216; Plett 2001, Lausberg 1990).

## **3 A Concept for a Storytelling Blueprint**

If we assume that the philologies build the ground for literature and narratology, we have to determine how they approach the phenomenon of storytelling – and therefore narration – first. It is remarkable, that, for instance, German and French narratologists mainly care about the act of narrating and hence perspective, time, setting, and the connection between those elements. Approaching plots and characters take hardly any role (cf. Martinez/Scheffel 2012). In the Anglo-Saxonian tradition, we may discover more interest in the latter, which increases in recent studies towards plot in US-American research, tying up on former European concepts but with new original approaches either in traditional research (e.g. Campbell 2004 and Mark/Pearson 2001) or, especially in film studies (and usually in a rather practical context), regarding suspense and arc (e.g. McKee 1999 or Field 1994). Finally, the phenomenon of character is approached again from a rather practical point of view (cf. Schmidt 2001 or Mark/Pearson 2001) as well as in other disciplines such as psychology with paying results (cf. László 2008).

In the following, we will set up the conceptual frame of storytelling on the basis of narratological approaches first and derive then which concepts determine the different dimensions of plot, character, and style, and how they reflect them as offered tools for storytelling in marketing and management on the backdrop of the narratological approaches. On the example of values, we can offer in the end how those elements support specific meaning with respect to the field of marketing and management.

### 3.1 A Conceptual Frame of Storytelling Elements

While the presented nutshell breaks down all modules into the very basic elements of plot, character, and style, we can now start to fill those dimensions with various approaches and theories that help understanding the construction of stories. It is as simple as consequent that the term storytelling combine two main thoughts about the phenomenon of narration: Firstly, it refers to the *story* as a specific type of narration itself, and secondly, it sums up all possibilities to narrate the story with the term *telling*. While the term *story* can be divided into the two basic components of *plot* (aspects concerning the driving content and structure) and *character* (meaning persons whose experiences are narrated), the term *telling*, referring to the style of narration, may be broke down to various different aspects of designing the story, such as the perspective, time, setting, and ornate (cf. figure 2).

--- Insert Figure 2 about here ---

From a narratological point of view, storytelling can also be divided into the perspective of observing the narrated world (*what?*) and the representation (*how?*) of the narrated world (cf. Martinez/Scheffel 2012). In these two classifications, characters and setting (as well as the plot limitedly) mainly belong to the concept of the *narrated world*, though the setting may be also discussed on the backdrop of its contribution to the story's design, while the plot generally rather refers to logic and semantics. Perspective, time, and ornate belong to the category of representing the story. This distribution can be added easily to our concept as described above.

### 3.2 The First Dimension: Plot

There are various options to determine how a text must look like to become narrative and how the narration becomes a story. It may defined, for example, with discussing it with respect to the "aesthetic function" language has (Volli 2002: 97; own translation), to the classes of *social systems* (cf. Lotman/Uspenskij 1984), differing between *textualised* and *grammaticalised* cultures (and thus between texts and stories), or on the basis of the *fabula* arrangement as an semantic determination (cf. Abbott 2013: 16-27). We decided us for another narratological perspective: every story contains a problem that has to be solved, and solving the problem is connected to a conflict which influences (the ability for) the solution. As a basic condition, the problem occurs due to a change of the situation. This simple approach allows to distinguish narrative stories from most other texts, and indeed the definition is the core proposition of dramatic theory, rooted in the ideas of Aristotle (1995) and expanded by researchers and poets such as Gustav Freytag (2003). Arranging this event of change and the depending aspects may be regarded as the main task of storytelling, which leads to concept of narrative plot, meaning the turn of a *fabula* into a *sjuzet* (cf. Propp 1968, Shklovsky 1965; Abbott 2013: 18, Bal 2009: 75-77): A plot in this context is the "artful *construction* of story" and therefore the "artful *disclosure* of story" (Abbott 2010: 43), referring to "that combination of economy and sequencing of events that makes a story a story and not just raw material" (ibid.). Another, additionally literary approach towards plot may be found in the works of Joseph Campbell (2004), who observed numerous myths and legends of different cultures, coming up with the idea of indeed circulating suspense, but revealing borders to be crossed and a plot-flow, corresponding with all previous models of the basic structure of story. In fact, all the different theories on story structure are comparable regarding their major elements (cf. table 1).

--- Insert Table 1 about here ---

In contemporary approaches, the phenomenon of plot is also developed in the discipline of narratology and film, extensively discussed by McKee (1999), Field (1994) from a rather professional perspective and, for example, by Hicketier (1996), Monaco (2000), and Faulstich (2013), Bordwell/Thompson (1997), followed by many more in the field of film research. The *event of change*, containing problem and conflict, is usually denominated as *plot point* in this context: “The PLOT POINT is an incident, or event, that ‘hooks’ into the action and spins it around into another direction. *It moves the story forward*” (Field 1994: 11). *Plot points* are events in narration which change a situation, causing the problem and hence the conflict a character is challenged to solve. They have been part of stories – in the sense of aesthetic – since Aristotle’s philosophy on drama. German poet Friedrich Schiller called those events *punctum saliens* (jumping points), and they may be regarded as being the neuralgic elements that drive a narration towards a specific direction, just as peaks in a story’s curve of suspense (cf. König 2005: 26-30). For being so important, plot points (in both drama and film aesthetic we have to expect two major types of them: one that delivers the problem and one that delays its solution; cf. Field 1994: 9 and Freytag 2003: 94f.) are the most important element of story, they are the precondition to narrate stories, and they allow the transmission of specific meaning (issues). By detecting plot points within a story, directly (or indirectly) offered meaning can be detected as well. Regarding business storytelling, plot points in story creation must be of core interest hence.

Consequently, a narrative turn (plot point), producing a conflict-loaded problem, leads to a challenge for a character. Taking the challenge and acting to solve the problem, discloses a character’s stance (attitude) towards the conflict. In this logical chain, every story reveals a message, and in the way a character solves the problem and discloses his or her attitude, we may expect a moral evaluation of the narrated action (cf. van Dijk 1980: 140-144 and László 2008: 16). Thus, all stories – and storytelling – base on the logic of semantics. Events, arranged in a plot, do not (just) give a joined together overview of what and when it happened but *why* it happened: why a situation changed, why a character was challenged to act, why an ostensible obstacle turned out dispensable, why the character acted the way he or she did, and why the solution payed (or did not). Thus, stories give us instantly a simple but evaluated explanation of the world we are forced to believe in (cf. Herman 2002: 38-50 and van Dijk 1980: 140-144): “[...] consumers are complicit in marketing. Consumers believe stories” (Godin 2009: 18).

### **3.3 The Second Dimension: Character**

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

The psychological term of *stance* can be easily compared with the phenomenon of *attribute* in marketing and management. Regarding storytelling, the attributes are linked to specific issues which the author (or just story teller) would like to communicate. Hence, creating the identity of characters follows the same rules as Krappmann described in his theory of social interaction (Krappmann 2010). Identities emerge within social interactions, vulgo: how a character deals with a problem and with other characters reveals his or her

personality to audience. Consequently, this idea equals Field's assumption on story characters, their arrangement, and their ability of interaction: a character's personality is narrated by his or her *experience of conflict*, by his or her *interaction with other characters*, and by his or her *interaction with themselves* (Field 1994: 28f.). Thus, a qualitative analysis should focus on these three characteristics to observe story personalities, their motives, and the narrated issues.

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

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

Considering that archetypes are the most important cast in many legends, myth, fairy tales, and other traditional stories as well as that there are approaches to create whole brands with respect to archetypes (cf. Häusel 2014), it is a logical conclusion to create stories in marketing and management that also refer to specific, corresponding literary archetypes.

### 3.4 The Third Dimension: Style

We determine the last core dimension of storytelling, which is consisting meaning and is hence able to create and transmit certain issues, as the *style* of a story, containing all other modules to narrate a story: "in narrative we usually have a steady stream of literal renderings" (Abbott 2013: 165). Usually, narratological theory may be divided into two main fields of interest: the focus on *what* is narrated (narrated world) and *how* it is narrated (representation of the narrated world). Our third dimension therefore asks generally for the design of narrating, hence *how* a story is told regarding the perspective (narrative situation), time (and narrative structuring in terms of time), the setting (spatial structuring and locations), all interdependent connections of those aspects, and, finally, the linguistical (or pictorial) design regarding rhetorical ornaments such as figures and tropes (and the corresponding elements of the moving image).

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

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

Especially Genette (1983) and Stanzel (2010) are pertinent for narration and focalization – or *narrative situation* in general – and distinguish between various types of narrating. While these approaches are literary and hence refer to structuring and aesthetics, recent studies indicate specific relevant impact of narration and focalization on perception and credibility (cf. e.g. Lucaites/Condit 1985, Warnick 2004, Manson/O'Neill 2007). Hence, the type of narrator and his or her focalization play not only a significant role for what information can how be delivered, the studies indicate also that the credibility and therefore trust depends on it.

### 3.5 Meaning and Message: the Example of Values as Issues of Marketing and Management

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

For the possibility of comparable results, the identification of values should not be managed just by intuition and description but on the basis of an established model. This can be found in contemporary studies of marketing and management, such as by Sweeney and Soutar, who differ between *emotional value*, *social value*, *functional value (price)*, and *functional value (performance/quality)* (Sweeney/Soutar 2001: 211f.) or, enhanced, by Wiedmann et al. (e.g. 2007, 2009) who differ between *financial value*, *functional value*, *individual value*, and *social value* (Wiedmann et al. 2007: 5) regarding luxury values. These specific kinds of value are to be identified within the three dimensions of storytelling if the aim is to detect the issue *value* as a narrative message of a story.

## 4 Discussion

After setting up an original conceptualisation for marketing and management, basing on the fundamentals of narratology, we can now discuss easy access implications on the backdrop of the observed research background. In the following, we will show firstly how the previous ideas can lead to a step-by-step storytelling blueprint and secondly discuss our paper’s limitations and future implications.

### 4.1 A Storytelling Blueprint for Marketing and Management

The following drawing board for storytelling in marketing and management is a general approach, basing on the previously observed narratological theories towards story and narration. Hence, they may be applicable for various stories in various situations and on various purposes which have to be determined first. Depending on these prerequisites, we derived basic questions a storyteller has to answer to complete a story with respect to the narrative conditions discussed before (cf. table 2).

--- Insert Table 2 about here ---

Firstly, the main character has to be defined: Who is the story’s *hero* (protagonist), and what is his or her personality to deal with problems – and why? Secondly, the character has to face a problem, occurring due to a change of situation. This event challenges the hero and evokes a desire which satisfaction is linked to a conflict the hero faces. However, he or she has a motivation (from his or her inner motives) and other incentives to overcome the conflict, to solve the problem, and to satisfy the desire. This package of character and event leads to the last central story modules which are represented in the questions of how the hero finally solves the problem (we know already why he or she decides so), and what effect the solution creates. Usually, basic plots delay the solution with a second plot point that forces the hero to



act more decidedly (and enhances the story's suspense). The solution and its effect finally also describe the hero's attitudes and set up a moral of the story by evaluating the outcome as positive or negative: we may call this evaluation also the story's final message.

After setting all those major story demands, we can enhance the story's representation and enhance the message's validity: adding enemies who want to foil the hero's intentions enhance suspense and underline the moral evaluation, just as added friends may motivate the desired rightness. Furthermore, those accompanying characters also have personalities which explain their motivations and actions. Regarding storytelling (especially in marketing and management), we still have to do research on what kind of typical confrontations and plot sets create specific basic story genres, though it might be a good advice already to be aware of general approaches (cf. Tobias 2012). In the end, the story can be finalised with respect to the narrative situation (who is telling the story, and from which perspective?), the frame its narration is set in (regarding the setting and other aspects such as focussing), and the style of language (or aesthetic of pictures in the moving images), always with the question kept in mind if, why, and how those applications support the story's message and eventually its expected effect.

--- *Insert Table 3 about here* ---

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

#### **4.2 Limitations and Implications**

Though our approach bases on various established theories and discussions on narratives, we could not cover all aspects which might become relevant for conceptualising storytelling in marketing and management. This is certainly due to the fact that research on the phenomenon is still limited and narratology does not deal (yet) with some of the perspectives which are relevant to the topic in our specific context. Still, there is no structural classification of stories in marketing and management which could also refer to the specific media which are needed for specific genres and contexts. While archetype characters have some popular attention, they lack of precise research reflection. Furthermore, other approaches on personality may also contribute to understand why and how specific characters work better in specific contexts. We also lack of empirical studies on the question if stories (and their messages) are fully understood by the audience as it was intended – a questions that would pay to be answered a lot with respect to the fact that it should be the understandable message which is the core value of a story. We also still know little about the matter of narrative perspective and its credibility, but certainly it makes a difference if a story is told auctorial or by an I-narrator – phenomena which definitely should have a research focus in the future, also coming with the questions of how different perspectives change the possibility of what can be told, which stories of which perspectives are remembered better, and what happens if they are retold (which, again, offers possibilities to discuss appropriate narrative perspectives and situations). Furthermore, we already touched matters of story and suspense. Presumably, a more suspenseful story gathers more attention, is remembered better and more likable. Still, these assumptions lack of both empirical evidence and a detection and qualitative approach how to

enhance suspense in storytelling (which would be naturally needed if the hypotheses are true). Consequently, this also leads to the questions if we can discover general master plots for general problems in marketing and management.

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

## 5 Conclusion

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

*(Michael Ende, The Neverending Story)*

Storytelling as a metonym for stories, their production and their potential in a business related field becomes more and more important to both researchers and professionals in marketing and management: “This is a whole new way of doing business. It’s a fundamental shift in the paradigm of how ideas spread. Either you’re going to tell stories that spread, or you will become irrelevant” (Godin 2009: 1). Nevertheless, applicable and established approaches from the philologies and other disciplines in general and narratology, linguistic, and psychology specifically are hardly introduced and applied. This paper compiled a brief overview of typical approaches that offer in combination a precise qualitative approach towards stories, being aware of standards and critique in this specific area of academic research.

The particular value of this study is to enable a discussion of the popular phenomenon, leading to a blueprint concept on the backdrop of the established academic theories and observations more precisely than before. By classifying different perspectives and arranging them as core elements of storytelling, a collection of story dimensions could be designed to help both understanding and creating stories. While value research is already established in the field of marketing and management, and even mentioned as a part of narrative stories and storytelling, a precise qualitative approach that allows comparable results and consecutive quantitative studies has been missing so far, though “a good story communicates [...] values in a language easily understood by all” (Fog et al. 2010: 23). This paper presented a conceptual frame that closes this gap.

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

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

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

*(Michael Ende, The Neverending Story)*

## 5 Bibliography

- Abbott, H.P. (2010): "Story, Plot, and Narration," in: David Herman (ed.): *Narrative*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: pp. 39-51.
- Abbott, H.P. (2013): *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Aristotle (1995): *Aristotle XIII. Poetics* (Translated by Stephen Halliwell). Loeb Classical Library, Harvard.
- Asmuth, B. (1997): *Einführung in die Dramenanalyse* [Introduction to Drama Analysis]. Metzler, Stuttgart (in German).
- Bal, M. (2009): *Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Bordwell, D. and Thompson, K. (1997): *Film Art. An Introduction*. McGraw-Hill, Columbus.
- Campbell, J. (2004): *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Chesin, G.A. (1966): "Storytelling and Storyreading," in: *Peabody Journal of Education*, 43(4): pp. 212-214.
- Cohen, H. (2011): "Seth Godin: 7 Truths at the Heart of Marketing (& How to Use Them)," in: *Heidi Cohen Actionable Marketing Guide*, December 14 (2011), <http://heidicohen.com/seth-godin-7-truths-at-the-heart-of-marketing-how-to-use-them/> (last access on August 26, 2015).
- Cooper, H. et al. (2010): "Brand-Self Identity Narratives in the James Bond Movies," in: *Psychology & Marketing*, 27(6): pp. 557–567.
- Faulstich, W. (2013): *Grundkurs Filmanalyse* [Basic Course in Film Analysis]. Wilhelm Fink, Paderborn (in German).
- Field, S. (1994): *Screenplay. The Foundations of Screenwriting*. Dell Trade, New York.
- Fog, K. et al. (2010): *Storytelling. Branding in Practice*. Springer, Berlin.
- Freytag, G. (2003): *Die Technik des Dramas* [The Technology of Drama]. Autorenhaus, Berlin (in German).
- Genette, G. (1983): *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- Godin, S. (2009): *All Marketers Are Liars. The Power of Telling Authentic Stories in a Low-Trust World*. Penguin, New York.
- Hant, C.P. (1999): *Das Drehbuch. Praktische Filmdramaturgie* (The Screenplay. Practical Film Dramaturgy). Zweitausendeins, Frankfurt (in German).
- Häusel, H.-G. (2014): *Brain View*. Haufe, Freiburg.
- Herman, D. (2002): *Story Logic. Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.
- Herman, D. (ed.) (2010): *Narrative*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Hickethier, K. (1996): *Film- und Fernsehanalyse* [Film and Television Analysis]. Metzler, Stuttgart (in German).
- Iser, W. (1994): *Der Akt des Lesens. Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung* [The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response]. Wilhelm Fink, München (in German).

- Jacobi, J. (2012): *Die Psychologie von C. G. Jung* [The Psychology of C. G. Jung]. Patmos, Ostfildern (in German).
- Jahn, M. (2010): "Focalization," in: Herman, David (ed.): *Narrative*: pp. 94-108.
- König, J.C.L. (2005): *Herstellung des Grauens. Wirkungsästhetik und emotional-kognitive Rezeption von Schauerfilm und –literatur* [Producing Horror. Effect Aesthetics and emotional-cognitive Reception of Gothic Film and Literature]. Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main (in German).
- König, J.C.L. (2011): *Über die Wirkungsmacht der Rede* [On the Power of Speech]. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht unipress, Göttingen (in German).
- Krappmann, L. (2010): *Soziologische Dimensionen der Identität: Strukturelle Bedingungen für die Teilnahme an Interaktionsprozessen* [Sociological Dimensions of Identity: Structural Conditions for Participation in Processes of Interaction]. Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart (in German).
- László, J. (2008): *The Science of Stories. An Introduction to Narrative Psychology*. Routledge, London.
- Lausberg, H. (1990): *Elemente der literarischen Rhetorik* [Elements of literary Rhetoric]. Hueber, Ismaning (in German)
- Lemon, L.T. and Reis, M. (eds.) (1965): *Russian Formalist Criticism*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.
- Lotman, J.M. and Uspenskij, B.A. (1984): *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*. Michigan Slavic Publications, Ann Arbor.
- Lucaites, J.L. and Condit, C.M. (1985): "Re-constructing Narrative Theory: A Functional Perspective," in: *Journal of Communication*, 35(4): pp. 90–108.
- Manson, N.C. and O'Neill, O. (2007): *Rethinking Informed Consent in Bioethics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Margolin, U. (2010): "Character," in: David Herman (ed.): *Narrative*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: pp. 66-79.
- Mark, M./Pearson, C.S. (2001): *The Hero and the Outlaw*. McGraw Hill, New York.
- Martinez, M. and Scheffel, M. (2012): *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie* [Introduction into Narrative Theory]. Beck, München (in German).
- McKee, R. (1999): *Story. Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting*. Methuen, London.
- Monaco, J. (2000): *How to Read a Film*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Peirce, C.S. (2011): *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*. Dover, Mineola.
- Phelan, J. (2010): "Rhetorics/Ethics," in: David Herman (ed.): *Narrative*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: pp. 203-216.
- Plett, H.F. (2001): *Einführung in die rhetorische Textanalyse* [Introduction into Rhetorical Text Analysis]. Buske, Hamburg.
- Propp, V. (1968): *Morphology of the Folk Tale*. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Rangel, F. and Rosso, P. (2015): "On the impact of emotions on author profiling," in: *Information Processing and Management*, (article in press), p. 1.

- Roberts, C. (2010): *Exploring Brand Personality through Archetypes*. <http://dc.etsu.edu/etd/1691> (last access on August 28, 2015).
- Schmidt, V.L. (2001): *A Writer's Guide to Characterization*. f+w Media, Blue Ash.
- Shklovsky, V. (1965): „Art as Technique,“ in L. T. Lemon and M. Reis (eds.): *Russian Formalist Criticism*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Stanzel, F.K. (2008): *Theorie des Erzählens* [A Theory of Narrative]. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen (in German).
- Sweeney, J.C. and Soutar, G.N. (2001): “Consumer perceived value: The development of a multiple item scale,“ in: *Journal of Retailing*, 77: pp. 203–220.
- Tepes, A. (2013): “Measuring Jung's Archetypal Theory Related to Other Personality Theories,“ in: *Journal of Transpersonal Research*, 5(1): pp. 65-82.
- Tobias, R.B. (2012): *20 Master Plots: And How to Build Them*. Writer's Digest Books, Cincinnati.
- Tsai, S.-p. (2006): “Investigating archetype-icon transformation in brand marketing,“ in: *Marketing, Intelligence & Planning*, 24(6): pp. 648 – 663.
- Turk, H. (1976): *Wirkungsästhetik. Theorie und Interpretation der literarischen Wirkung* [Effect Aesthetics. Theory and Interpretation of Literary Effect]. edition text + kritik, München (in German).
- Volli, U. (2002): *Semiotik* [Semiotics]. A. Francke, Tübingen.
- Warnick, B. (2006): “Online Ethos Source Credibility in an 'Authorless' Environment,“ in: *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48(2): pp. 256-265.
- Wiedmann, K.-P. et al. (2007): “Measuring Consumers' Luxury Value Perception: A Cross-Cultural Framework,“ in: *Academy of Marketing Science Review, Special Issue on Cross-Cultural Issues in Marketing Science* (ed. by John B. Ford), 11(7): pp. 1-21.
- Wiedmann, K.-P. et al. (2009): “Value-Based Segmentation of Luxury Consumption Behavior,“ in: *Psychology & Marketing*, 26(7): pp. 625–651.
- Woodside, A.G. (2010): “Brand–Consumer Storytelling Theory and Research: Introduction to a Psychology & Marketing Special Issue,“ in: *Psychology & Marketing*, 27(6): pp. 531-540.

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1: Nutshell of Business Storytelling



Figure 2: Conceptual Frame of Storytelling Dimensions

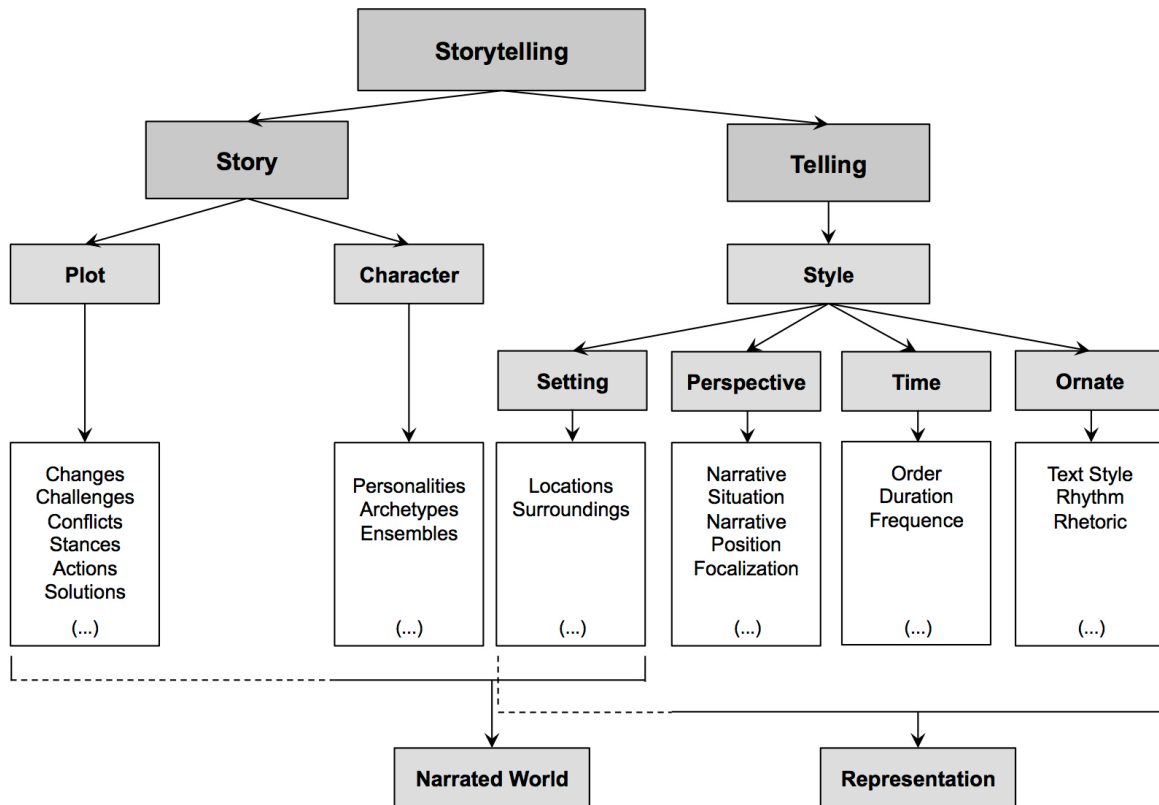


Table 1: Basic structures of story

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

**Table 2: A Storytelling Blueprint Concept**

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

**Table 3: Brand Context Sheet**

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