

International Research Journal of Business and Social Science

Volume: 12 Issue: 3

April-June, 2026

ISSN:2411-3646



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64907/xkmf.v12i3.irjbss.12>

Research Article

<http://irjbss.net/>

OPEN  ACCESS

Fashion Product Positioning through Marketing Narratives: A Qualitative Study

Monalisa Akter Akhi^{1*}; Israt Jahan; Kazi Abdul Mannan

^{1*}Department of Fashion Design & Technology

²Department of Business Administration

Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology, Uttara, Dhaka, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

This study examines how marketing narratives function as strategic tools for fashion product positioning. Drawing on brand positioning theory, narrative theory, and consumer culture theory, the research adopts a qualitative approach based on secondary data, including brand campaigns, digital content, and social media communications. Thematic analysis reveals five dominant narrative strategies employed by fashion brands: aspiration and transformation, authenticity and heritage, inclusivity and identity representation, sustainability and ethical positioning, and digital co-creation through influencers. The findings demonstrate that narratives play a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions by embedding products within emotionally engaging and culturally relevant stories. These narratives enhance brand differentiation by aligning products with consumers' self-concepts, values, and lifestyle aspirations. Furthermore, the study highlights the increasing importance of digital platforms in facilitating interactive and co-created storytelling, which strengthens brand-consumer relationships. The research contributes to the literature by providing an integrated theoretical perspective on narrative-driven positioning and offers practical insights for marketers seeking to develop compelling and authentic brand narratives in a competitive fashion landscape.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 2 May 2026

Revised 20 June 2026

Accepted 25 June 2026

KEYWORDS

Fashion marketing, product positioning, marketing narratives, storytelling, consumer culture theory, brand identity, digital media

CONTACT Monalisa Akter Akhi, Email: monalisaakhi007@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The global fashion industry has undergone a significant transformation in the past two decades, driven by technological advancements, globalisation, and shifts in consumer behaviour. Beyond the functional attributes of clothing, contemporary fashion consumption is deeply embedded in symbolic meaning, identity construction, and emotional engagement. As a result, fashion brands increasingly rely on marketing narratives to position their products in the minds of consumers. These narratives go beyond traditional advertising messages by embedding products within stories that evoke values, lifestyles, and cultural meanings (Fog et al., 2010; Escalas, 2004).

Product positioning has long been recognised as a central concept in marketing strategy, referring to the process by which a brand creates a distinct image and identity relative to competitors in the consumer's mind (Ries & Trout, 2001). In the context of fashion, positioning is particularly complex due to the intangible and symbolic nature of products. Fashion items often serve as markers of identity, social status, and group affiliation (Crane, 2012). Consequently, effective positioning requires more than highlighting product features; it involves constructing narratives that resonate with consumers' aspirations and self-concepts.

Marketing narratives have emerged as a powerful tool in this regard. Narrative-based communication allows brands to convey meaning through storytelling structures that include characters, plots, and emotional arcs

(Woodside, 2010). These narratives can be disseminated through various channels, including advertising campaigns, social media content, brand websites, and influencer collaborations. By engaging consumers on an emotional level, narratives can enhance brand recall, foster loyalty, and influence purchasing decisions (Escalas, 2004; Lundqvist et al., 2013).

In the fashion industry, the importance of storytelling has been amplified by the rise of digital platforms. Social media, in particular, has enabled brands to communicate continuously with consumers and co-create narratives in real time. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok allow for visual storytelling that aligns with the aesthetic nature of fashion products (Phua et al., 2020). Influencers and content creators further extend these narratives by integrating products into their personal stories, thereby enhancing authenticity and relatability (De Veirman et al., 2017). This shift has blurred the boundaries between brand-generated and user-generated content, creating a dynamic ecosystem of narrative construction.

Moreover, the increasing emphasis on sustainability and ethical practices has introduced new dimensions to fashion narratives. Consumers are becoming more conscious of the environmental and social impacts of their purchases, prompting brands to incorporate themes such as transparency, craftsmanship, and responsibility into their storytelling (Joy et al., 2012). These narratives not only position products as desirable but also as morally aligned with consumer values, thereby strengthening emotional connections.

Despite the growing importance of marketing narratives in fashion, there remains a need for deeper academic exploration of how these narratives function as positioning mechanisms. While existing research has examined storytelling in branding and consumer behaviour, fewer studies have specifically focused on the qualitative analysis of narratives within the fashion context. In particular, there is limited understanding of how different narrative elements-such as themes, characters, and symbolic meanings-contribute to product positioning.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining how fashion brands use marketing narratives to position their products. Adopting a qualitative approach based on secondary data, the research analyses existing brand communications, advertising campaigns, and digital content to identify recurring narrative patterns and themes. By doing so, the study aims to provide insights into the strategic use of storytelling in fashion marketing and its implications for brand differentiation and consumer engagement.

The objectives of this research are threefold. First, it aims to explore the types of narratives commonly employed by fashion brands in their marketing communications. Second, it seeks to analyse how these narratives contribute to product positioning by shaping consumer perceptions and associations. Third, it intends to identify the broader implications of narrative-based positioning for brand strategy in the fashion industry.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both academic literature and practical marketing strategies. From a

theoretical perspective, it integrates concepts from branding, storytelling, and consumer culture to provide a comprehensive understanding of narrative-driven positioning. From a managerial standpoint, the findings can inform fashion marketers on how to craft effective narratives that resonate with target audiences and differentiate their products in a competitive market.

In conclusion, as the fashion industry continues to evolve, the role of marketing narratives in shaping product positioning becomes increasingly critical. By examining these narratives through a qualitative lens, this study aims to shed light on the mechanisms through which stories influence consumer perceptions and drive brand success.

2. Literature Review

Product positioning is a foundational concept in marketing that involves establishing a distinct image of a product in the minds of consumers relative to competing offerings (Ries & Trout, 2001). Effective positioning requires a clear understanding of target audiences, competitive landscapes, and the unique value proposition of a brand. Traditionally, positioning strategies have focused on functional attributes such as quality, price, and performance. However, in industries like fashion, where products are highly symbolic, positioning extends beyond functional benefits to encompass emotional and experiential dimensions (Kapferer, 2012).

Keller (2013) emphasises that strong brands are built through consistent and meaningful

positioning that aligns with consumer perceptions. In the fashion context, this involves creating associations related to lifestyle, identity, and cultural values. For instance, luxury brands often position themselves through narratives of exclusivity and heritage, while fast fashion brands emphasise accessibility and trend responsiveness. These positioning strategies are not merely communicated through product features but are embedded in broader brand narratives.

2.1 Narrative Theory and Storytelling in Marketing

Narrative theory provides a useful framework for understanding how stories influence human cognition and behaviour. According to Bruner (1991), narratives are fundamental to how individuals make sense of the world, as they organise information into coherent and meaningful structures. In marketing, storytelling leverages this cognitive tendency by presenting brand messages in narrative form, thereby enhancing engagement and memorability (Woodside, 2010).

Escalas (2004) argues that narrative processing allows consumers to integrate brand information into their self-concept, leading to stronger emotional connections. When consumers perceive a brand story as relevant to their own experiences or aspirations, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the brand. This process, known as narrative transportation, involves immersion in a story that reduces critical resistance and increases persuasion (Green & Brock, 2000).

Fog et al. (2010) identify key elements of effective storytelling, including authenticity, conflict, and resolution. These elements help create compelling narratives that capture attention and evoke emotions. In the context of fashion marketing, storytelling often revolves around themes such as transformation, individuality, and aspiration, which resonate with consumers' desires for self-expression.

2.2 Branding and Symbolic Consumption in Fashion

Fashion consumption is inherently symbolic, as clothing and accessories serve as tools for expressing identity and social status (Crane, 2012). Belk (1988) introduced the concept of the extended self, suggesting that possessions become part of an individual's identity. This perspective is particularly relevant in fashion, where products are used to communicate personal and social meanings.

Thompson and Haytko (1997) highlight that consumers actively interpret and negotiate the meanings of fashion products within cultural contexts. This interpretive process underscores the importance of narratives in shaping brand perceptions. By embedding products within meaningful stories, brands can influence how consumers perceive and use these products in their identity construction.

Kapferer (2012) further emphasises the role of brand identity in shaping consumer perceptions. A strong brand identity is built through consistent messaging and symbolic associations, which are often conveyed through narratives. For example, heritage brands may use storytelling to highlight

craftsmanship and tradition, while contemporary brands may focus on innovation and diversity.

2.3 Digital Media and Narrative Construction

The rise of digital media has transformed the way brands communicate with consumers, enabling more interactive and participatory forms of storytelling. Social media platforms allow brands to share visual and textual narratives that can be easily disseminated and amplified by users (Phua et al., 2020). This has led to the emergence of a co-creation paradigm, where consumers actively participate in shaping brand narratives.

De Veirman et al. (2017) examine the role of influencers in this process, noting that influencers serve as intermediaries who integrate brand messages into their personal narratives. This integration enhances perceived authenticity and trustworthiness, which are critical factors in consumer decision-making. As a result, influencer marketing has become a key component of narrative-based positioning in fashion.

Lundqvist et al. (2013) find that storytelling in digital contexts can significantly enhance brand equity by fostering emotional engagement and brand loyalty. Visual storytelling, in particular, is highly effective in the fashion industry due to its emphasis on aesthetics and visual appeal. Platforms such as Instagram enable brands to curate cohesive visual narratives that reinforce their positioning.

2.4 Sustainability Narratives in Fashion Marketing

In recent years, sustainability has become a central theme in fashion marketing narratives. Consumers are increasingly concerned about environmental and social issues, prompting brands to adopt more transparent and responsible practices (Joy et al., 2012). These practices are often communicated through narratives that emphasise ethical sourcing, environmental stewardship, and social impact.

However, the use of sustainability narratives also raises concerns about authenticity and credibility. Greenwashing, or the practice of making misleading claims about environmental practices, can undermine consumer trust (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Therefore, effective sustainability narratives must be supported by genuine actions and transparent communication.

Sustainability narratives also contribute to product positioning by differentiating brands in a crowded market. By aligning with consumer values, brands can create deeper emotional connections and enhance brand loyalty. This aligns with the broader trend of purpose-driven branding, where brands position themselves as agents of positive change.

2.5 Research Gap and Conceptual Direction

While existing literature provides valuable insights into product positioning, storytelling, and consumer behaviour, there is a need for more integrated research that examines the intersection of these concepts within the fashion industry. Specifically,

there is limited qualitative research on how marketing narratives function as positioning tools in fashion contexts.

Most studies have focused on quantitative measures of brand equity or consumer attitudes, often overlooking the rich and nuanced nature of narrative content. A qualitative approach allows for a deeper exploration of narrative structures, themes, and meanings, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how narratives influence product positioning.

This study addresses this gap by analysing secondary data from fashion marketing communications to identify patterns in narrative construction and their implications for positioning. By integrating theoretical perspectives from branding, narrative theory, and consumer culture, the research aims to contribute to a more holistic understanding of narrative-driven marketing strategies.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates brand positioning theory, narrative theory, and consumer culture theory (CCT). These theoretical perspectives collectively provide a comprehensive lens for understanding how marketing narratives function as strategic tools for positioning fashion products in the minds of consumers.

3.1 Brand Positioning Theory

Brand positioning theory forms the foundational basis of this study. According to Ries and Trout (2001), positioning refers to the process of establishing a distinctive place for a brand in the consumer's mind relative to

competitors. This process involves the deliberate creation and communication of a unique value proposition that differentiates a product based on attributes, benefits, or symbolic meanings.

Keller (2013) further develops this concept through the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model, which emphasises the importance of building strong, favourable, and unique brand associations. Within this framework, positioning is achieved by shaping consumer perceptions through consistent messaging and strategic communication. In the fashion industry, where differentiation is often based on intangible elements such as style, identity, and emotion, positioning relies heavily on symbolic associations rather than purely functional attributes (Kapferer, 2012).

Marketing narratives serve as a key mechanism for conveying these associations. By embedding products within compelling stories, brands can communicate complex meanings coherently and memorably. For example, a luxury fashion brand may use narratives of heritage and craftsmanship to position its products as exclusive and timeless, while a sustainable brand may emphasise ethical production and environmental responsibility. Thus, brand positioning theory provides the structural foundation for understanding the strategic intent behind marketing narratives.

3.2 Narrative Theory

Narrative theory offers critical insights into how stories influence human cognition, emotion, and behaviour. Bruner (1991) argues that narratives are a fundamental

mode of thought through which individuals construct meaning and interpret experiences. In marketing contexts, narratives enable brands to present information in a structured and engaging format that resonates with consumers.

A key concept within narrative theory is narrative transportation, which refers to the psychological immersion of individuals into a story (Green & Brock, 2000). When consumers become transported into a narrative, they are more likely to experience emotional engagement and reduced counter-arguing, leading to more persuasive outcomes. Escalas (2004) highlights that narrative processing allows consumers to integrate brand-related information into their self-concept, thereby strengthening brand connections.

Woodside (2010) extends narrative theory to consumer behaviour by proposing that storytelling is central to how consumers understand and relate to brands. According to this perspective, effective brand narratives include elements such as characters, plots, and conflicts that mirror real-life experiences. These elements enable consumers to identify with the story and, by extension, the brand.

In the context of fashion marketing, narrative theory is particularly relevant due to the experiential and symbolic nature of products. Fashion narratives often revolve around themes such as transformation, aspiration, and identity, which align with consumers' desires for self-expression. By leveraging these themes, brands can create emotionally compelling stories that enhance product positioning.

3.3 Consumer Culture Theory (CCT)

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) provides a broader sociocultural perspective on consumption, emphasising the role of cultural meanings, social practices, and identity formation (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). CCT posits that consumption is not merely a functional activity but a symbolic process through which individuals construct and communicate their identities.

Belk's (1988) concept of the extended self is central to this perspective, suggesting that possessions become integral to an individual's sense of self. In fashion, this is particularly evident, as clothing and accessories are used to express personal style, social status, and group affiliation. Thompson and Haytko (1997) further argue that consumers actively interpret and negotiate the meanings of fashion products within cultural contexts.

Marketing narratives play a crucial role in shaping these meanings by providing symbolic frameworks through which consumers can understand and use products. For instance, a brand that positions itself around inclusivity and diversity may use narratives that celebrate individuality and self-acceptance. These narratives not only influence how products are perceived but also how they are integrated into consumers' identity projects.

CCT also highlights the importance of cultural authenticity and resonance in brand communication. Narratives that align with cultural values and social trends are more likely to be effective in influencing consumer

behaviour. In the contemporary fashion landscape, this includes themes such as sustainability, ethical consumption, and social responsibility (Joy et al., 2012).

3.4 Integrated Theoretical Model

By integrating brand positioning theory, narrative theory, and CCT, this study develops a comprehensive framework for analysing fashion marketing narratives. Brand positioning theory explains the strategic objectives behind narrative construction, narrative theory elucidates the mechanisms through which stories influence consumer cognition and emotion, and CCT provides insights into the cultural and symbolic dimensions of consumption.

This integrated framework enables a nuanced analysis of how marketing narratives function as positioning tools in the fashion industry. It highlights the interplay between strategic intent, narrative structure, and cultural meaning, thereby offering a holistic understanding of narrative-driven positioning.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore how marketing narratives are used to position fashion products. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for this study because it allows for an in-depth examination of complex and context-dependent phenomena, such as narrative construction and meaning-making (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research is based on a secondary data analysis, which involves the systematic examination of existing data sources,

including brand communications, advertising campaigns, social media content, and corporate websites. This approach is appropriate given the widespread availability of digital marketing materials and the focus on narrative content rather than consumer responses.

A qualitative design enables the researcher to capture the richness and diversity of marketing narratives, as well as the subtle nuances of language, imagery, and symbolism. It also facilitates the identification of patterns and themes across different brands and contexts.

4.1 Data Collection

The data for this study were collected from multiple secondary sources to ensure a comprehensive analysis of fashion marketing narratives. These sources include:

- Official brand websites and campaign archives
- Social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, YouTube)
- Digital advertisements and promotional videos
- Fashion editorials and brand storytelling content

The selection of data is guided by purposive sampling, which involves choosing cases that are particularly relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2002). Specifically, the study focuses on fashion brands that are known for their strong narrative-driven marketing strategies, including luxury, fast fashion, and sustainable brands.

To ensure diversity, the sample includes brands from different market segments and

geographic contexts. This allows for a comparative analysis of narrative strategies and positioning approaches across the fashion industry.

4.2 Data Analysis

The study employs thematic analysis as the primary method of data analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative technique for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The analysis follows a systematic process consisting of the following steps:

- **Familiarisation with the data:** The researcher reviews and organises the collected materials to gain an overall understanding of the content.
- **Initial coding:** Key elements of the narratives, such as themes, symbols, and storytelling techniques, are identified and coded.
- **Theme development:** Codes are grouped into broader themes that capture recurring patterns in the data.
- **Theme review and refinement:** Themes are evaluated for coherence and relevance to the research objectives.
- **Interpretation:** The themes are interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework, with a focus on how they contribute to product positioning.

This approach allows for both inductive and deductive analysis. While themes emerge from the data, they are also informed by the theoretical framework, ensuring a balance

between empirical observation and theoretical interpretation.

4.3 Trustworthiness and Rigour

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings, the study employs several strategies for enhancing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985):

- **Credibility:** The use of multiple data sources enables triangulation, which enhances the validity of the findings.
- **Transferability:** Detailed descriptions of the data and analysis provide transparency, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other contexts.
- **Dependability:** A clear and systematic research process ensures consistency and replicability.
- **Confirmability:** The analysis is grounded in the data, with interpretations supported by evidence from the selected materials.

These measures help ensure that the research findings are robust and credible.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

As this study relies on secondary data from publicly available sources, it does not involve direct interaction with human participants. Therefore, issues related to informed consent and confidentiality are minimised. However, ethical considerations still apply in terms of responsible data use and accurate representation of sources.

The study ensures that all data are used in accordance with copyright and intellectual property guidelines (Mannan & Farhana, 2026). Proper attribution is provided for all

referenced materials, and care is taken to avoid misinterpretation or misrepresentation of brand communications.

4.5 Limitations of the Methodology

Despite its strengths, the chosen methodology has certain limitations. First, the reliance on secondary data means that the analysis is limited to existing materials and does not capture consumer interpretations or responses. Second, qualitative analysis is inherently interpretive, which may introduce researcher bias.

However, these limitations are mitigated through rigorous analytical procedures and the use of multiple data sources. Future research could complement this study with primary data, such as interviews or surveys, to gain additional insights into consumer perspectives.

5. Findings and Analysis

The thematic analysis of secondary data reveals that fashion brands employ marketing narratives in systematic and strategic ways to position their products. Across different market segments-luxury, fast fashion, and sustainable brands-distinct narrative patterns emerge. These narratives function not only as communication tools but also as symbolic frameworks that shape consumer perceptions, emotional engagement, and identity alignment. Five dominant themes are identified: narratives of aspiration and transformation, authenticity and heritage storytelling, inclusivity and identity representation, sustainability and ethical positioning, and digital co-creation and influencer-driven narratives.

5.1 Narratives of Aspiration and Transformation

One of the most prominent themes identified is the use of aspirational and transformational narratives. Fashion brands frequently construct stories that depict personal evolution, success, and idealised lifestyles. These narratives often feature characters who transform, symbolising the potential of the consumer to achieve a desired identity through the use of the product.

This finding aligns with narrative theory, particularly the concept of narrative transportation, where consumers become emotionally immersed in a story (Green & Brock, 2000). The aspirational dimension of these narratives encourages consumers to project themselves into the story, thereby associating the brand with their desired future selves (Escalas, 2004). For example, luxury fashion campaigns often portray glamorous settings, elite social circles, and refined aesthetics, positioning products as gateways to exclusivity and sophistication.

In contrast, fast fashion brands use similar narrative structures but adapt them to emphasise accessibility and immediacy. The transformation is framed as quick and attainable, aligning with the fast-paced consumption patterns associated with this segment (Joy et al., 2012). This demonstrates how the same narrative archetype can be tailored to different positioning strategies.

The analysis indicates that aspirational narratives are particularly effective in reinforcing emotional engagement. By linking products to personal goals and aspirations, brands create a strong

psychological connection that goes beyond functional benefits. This supports Keller's (2013) assertion that emotional and symbolic associations are central to building strong brand equity.

5.2 Authenticity and Heritage Storytelling

Another key theme is the emphasis on authenticity and heritage, particularly among luxury and premium fashion brands. These narratives highlight the history, craftsmanship, and legacy of the brand, often using storytelling elements such as origin stories, artisan techniques, and generational continuity.

Such narratives serve to position products as timeless and valuable, reinforcing perceptions of quality and exclusivity (Kapferer, 2012). The use of heritage storytelling also aligns with consumer culture theory, which emphasises the importance of cultural meaning and authenticity in consumption (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). By presenting products as part of a larger historical and cultural narrative, brands enhance their symbolic value.

The analysis reveals that authenticity is constructed through both content and form. Visual elements such as archival imagery, traditional production processes, and minimalist aesthetics contribute to the perception of genuineness. Linguistic elements, including storytelling tone and vocabulary, further reinforce this positioning.

However, authenticity is not limited to heritage brands. Contemporary brands also construct authenticity through narratives of transparency and personal storytelling. For

example, emerging designers often share behind-the-scenes content and personal journeys, creating a sense of intimacy and relatability. This suggests that authenticity is a flexible construct that can be adapted to different brand identities.

5.3 Inclusivity and Identity Representation

The third major theme is the use of narratives centred on inclusivity, diversity, and identity representation. Many fashion brands are increasingly incorporating stories that reflect a wide range of identities, including different ethnicities, body types, genders, and cultural backgrounds.

These narratives function as positioning tools by aligning brands with contemporary social values and movements. According to Belk (1988), consumers use products to construct and communicate their identities. By representing diverse identities in their narratives, brands enable consumers to see themselves reflected in the brand, thereby enhancing identification and engagement.

The analysis shows that inclusivity narratives often emphasise themes of empowerment, self-expression, and acceptance. These themes resonate strongly with younger consumers, who tend to value authenticity and social responsibility (Phua et al., 2020). Moreover, the use of real people and user-generated content enhances the perceived authenticity of these narratives.

From a positioning perspective, inclusivity narratives differentiate brands by signalling openness and relevance. They also contribute to emotional branding by fostering a sense of belonging and community. However, the

effectiveness of these narratives depends on their consistency and authenticity. Superficial or inconsistent representation can lead to scepticism and backlash, highlighting the importance of alignment between narrative and practice.

5.4 Sustainability and Ethical Positioning

Sustainability emerges as a critical narrative theme, reflecting the growing importance of environmental and social concerns in consumer decision-making. Brands use sustainability narratives to position their products as responsible and ethical choices, often emphasising eco-friendly materials, ethical labour practices, and reduced environmental impact.

These narratives are closely linked to the concept of purpose-driven branding, where brands align themselves with broader societal goals (Joy et al., 2012). The analysis indicates that sustainability narratives often include elements of transparency, such as detailed information about supply chains and production processes. This transparency enhances credibility and trust, which are essential for effective positioning.

However, the analysis also reveals challenges associated with sustainability narratives. The risk of greenwashing-misleading claims about environmental practices-can undermine consumer trust (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). As a result, successful sustainability narratives require not only compelling storytelling but also verifiable actions and consistent communication.

From a positioning perspective, sustainability narratives differentiate brands in a crowded

market by appealing to value-driven consumers. They also contribute to long-term brand equity by fostering trust and loyalty. This underscores the strategic importance of integrating sustainability into both narrative and operational aspects of the brand.

5.5 Digital Co-Creation and Influencer-Driven Narratives

The final theme highlights the role of digital platforms and influencers in shaping marketing narratives. Social media has transformed storytelling into a participatory process, where consumers and influencers actively contribute to narrative construction.

Influencers play a key role in this process by integrating products into their personal stories. This integration enhances authenticity and relatability, as consumers perceive influencer content as more genuine than traditional advertising (De Veirman et al., 2017). The analysis shows that influencer narratives often focus on everyday experiences, making the brand more accessible and relatable.

User-generated content further amplifies this effect by allowing consumers to share their own stories and interpretations of the brand. This co-creation process aligns with the principles of consumer culture theory, which emphasises the active role of consumers in meaning-making (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

From a positioning perspective, digital co-creation enables brands to maintain relevance and adaptability. By engaging with consumers in real time, brands can continuously refine their narratives and respond to changing trends. However, this

also introduces challenges related to consistency and control, as narratives are no longer entirely managed by the brand.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the role of marketing narratives in fashion product positioning. By integrating perspectives from brand positioning theory, narrative theory, and consumer culture theory, the discussion highlights the strategic, psychological, and cultural dimensions of narrative-driven positioning.

6.1 Narratives as Strategic Positioning Mechanisms

The findings confirm that marketing narratives are not merely communication tools but strategic mechanisms for positioning fashion products. Consistent with Ries and Trout (2001), positioning involves creating a distinct place in the consumer's mind. Narratives facilitate this process by organising brand messages into coherent and meaningful structures.

The identified themes demonstrate that different types of narratives correspond to different positioning strategies. For example, aspirational narratives align with premium and luxury positioning, while sustainability narratives support ethical and purpose-driven positioning. This indicates that narrative selection is a deliberate strategic decision that reflects the brand's target audience and value proposition.

Furthermore, the integration of multiple narrative themes allows brands to create complex and multidimensional positioning.

For instance, a brand may combine sustainability with inclusivity to appeal to socially conscious consumers. This multidimensionality enhances the richness of brand meaning and increases its relevance across different consumer segments.

6.2 Emotional Engagement and Narrative Transportation

From a psychological perspective, the effectiveness of marketing narratives can be explained through the concept of narrative transportation (Green & Brock, 2000). The findings show that narratives that evoke strong emotions and relatable experiences are more likely to engage consumers and influence their perceptions.

Escalas (2004) suggests that narrative processing enables consumers to integrate brand information into their self-concept. This is evident in the use of aspirational and identity-based narratives, which encourage consumers to see the brand as part of their personal journey. The emotional resonance of these narratives enhances brand attachment and loyalty.

Moreover, the use of visual storytelling in digital media amplifies this effect. Visual elements such as imagery, colour, and composition contribute to the emotional impact of narratives, making them more immersive and memorable (Lundqvist et al., 2013). This highlights the importance of integrating visual and textual elements in narrative construction.

6.3 Cultural Meaning and Identity Construction

The findings also underscore the role of cultural meaning in fashion marketing narratives. Consistent with consumer culture theory, narratives provide symbolic frameworks through which consumers interpret and use products (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). These frameworks influence not only how products are perceived but also how they are integrated into identity construction.

Inclusivity and sustainability narratives, in particular, reflect broader cultural trends and social values. By aligning with these values, brands position themselves as culturally relevant and socially responsible. This alignment enhances consumer identification and strengthens brand relationships.

However, the effectiveness of these narratives depends on their authenticity and consistency. As Thompson and Haytko (1997) note, consumers actively interpret and evaluate brand messages. Inauthentic or contradictory narratives can lead to scepticism and reduce brand credibility. Therefore, brands must ensure that their narratives are supported by genuine practices and consistent communication.

6.4 The Role of Digital Media in Narrative Evolution

The findings highlight the transformative impact of digital media on marketing narratives. Social media platforms enable continuous and interactive storytelling, allowing brands to engage with consumers in real time. This has shifted the role of

consumers from passive recipients to active participants in narrative construction.

Influencer marketing exemplifies this shift by integrating brand messages into personal narratives. As De Veirman et al. (2017) note, influencers enhance perceived authenticity and trustworthiness, making them effective intermediaries in narrative communication. However, this also raises questions about control and consistency, as brands must balance authenticity with strategic alignment.

The co-creation of narratives also introduces new opportunities for innovation and engagement. User-generated content allows brands to tap into diverse perspectives and experiences, enriching the overall narrative. At the same time, it requires careful management to ensure that the brand's core message remains coherent.

6.5 Implications for Theory and Practice

The study contributes to theoretical understanding by integrating multiple perspectives on narrative-driven positioning. It demonstrates that marketing narratives operate at the intersection of strategy, psychology, and culture, highlighting the need for interdisciplinary approaches in marketing research.

From a practical perspective, the findings offer valuable insights for fashion marketers. First, they emphasise the importance of aligning narratives with brand identity and the target audience. Second, they highlight the need for authenticity and consistency in narrative construction. Third, they underscore the potential of digital media and

influencer marketing as tools for enhancing narrative engagement.

6.6 Limitations and Future Research

While the study provides valuable insights, it also has limitations. The reliance on secondary data limits the ability to capture consumer perspectives and responses. Future research could incorporate primary data, such as interviews or surveys, to explore how consumers interpret and engage with marketing narratives.

Additionally, the study focuses on a qualitative analysis of narrative content. Quantitative approaches could complement these findings by measuring the impact of different narrative strategies on consumer behaviour and brand performance.

7. Conclusion

This study set out to explore how marketing narratives contribute to fashion product positioning through a qualitative analysis of secondary data. By integrating theoretical perspectives from brand positioning theory, narrative theory, and consumer culture theory, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how storytelling operates as a strategic and symbolic tool in fashion marketing.

The findings reveal that marketing narratives are central to the positioning process, enabling brands to communicate complex meanings that extend beyond functional product attributes. Through themes such as aspiration, authenticity, inclusivity, sustainability, and digital co-creation, fashion

brands construct narratives that resonate with consumers' identities, values, and emotional experiences. These narratives not only differentiate brands in a highly competitive market but also foster deeper connections with consumers by aligning products with their self-concepts and cultural contexts.

A key contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that narrative-driven positioning is inherently multidimensional. Brands often combine multiple narrative themes to create rich and layered meanings, thereby appealing to diverse consumer segments. For example, the integration of sustainability and inclusivity narratives reflects broader societal trends and enhances the relevance of brand positioning in contemporary markets. Moreover, the increasing role of digital platforms and influencer collaborations underscores the dynamic and participatory nature of modern storytelling, where consumers actively engage in and co-create brand narratives.

From a theoretical perspective, the study advances the understanding of marketing narratives by situating them at the intersection of strategy, psychology, and culture. It highlights the importance of narrative transportation, symbolic consumption, and cultural meaning-making in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours. From a managerial standpoint, the findings emphasise the need for authenticity, consistency, and strategic alignment in narrative construction. Brands must ensure that their stories are supported by genuine practices and resonate with their target audiences to maintain credibility and trust.

Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its reliance on secondary data and qualitative interpretation. Future research could incorporate primary data and quantitative methods to further examine the impact of narrative strategies on consumer behaviour and brand performance. Additionally, cross-cultural studies could provide deeper insights into how narratives are interpreted in different cultural contexts.

In conclusion, marketing narratives represent a powerful and evolving mechanism for fashion product positioning. As the industry continues to adapt to changing consumer expectations and technological advancements, the ability to craft meaningful and authentic stories will remain a critical determinant of brand success.

References

- Arnould, E. J., & Thompson, C. J. (2005). Consumer culture theory (CCT). *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), 868-882.
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self in consumer behaviour. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139-168.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry*, 18(1), 1-21.
- Crane, D. (2012). *Fashion and its social agendas: Class, gender, and identity in clothing*. University of Chicago Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (4th ed.). Sage.
- De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798-828.
- Delmas, M. A., & Burbano, V. C. (2011). The drivers of greenwashing. *California Management Review*, 54(1), 64-87.
- Escalas, J. E. (2004). Narrative processing in consumer behaviour. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(2), 168-180.
- Fog, K., Budtz, C., & Yakaboylu, B. (2010). *Storytelling: Branding in practice*. Springer.
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(5), 701-721.
- Joy, A., Sherry, J. F., Venkatesh, A., Wang, J., & Chan, R. (2012). Fast fashion and sustainability. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 12(3), 273-296.
- Kapferer, J.-N. (2012). *The new strategic brand management* (5th ed.). Kogan Page.
- Keller, K. L. (2013). *Strategic brand management* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

- Lundqvist, A., Liljander, V., Gummerus, J., & van Riel, A. (2013). The impact of storytelling on brand equity. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(4), 283-297.
- Mannan, K.A., & Farhana, K.M. (2026). *The Principles of Qur'anic Research Methodology: Deriving the Process of Knowledge from Revelation*. KMF Publishers. Open Access (CC BY 4.0). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64907/xkmf.book.pqrm.26.02.12>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Phua, J., Jin, S. V., & Kim, J. (2020). Uses and gratifications of social media. *Telematics and Informatics*, 52, 101401.
- Ries, A., & Trout, J. (2001). *Positioning: The battle for your mind*. McGraw-Hill.
- Thompson, C. J., & Haytko, D. L. (1997). Speaking of fashion. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(1), 15-42.
- Woodside, A. G. (2010). Brand-consumer storytelling theory. *Psychology & Marketing*, 27(6), 531-540.