

Story as Publicity: A Study of Brand Narrative Positions and Corporate Image Construction

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Abstract

Against the backdrop intensified traffic competition within today's digital communication landscape, traditional corporate publicity that centers on product-oriented information push and paid advertising is prone to homogenized marketing traps. The creation of the Brand Storytellers role signals a pivotal transformation in corporate communication: Enterprises are moving away from one-way informational announcements toward the systematic development of cohesive brand stories. Grounded in organizational communication and brand narrative theories and drawing on case studies of enterprises with dedicated brand-narrative personnel, this paper dissects the functional positioning of Brand Storytellers and the complete production workflow of brand narratives. It further identifies practical bottlenecks in real-world brand-narrative implementation and proposes feasible countermeasures for improvement, with full consideration of the complex interaction between corporate operations and public reception. This research concludes that credible and logically consistent brand narratives constitute the cornerstone of high-quality corporate publicity. Rather than merely generating superficial promotional content, the core value of Brand Storytellers resides in reconciling internal and external narrative threads for an organization and closing the perceptual divide between corporate realities and audience interpretations, so as to maintain stable long-term brand trust among stakeholders.

Keywords

Corporate publicity, Brand narrative, Brand story, Organizational communication, Brand Storytellers



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Introduction

In the digital-media era, internet traffic dividends are gradually fading, while information overload has resulted in audience attention becoming a scarce resource. Audiences have grown increasingly resistant to

conventional corporate publicity built on hard-sell advertising that bluntly promotes product selling points. In traditional corporate structures, publicity-related tasks are scattered across copywriting, public relations,

marketing and other separate posts [1]. Content output is fragmented, communication objectives tend to be short-term, and companies frequently get trapped in homogenized marketing rivalry.

Against such a backdrop, multiple domestic and international enterprises have created full-time Brand Storytellers positions. They elevate the excavation, construction and maintenance of brand stories to a specialized organizational function.

Brand storytelling is widely recognized as one of the most effective communication approaches for building emotional bonds and value identification between brands and consumers. The core value of corporate publicity has accordingly shifted. Companies no longer focus on one-off ad campaigns and product-information releases for short-term exposure. Instead, they build sustained, coherent brand narratives.

These narratives help companies forge emotional connections with the public. A reputable brand with solid market performance invariably features well-rounded brand elements and leaves the public with positive, memorable impressions [2]. Favourable corporate images and brand assets are built through long-term accumulation rather than instant effects.

This paper addresses three core research questions under the background of the transformation of corporate publicity logic. First, what are the key responsibilities assumed by Brand Storytellers within existing corporate communication frameworks, and how do these roles differ from traditional corporate communicators? Second, how do brand-narrative professionals leverage organizational resources to produce, coordinate and distribute brand stories so as to systematically construct consistent and credible corporate images for diverse stakeholder groups? Third, what inherent contradictions and practical constraints emerge in organizational coordination, content creation and audience engagement when enterprises implement publicity strategies centred on dedicated brand-narrative roles amid complex public opinion environments?

Existing brand-narrative scholarship predominantly investigates audience perceptions, story components and communication effectiveness from the recipient perspective. Few studies have adopted an organizational-communication lens to examine newly-emerging professional roles for brand storytelling on the production side.

This research takes Brand Storytellers as an analytical anchor to supplement production-oriented brand-narrative research and broaden theoretical horizons for corporate publicity studies. Numerous domestic enterprises are undergoing communication-model transitions. By sorting out operational experiences from brand-narrative practice, this paper offers practical references for firms aiming to shift from one-sided information broadcasting to long-term brand-story building.

This study combines literature review and multiple-case analysis to explore the functions and dilemmas of brand storytellers in modern corporate communication. The literature review sorts out prior academic findings on brand narrative and corporate publicity, clarifying core concepts and theoretical foundations while identifying research gaps in existing scholarship. For the multiple-case analysis, this paper adopts theoretical sampling principle: Case enterprises must satisfy two inclusion criteria to ensure that selected samples can provide rich, informative empirical evidence for this research.

- (1) Formally set up full-time Brand Storytellers or equivalent dedicated brand-narrative leadership post.
- (2) Having publicly available brand output materials, corporate announcements, industry media reports for evidence triangulation. Exclusion criteria are enterprises only assigning part-time staff to undertake sporadic brand-story work without clear job responsibilities.

Five-case enterprises are selected, covering both consumer-facing brands and manufacturing enterprises (see Table 1 for case profiles). By comparing operational patterns across industries, this paper summarises

strengths and predicaments in on-the-job practice and extracts optimised publicity pathways [3].

Table1. Profiles of case enterprises.

Case ID	Enterprise type	Industry	Brand-narrative role setup	Main data sources for case analysis
E1	Consumer-facing brand	Fast-moving consumer goods	Full-time Brand Storytellers	Official new-media content, corporate white papers, industry media interview
E2	Consumer-facing brand	Smart hardware	Dedicated brand-narrative lead within brand centre	Product launch manuscripts, brand documentaries, public annual reports
E3	Manufacturing enterprise	High-end equipment manufacturing	Brand-story specialist attached to corporate communications department	Corporate exhibition materials, CSR reports, technical publicity outputs
E4	Manufacturing enterprise	New materials industry	Cross-department brand-narrative working group within assigned lead	Press releasase, craftsmanship-themed serial reports
E5	Cross-border-oriented consumer brand	Apparel & lifestyle	Brand Storytellers covering domestic and overseas communication	Cross-cultural brand campaigns, multi-language official content

Notes: All case materials are secondary public data, including open corporate documents, third-party industry media coverage and publicly released brand communication outputs; no confidential internal corporate data is used.

Literature review and theoretical foundations

Since narratology was introduced into marketing-communication research, brand narrative has become a critical analytical lens for understanding how brand meaning is generated. Storytelling represents an ancient universal narrative practice through which human beings record and reconstruct events and processes. Scholars define brand narrative as communication practices that convey brand values via story-based elements [4].

Distinct from standard advertising and one-sided information dissemination, which prioritise short-term persuasion and sales conversion, brand narrative emphasises sustained meaning construction and cultivates durable emotional bonds between brands and audiences.

Current literature largely focuses on recipient-side outcomes: audience narrative perceptions, story-element design and communication-effect testing. Scholars examine how story content reshapes consumer attitudes

yet seldom probe organisational production procedures. Limited academic attention has been paid to internal corporate processes including narrative generation, cross-department alignment and holistic coordination managed by specialised full-time staff.

Traditional corporate publicity undertakes information dissemination, crisis public relations and image maintenance, mostly functioning as unidirectional organisational output targeting external stakeholders. Within digital media ecosystems, audiences enjoy greater information-selection agencies, prompting paradigm shifts in corporate publicity [5].

Organisational-communication scholarship underscores that publicity is no longer sheer information indoctrination but bidirectional meaning negotiation between organisations and the public. Enterprises must continuously incorporate audience feedback, finetune communicative expressions and sustain organisational reputations through dialogic engagement. This industry-wide transformation provides the communicative context for the rise of dedicated brand-narrative positions.

Narrative theory posits that narration constructs and renews cognitive schemas in human minds. Individuals organise information and make sense of relationships by constructing, interpreting and sharing stories that integrate people, objects, events, behaviours and scenarios. The narrative-transportation theory explains psychological mechanisms behind audience cognitive immersion and emotional resonance when engaging with story texts [6]. It illuminates reception-side dynamics of brand-story consumption for this paper. Organisational-communication theory sheds light on Brand Storytellers' internal coordination work by analysing intra-firm communication, cross-unit collaboration and organization-public interactions. The brand-authenticity theory establishes evaluative criteria for sustainable persuasive power of brand narratives from dimensions including credibility and narrative continuity.

Existing brand-narrative discussions concentrate heavily on communication endpoints, whereas organisational mechanisms at the narrative-production stage remain under-researched. Few studies systematically analyse how emerging brand-narrative roles consolidate source materials, unify core narrative threads and synchronise multi-channel corporate messaging. Practical experience accumulated by brand-narrative positions encapsulates realistic logics behind corporate-publicity transformation, calling for systematic academic generalisation.

Job origins: Positioning of Brand Storytellers within corporate publicity systems

Digital communication has expanded corporate outreach channels to encompass short-video platforms, official new-media accounts, offline exhibitions, product presentations and press releases. Under conventional division-of-labour frameworks, publicity content falls under separate public relations, new-media-operation and product-marketing modules. Each department generates content according to short-term business key performance indicators (KPIs) without unified

overarching storylines. Inconsistent brand statements and conflicting value articulations frequently emerge across touchpoints. Fragmented content workflows can only deliver isolated information pushes and fail to convey stable brand values consistently.

As market competition evolves from product-function rivalry toward brand-identity contestation, enterprises are no longer satisfied with temporary exposure brought by individual advertisements or event campaigns [7]. They demand consistent, self-coherent brand narratives to cultivate long-term corporate images. Against this backdrop, some enterprises hire Brand Storytellers as dedicated specialists. These professionals oversee master-narrative planning, standardise expressive tones across outputs and resolve discursive fragmentation across channels, responding to public demand for coherent brand cognition.

Brand Storytellers oversee end-to-end brand-story development and maintenance

Firstly, they trace and excavate original source materials by systematically sorting corporate history, founding journeys, manufacturing craftsmanship records and social-responsibility initiatives to identify fact-based communication-worthy resources.

Secondly, they build enduring core-story frameworks grounded in corporate characteristics, clarifying value cores and expressive boundaries to prevent unfocused, disjointed content output.

Thirdly, they facilitate cross-department collaboration by liaising with research and development (R&D), production, public relations and sales teams to harmonise narrative logics across departmental outputs.

Fourthly, they adapt storytelling to target audiences: adjusting communicative forms according to media attributes and audience demographics.

A well-crafted brand story features positive themes, appropriate subjects, distinct roles, prominent plots, plus four essential dimensions: authenticity, commitment, consensus and emotion. Brand Storytellers avoid mechanically reusing identical texts for all

communication contexts [8]. Finally, they conduct iterative optimisation through feedback monitoring: tracking public interpretations and evaluations of brand

narratives, refining expressions based on public-opinion signals and proactively identifying and mitigating trust risks arising from brand storytelling (in Figure 1).

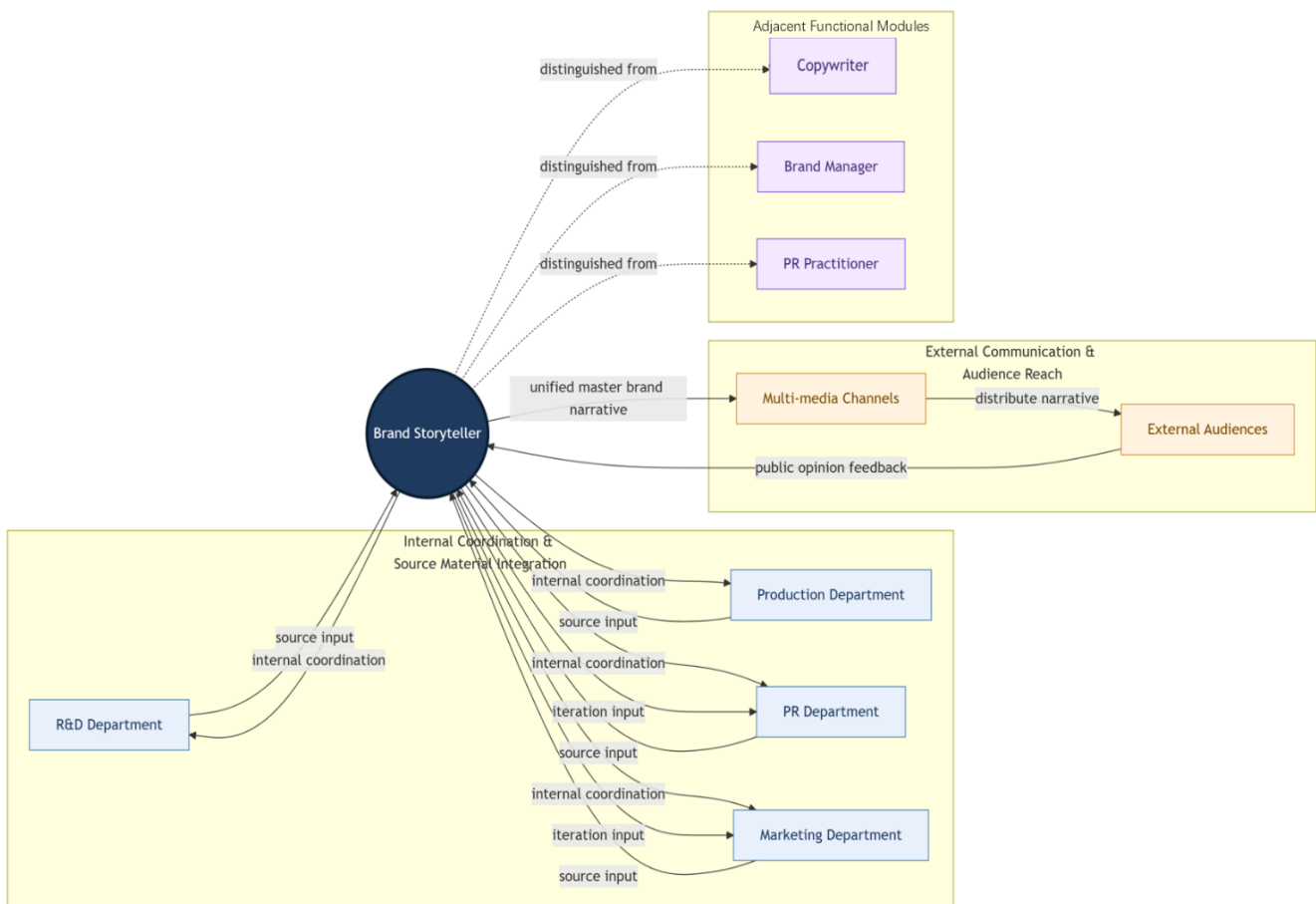


Figure 1. Conceptual diagram: functional positioning of Brand Storytellers' role.

Functional priorities distinguish Brand Storytellers from adjacent corporate roles. Copywriters specialise in polishing textual deliverables such as articles and short-video scripts. Brand managers focus on market metrics, brand positioning, marketing planning and business-target delivery. Public-relations practitioners handle public-opinion crises and media liaison, prioritising reputation repair amid emergencies [9].

Unlike these roles, Brand Storytellers do not take charge of every piece of copywriting, nor do they treat immediate sales growth or crisis containment as primary objectives. Instead, they step back from day-to-day content drafting and tactical firefighting tasks that usually occupy traditional marketing staff. Their central mandate is to govern underlying logics for complete brand-story systems and align content generated by other

functions with unified narrative threads. They help different teams avoid inconsistent messaging and ensure all brand outputs reflect the core identity and long-term value proposition of the organisation.

As semiotic theories suggest, ordinary commodities can acquire rich cultural meanings exceeding practical use-value within contemporary popular culture. Brand Storytellers serve as dedicated stewards of long-term brand significance, while other communication-related positions implement narrative strategies on the ground. Collective collaboration delivers cohesive integrated corporate publicity outcomes [10].

Evidence from case E1-E5 shows that in practice, the authority boundary of this new post varies substantially among sampled firms, ranging from limited advisory power to full cross-departmental coordination rights. It

constitutes one important source of real-world coordination frictions that hinder consistent brand narrative delivery across departments.

Brand-story construction led by Brand Storytellers

Brand-story construction spearheaded by Brand

Storytellers constitutes a cohesive communication workflow that diverges from scattered conventional advertising copywriting.

It starts with factual foundations, proceeds through structural design and media adaptation, facilitates meaning negotiation with audiences, and ultimately fosters emotional resonance and value identification (in Figure 2).

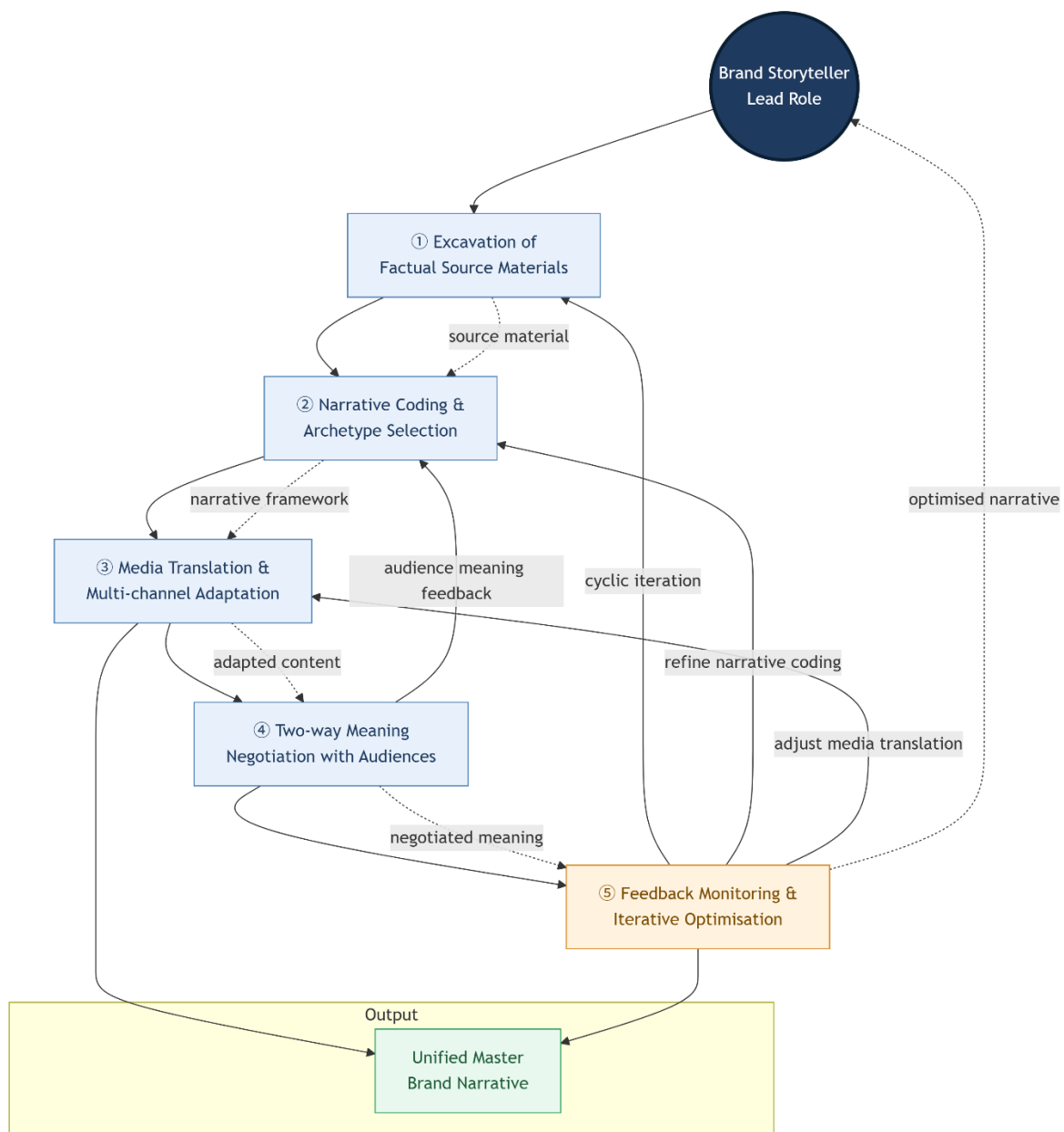


Figure 2. Flowchart of brand-narrative production workflow led by Brand Storytellers.

Facts constitute the bedrock of valid brand narratives. Narratives detached from corporate realities rapidly lose public credibility. Brand Storytellers first mine internal primary materials, drawing factual resources from corporate developmental trajectories, manufacturing practices and employee experiences. Source-material emphases vary across sectors. Manufacturing enterprises centre on technological breakthroughs, craftsman dedication and craft evolution to highlight technical and production logics.

Consumer brands prioritise founding anecdotes and user-experience narratives to establish human-product value connections that resonate deeply with target audiences and foster long-term emotional bonds between customers and merchandise. Material excavation rejects fabricated plots and verifiable corporate experiences underpin authentic story foundations, ensuring brand storytelling remains grounded in real events rather than artificially constructed marketing tales.

Building upon authentic source materials, brand-narrative professionals perform narrative coding by organising disjointed materials into readable story formats. Effective brand narratives transmit core connotations through tangible characters and plots instead of empty slogans. Four prevalent narrative archetypes appear in corporate practice: origin narratives revisit brand-birth contexts and consolidate founding missions; craft narratives showcase technical details and philosophical ideals behind production processes.

Social-responsibility narratives document corporate endeavours in philanthropy and environmental protection; user-co-creation narratives integrate audience feedback to enrich brand connotations. All narrative categories orbit unified brand-value cores and form integrated narrative ecosystems.

Once core narratives are finalised, Brand Storytellers execute media translation for diverse communication contexts. While preserving central brand themes intact, expressive forms must adapt to channel-specific traits.

Short-video platforms, official articles, exhibition installations, media interviews and overseas communication vehicles possess distinct media logics and cannot share identical textual outputs.

Within short-video ecosystems, narrative emphasis falls on visualised plots; exhibition materials combine physical exhibits with storytelling; cross-cultural communication respects local-audience reception habits. The overarching principle remains “one core narrative, diversified expressive implementations”.

Brand narrative is not one-sided corporate indoctrination but interactive meaning-making between organisations and audiences. Brand narrative integrates internal corporate visions, cultures, products, technologies, institutions and employee behaviours with external user realities, public identities, participant engagement and grassroots creativity, collectively constructing shared brand-story worlds.

Audiences interpret brand stories through personalised cognitive frameworks and lived experiences; public readings may deviate from corporate preset intentions. Sophisticated brand narratives reserve space for empathetic reception and minimise coercive persuasive stances. They encourage audiences to participate in meaning generation and transform corporate publicity from monologic corporate self-promotion into two-way communication capable of sparking resonance and sustained public-image perception.

Contradictions and practical predicaments of brand-narrative practice

Brand-narrative roles offer organisational instruments for story-driven corporate publicity. Nevertheless, real-world operations are constrained by commercial imperatives, organisational architectures, communication environments and performance-evaluation mechanisms. Multiple frictions undermine corporate-image-construction effectiveness (in Figure 3).

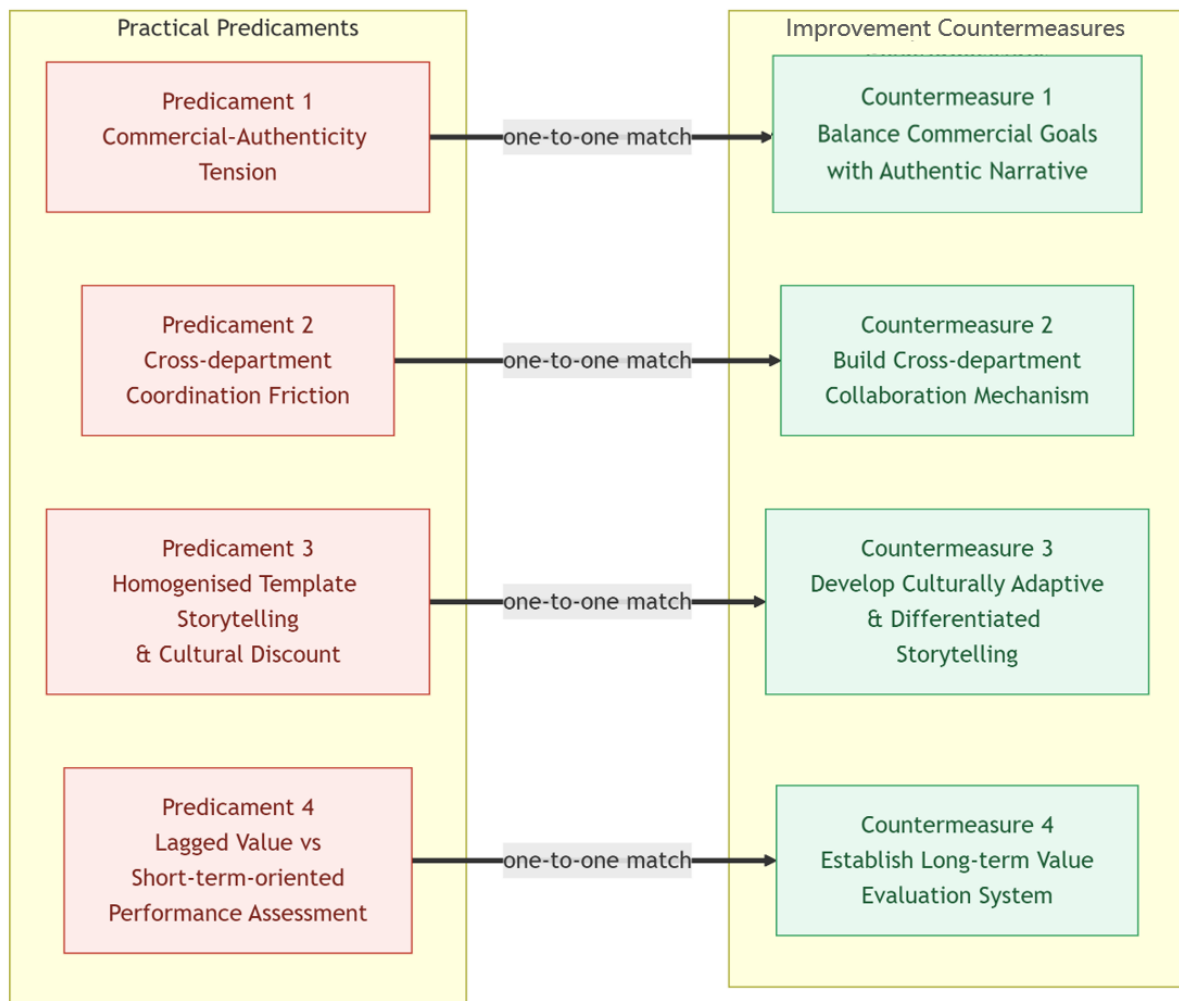


Figure 3. Analytical framework for contradiction and countermeasures of brand-narrative practice.

Brand narratives unfold within commercial contexts where enterprises face inherent revenue-growth and market-expansion demands. Tensions persist between commercial requirements and factual boundaries. A compelling brand story functions not merely as a marketing instrument but as an emotional contract linking brands and consumers. Pressures to deliver performance outcomes may tempt enterprises toward selective beautification and over-embellishment: Amplifying partial merits while downplaying objective limitations. Persuasive power for brand stories hinges on factual grounding. When narratives diverge substantially from actual corporate production, service quality or governance conditions, audiences readily detect

misrepresentation, triggering trust crises and damaging long-standing corporate reputations.

Brand narrative demands continuity and stability for core storylines. However, corporate departments operate in parallel with heterogeneous objective orientations. Sales and new-media teams prioritise short-term conversion metrics. Promotional campaigns and trend-chasing marketing frequently conflict with long-run narrative consistency. As newly-established positions, many Brand Storytellers face ambiguous authority boundaries and insufficient organisational clout. They struggle to constrain fragmented content outputs originating from separate departments. High cross-department coordination costs result in inconsistent messaging

across touchpoints and diluted core brand narratives.

Template-driven storytelling represents another widespread domestic pitfall. Numerous enterprises mechanically adopt ready-made narrative tropes such as “craftsman dedication” or “unwavering original aspiration”. Superficial source-material excavation fails to generate distinctive narrative cores rooted in industrial heritage, technical features or organisational identities, culminating in audience fatigue.

For overseas outreach, locally-rooted brand narratives encounter cultural discount phenomena. Symbols and value constructs embedded in native socio-cultural contexts resist seamless cross-cultural translation, leading to simplification or misinterpretation among foreign audiences.

Brand-narrative value manifests indirectly and with time lags by nurturing long-term audience identification and accumulating intangible brand assets. Yet prevailing corporate-communication assessment frameworks rely heavily on short-term quantitative metrics including view counts, click-through rates and conversion volumes. Such indicators cannot adequately capture deep-level outcomes such as shifts in public trust, brand favourability or value recognition. Deficient evaluation methodologies push enterprises back toward traffic-first mindsets. Investment space for in-depth brand-narrative exploration shrinks, eroding strategic significance for Brand Storytellers roles.

Advancing corporate-publicity narrative upgrading through role building

Creating Brand Storytellers’ positions furnishes organisational foundations for corporate publicity to transition from traffic orientation toward value-driven storytelling. Systematic adjustments covering organizational architecture, content production, communication rhythms and performance evaluation are required to realise narrative upgrading.

Enterprises ought to clarify authority and responsibility

boundaries for Brand Storytellers and build cross-department narrative-review coordination mechanisms. Brand-narrative work should be embedded within long-term brand-strategy planning rather than treated as ad-hoc marketing tasks. Brand Storytellers must collaborate with marketing, legal, production and public-relations functions to unify corporate external-narration standards, prevent discursive conflicts across business divisions and secure stable organisational resources to implement brand-story initiatives.

On the content front, narrative creation must anchor authentic corporate primary facts and develop verifiable core narrative frameworks. Authenticity underpins brand narrative. Enterprises should reject artificial story-fabrication disconnected from organisational realities. Source materials ought to derive from tangible corporate technological accumulations, product attributes, developmental histories and front-line -employee experiences. Brand values are distilled from real-world evidence to reduce floating, fictionalised rhetorical expressions, mitigate public scepticism toward corporate communications and consolidate narrative credibility. When stories embody intrinsic brand value, consumers evolve into resonators, participants and co-producers of narratives.

Enterprises must differentiate enduring core narratives from time-bound marketing content and safeguard narrative continuity. Long-term core narratives embody corporate philosophies and brand temperaments, serving as persistent throughlines for all publicity outputs. Promotional activities and festival marketing belong to periodic messaging. Brand Storytellers coordinate content hierarchies to prevent short-term marketing rhetoric from diluting long-run brand themes, ensuring unified corporate-image perceptions across diverse communication scenarios.

Multi-dimensional evaluation frameworks covering brand cognition, public trust and value identification should be constructed to prioritise long-term brand-asset accumulation. Conventional publicity assessments

overemphasise short-term exposure and conversion data and overlook deeper narrative-driven impacts. Updated evaluation systems measure baseline brand awareness alongside fluctuations in audience trust and value recognition. Balancing immediate communication outputs and long-term brand-asset cultivation refocuses brand-narrative practice on its fundamental objective: corporate-image construction.

Conclusion

Credible brand-story construction forms the core of excellent corporate publicity. As emerging organisational actors tasked with narrative planning and cross-channel delivery, Brand Storytellers coordinate narrative production and synchronise multi-stakeholder communication.

Brand-story production follows dynamic workflows: source-material excavation, framework formulation, media-specific adaptation and multi-faceted audience interpretation. Distinct from one-way indoctrinating advertising, brand narrative prioritises audience perception and participatory engagement. This study identifies intrinsic tensions within brand-narrative practice: Conflicts between short-run commercial-marketing imperatives and authenticity-driven long-term brand-value shaping constrain communication efficacy and risk eroding public trust.

This paper draws primarily upon public reports, corporate documents and existing academic literature for case analysis. Although this study clarifies case-selection criteria and publishes basic case profiles in Table 1, all empirical materials remain secondary public sources. In-depth field interviews with front-line Brand Storytellers were not conducted; first-hand practitioner perspectives remain absent. Furthermore, case-study sample scope is limited. Heterogeneities in position setup, authority boundaries and operational patterns across enterprises of varying industries and scales have not received comprehensive comparative analysis. Hence, findings possess certain generalisability constraints.

Future research may adopt semi-structured field interviews to gather practitioner primary data. Cross-national comparative analysis of institutional arrangements for brand-narrative roles can be pursued. Additional scholarly attention should address adaptive brand-narrative strategies for Chinese-enterprise cross-border communication, enriching research on brand narrative and corporate international outreach.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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