



# When Brands Tell Stories: The Impact of Narrative Advertising on Youth Perception

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## ABSTRACT

Advertising has changed a lot over time. In the past, advertisements mostly focused on promoting a product and explaining its features. Today, brands try to make their ads more interesting and emotionally engaging so that people feel connected to them. One popular method used in modern advertising is storytelling. Through simple and relatable stories, brands share their message in a way that audiences can easily understand and remember. In the FMCG sector, brands like Surf Excel, Amul, and Dove often use emotional and meaningful stories in their advertisements to connect better with consumers. This study looks at how storytelling in FMCG advertisements affects the perception of young people in Mumbai. For this research, a quantitative method was used, and data were collected from 120 respondents between the ages of 18 and 35 through an online questionnaire. The results show that storytelling makes advertisements more engaging and easier to remember. Many respondents felt that ads with emotional stories and relatable characters are more interesting than traditional ads that only talk about the product, and they also help create a more positive image of the brand.

Keywords: Storytelling, FMCG Advertising, Youth Perception, Consumer Behaviour, Appeals, Advertising Narratives.

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Advertising today plays a major role in how brands communicate with their consumers. In a competitive market where many products offer similar features, companies constantly search for creative ways to attract attention and leave a lasting impression on audiences. Earlier, advertisements mainly focused on highlighting product qualities, price, and practical benefits. However, as media platforms have grown and consumer expectations have changed, advertising has become more creative and emotionally driven. One approach that has gained strong importance in recent years is storytelling. Instead of directly promoting a product, storytelling advertisements present small narratives that include characters, emotions, and everyday situations that viewers can easily relate to. These stories make advertisements feel more natural and engaging, allowing audiences to connect with the brand on a deeper emotional level. Research in advertising has also shown that people tend to remember stories and emotional experiences much better than simple promotional messages.

The Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector has widely adopted storytelling as a powerful communication strategy. FMCG products include everyday items such as packaged foods, beverages, personal care products, and household goods that people purchase frequently. In India, several well-known brands, including Surf Excel, Amul, Tata Tea, and Dove, have successfully used storytelling in their advertising campaigns, focusing on themes such as family relationships, social values, kindness, and everyday life. These themes make the advertisements more relatable and emotionally appealing to viewers. Young consumers, especially those living in cities like Mumbai, are constantly exposed to advertisements through television, social media, and various digital platforms. Their reactions to these advertisements can strongly influence brand perception and purchasing behaviour. Therefore, this study aims to examine how storytelling in Indian FMCG advertising influences engagement, emotional connection, and brand perception among young audiences in Mumbai using a quantitative survey.

### 1.1 What is Advertising?

Advertising is an important way through which businesses communicate with their customers. It is a form of marketing used to promote products, services, or ideas and to make people aware of different brands. Through advertising, companies try to deliver messages that can inform people about a product, influence their opinions, and remind them about the brand whenever they think about buying something. Advertisements can be seen on many different platforms such as television, newspapers, radio, social media, billboards, and various digital channels. These platforms help brands reach a large number of people and capture their attention. The main purpose of advertising is to create awareness about a brand and encourage consumers to try or purchase the product.

In highly competitive industries like FMCG, advertising becomes even more important. Many brands offer similar types of products, so companies use creative advertising strategies to stand out in the market. Effective advertisements help shape how consumers think about a brand and build a stronger connection between the company and its audience.

## 1.2 What is storytelling in advertising?

Storytelling in advertising is a creative way for brands to communicate with their audience. Instead of only talking about product features or benefits, companies present their message through a short story or situation that people can easily understand and relate to. These stories may include characters, emotions, everyday experiences, or social messages that reflect real life. By doing this, the advertisement feels more natural and meaningful rather than just a direct sales message. When advertisements use storytelling, they focus more on creating an emotional connection with the audience. Viewers often remember a story better than a simple promotional message because it makes them feel something whether it is happiness, nostalgia, or empathy. This emotional engagement helps the audience connect with the brand on a deeper level and makes the advertisement more memorable. Many well-known brands such as Surf Excel and Dove have successfully used storytelling in their campaigns. Their advertisements often highlight themes like family relationships, kindness, self-confidence, and everyday life moments. These types of stories make the advertisements more relatable, especially for younger viewers who prefer meaningful and engaging content. As a result, storytelling not only captures attention but also helps strengthen brand image and improves how consumers remember and perceive the brand.

## 1.3 What are FMCG Ads?

Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) are products that people use in their everyday lives and therefore buy very frequently. These items are usually available at affordable prices and are sold quickly in large quantities. FMCG products include things like food and beverages, personal care products, household cleaning items, and other packaged goods that are part of daily routines. Popular brands such as Amul, Surf Excel, and Dove are common examples that many consumers use regularly. Because these products are used almost every day, they need to be replaced or repurchased often, which results in a high sales turnover in the FMCG market. The industry is also highly competitive, with many brands offering similar products. To stand out in such a crowded market, companies focus strongly on advertising and branding. Many FMCG brands now use creative techniques like storytelling in their advertisements to connect emotionally with consumers and make their brand more memorable. This approach helps companies attract attention, build trust, and create a strong identity in the minds of customers.

## 1.4 What are Global Ads and storytelling in global ads?

Global FMCG advertisements are marketing campaigns created by large consumer goods companies that sell their products in many countries. These advertisements are designed to reach people from different parts of the world while keeping the brand message consistent. Since audiences come from different cultures and backgrounds, these ads often focus on simple and universal ideas such as happiness, family life, health, confidence, and everyday experiences that people everywhere can easily understand and relate to. Well-known international companies like Coca-Cola, Unilever, Procter & Gamble, and Nestlé regularly run advertising campaigns across different countries. These advertisements appear on television, digital platforms, social media, and outdoor media so they can reach a large audience. While the central idea of the campaign usually stays the same, brands may change certain things like language, visuals, or cultural references so that the advertisement feels more familiar to people in each region.

Storytelling is widely used in global FMCG advertising to make campaigns more engaging. Instead of simply highlighting product features, brands often present their message through small stories that reflect real-life situations. These stories may include relatable characters, emotions, and everyday moments that help viewers connect with the message. Many global brands, including Coca-Cola and Dove, have used storytelling to talk about themes like friendship, confidence, and human connection. Such stories make advertisements more memorable and help brands build stronger relationships with consumers around the world.

## 1.5 Indian FMCG

In India, storytelling has always been an important part of communication and cultural expression. From ancient folklore and traditional stories to films and television, narratives have played a significant role in how messages are shared and understood. Because of this strong storytelling tradition, Indian audiences naturally connect with advertisements featuring emotional, relatable narratives. Indian FMCG advertisements often reflect everyday situations people experience. Many advertisements focus on family relationships, festivals, childhood memories, and social values. For example, an advertisement may show a family preparing for a festival or siblings sharing a special moment. In such cases, the product becomes a part of the story rather than the main focus. This approach helps the advertisement feel more genuine and relatable.

## 1.6 Appeals

Another important aspect of advertising is the use of appeals. Advertising appeals are the strategies used to attract consumer attention and persuade them to purchase a product. Different types of appeals are used depending on the advertisement's objective and target audience. Emotional appeals focus on feelings such as love, care, happiness, nostalgia, and warmth. Rational appeals highlight the product's practical benefits, such as quality, effectiveness, or value for money. Humour appeals aim to entertain the audience and make the advertisement enjoyable, while social appeals emphasise relationships, social responsibility, or cultural values.

Storytelling plays a significant role in strengthening these advertising appeals. Through stories, brands can combine emotional and rational messages. For example, an advertisement may show a touching family moment while also demonstrating how a product contributes to that experience. This makes the advertisement more appealing and helps the audience remember both the story and the product.

In recent years, the growth of digital media has further increased the importance of storytelling in advertising. Platforms such as social media, video-sharing websites, and online streaming services have changed the way people consume content. Audiences today are exposed to a large number of advertisements, which makes it more difficult for brands to capture their attention. Storytelling helps advertisements stand out by offering meaningful and engaging content rather than simple promotional messages. Advertisements that include strong storytelling elements are also more likely to be shared on digital platforms. People often share advertisements that make them laugh, feel emotional, or inspire them. This sharing behaviour increases the advertisement's reach and helps the brand gain greater visibility. As a

result, storytelling has become an essential part of modern advertising strategies for FMCG companies worldwide.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Storytelling has become an important part of modern advertising because it helps brands connect with people on an emotional level. Instead of simply promoting a product, advertisements today often present small stories that reflect real-life feelings and experiences. According to K. S. Chandra, advertisement become powerful when they combine universal human emotions such as love, fear, and the desire to belong with cultural symbols that audiences already understand. When emotions and culture are blended in a natural way, the advertisement feels more personal and meaningful. This idea is especially useful when studying Indian FMCG advertising, where emotional storytelling can influence how young consumers think about brands, particularly in large cities like Mumbai. A study by M. Dave, R. Makwana, K. Dua, and K. Srimali (2025) also examines how storytelling and emotional branding influence consumer purchase behaviour in the Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) and FMCG sectors. Using an exploratory research approach, the researchers found that advertisements built around emotions and stories often encourage people to buy products. Their findings show that this effect is slightly stronger in the QSR sector, but storytelling still plays an important role in shaping consumer attitudes toward FMCG brands as well. Another study by N. Tripathi, S. Pal, and S. Agarwal (2025) looks at how Indian television advertisements combine product promotion with emotional family stories. Through semiotic analysis, the researchers found that advertisements often use family relationships and everyday situations to create emotional responses among viewers. These storytelling techniques make the advertisement feel more relatable and can influence how consumers respond to the brand. This is especially common in Indian FMCG advertising, where themes like family bonding and daily life are frequently used. Earlier research by B. Jit Singh Mann and M. Kaur (2013) studied branding strategies in the FMCG, service, and durable goods sectors in India. Their work highlights how companies often rely on corporate-backed individual brands to build trust among consumers. When strong brand identity is combined with engaging advertising stories, it can reduce uncertainty and increase consumer confidence in the product. This connection between branding and storytelling helps explain how FMCG advertisements influence the perception of young consumers. Similarly, research by A. Akanksha and P. Kalita (2025) discusses how advertising stories shape social understanding through representation and narrative framing. Their study highlights the growing importance of inclusive and culturally sensitive storytelling in advertising. According to the authors, narrative-driven advertisements can influence how audiences interpret social values, identities, and brand messages. In the context of Indian FMCG advertising, such storytelling methods play a key role in shaping youth perception and strengthening the overall impact of advertising messages.

## CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN

### 3.1 Hypothesis:

**H1:** Storytelling in Indian FMCG advertisements significantly influences youth perception in Mumbai.

**H0:** Storytelling in Indian FMCG advertisements has no significant influence on youth perception in Mumbai.

### 3.2 AIM and Objectives

**3.2.1** To explore the influence of storytelling in Indian FMCG advertisements on the perception of youth in Mumbai during 2025–26.

#### 3.2.2 Objectives

1. To identify key storytelling elements used in Indian FMCG advertisements.
2. To examine how emotional and cultural narratives affect youth perception.
3. To analyse the impact of storytelling on brand recall and brand association among youth.
4. To understand whether storytelling influences purchase intention and brand preference.
5. To explore youth attitudes towards narrative-driven versus product-focused advertisements.

### 3.3 Limitations

1. The study is limited to youth in Mumbai and may not represent perceptions across India.
2. The sample size is relatively small due to academic constraints.
3. Responses are self-reported and may be subject to bias.
4. The study focuses only on FMCG advertisements and excludes other sectors.
5. The rapidly changing media landscape may affect long-term relevance.

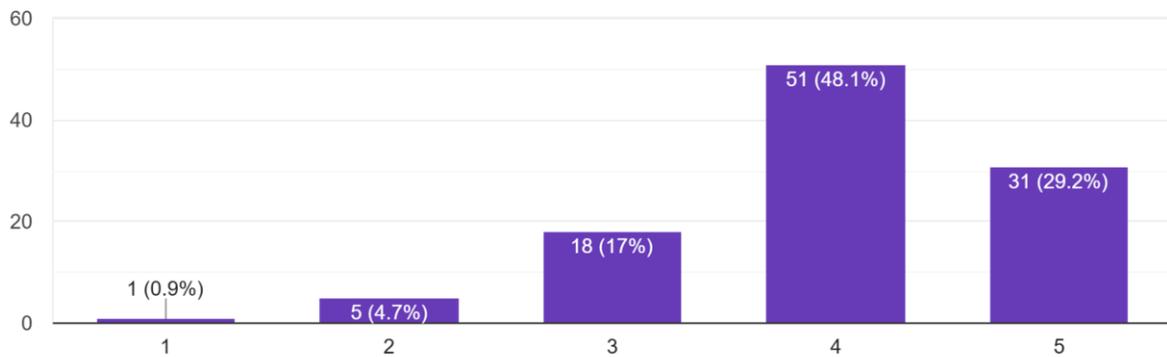
## CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS

The study gathered responses from 106 participants through an online questionnaire. The aim was to understand how often people encounter FMCG advertisements and what they think about the use of storytelling in them. Most respondents said they usually see FMCG advertisements on social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. This shows that digital media has become the primary channel through which young audiences notice advertisements today. When asked about storytelling, many participants felt that story-driven advertisements were more interesting and enjoyable to watch. They believe that storytelling keeps their attention and makes the advertisement feel less like a promotion and more like a short experience.

Out of 120 respondents, most participants had a positive opinion about storytelling in advertisements. About 48.1% agreed and 29.2% strongly agreed that storytelling-based ads make them more likely to try an FMCG product. Meanwhile, 17% remained neutral, suggesting a moderate influence, and only a very small number disagreed. Overall, the responses show that storytelling in advertisements generally has a strong impact on the purchase interest of young consumers.

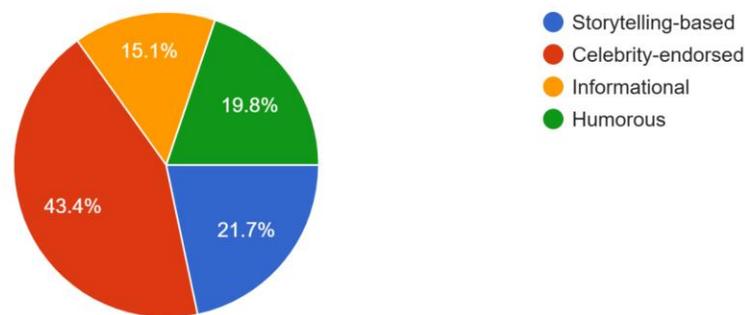
10. I am more likely to try an FMCG product after watching a storytelling-based advertisement.

106 responses



11. Which type of FMCG advertisement influences you the most?

106 responses



Out of 106 respondents, the largest group (43.4%) said that celebrity-endorsed advertisements influence them the most, showing that familiar faces and popular personalities attract more attention in FMCG advertising. Around 21.7% of the respondents preferred storytelling-based advertisements, while 19.8% said humorous advertisements influence them more. In comparison, only 15.1% were influenced by informational advertisements, suggesting that most young consumers are drawn more towards creative, entertaining, and personality-driven advertisements rather than ads that only focus on product information.

## CHAPTER V: FINDINGS

The key findings of the study include:

1. Most young people today come across FMCG advertisements mainly on digital platforms like social media and online videos.
2. Advertisements that tell a story usually grab more attention and keep viewers interested compared to ads that only focus on showing the product.
3. Stories that include emotions and characters that feel real or relatable tend to make a stronger impact on the audience.

4. Through storytelling, brands are also able to share cultural values and social messages in a way that feels natural and easy to understand.
5. When advertisements include a story, people are more likely to remember the brand because the message stays in their mind for a longer time.
6. Even though storytelling makes the advertisement interesting, it does not always mean people will buy the product immediately, as purchasing decisions depend on other factors too.
7. This study found that storytelling helps create a stronger emotional connection between consumers and the brand
8. This study shows that digital media has become one of the main ways brands reach the youth.
9. Emotional and relatable real-life situations were found to be the most effective storytelling elements in FMCG advertisements.
10. Storytelling encourages consumers to remember and connect consumers with the brand.

## **CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study support previous research that emphasises the importance of storytelling in advertising communication. Consistent with P. Sharma's (2025) research, storytelling significantly enhanced audience engagement and message comprehension.

The importance of emotional narratives identified in the survey results also aligns with K. S. Chandra's observation that advertisements resonate more effectively when they incorporate universal emotions and culturally familiar themes.

Furthermore, the study confirms the findings of M. Dave and colleagues, who reported that emotional storytelling positively influences consumer attitudes toward brands.

The results also highlight the significance of cultural storytelling in Indian advertising, supporting the analysis by N. Tripathi and co-authors regarding the role of family relationships and social narratives in shaping consumer perception.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that storytelling is a powerful communication strategy that strengthens brand engagement and enhances youth perceptions of FMCG advertisements.

## **CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION**

This research explored how storytelling in Indian FMCG advertisements influences the perception of young audiences in Mumbai. The study shows that storytelling has become an important approach in today's advertising environment, especially in the FMCG sector. Instead of simply highlighting product features, many brands now focus on telling stories that include emotions, everyday situations, and characters that people can easily relate to. This makes advertisements feel more natural and meaningful for viewers.

The survey results also show that young people are regularly exposed to FMCG advertisements, mainly through digital platforms and social media. Most respondents felt that advertisements that tell a story are more interesting and easier to remember than advertisements that only provide product information. Elements such as emotional moments, real-life situations, and family-related themes were found to have a strong impact on how audiences understand and remember advertisements. Another important finding of the study is that storytelling helps create a stronger emotional bond between consumers and brands. When advertisements reflect situations that people experience in their daily lives or show cultural values that they recognize, audiences are more likely to connect with the message. Well-known brands such as Surf Excel, Amul, and Dove have used storytelling in many of their campaigns to build a positive image and create emotional engagement with consumers. At the same time, the research also shows that while storytelling improves brand recall and makes advertisements more engaging, it does not always lead directly to purchase decisions. In the FMCG market, consumers often consider practical factors such as price, product availability, and everyday necessity before making a purchase.

In conclusion, the study suggests that storytelling plays an important role in shaping how young people perceive FMCG advertisements. Advertisements that include strong narratives are more likely to attract attention and stay in the minds of audiences. As digital media continues to grow and advertising becomes more competitive, storytelling will remain a valuable tool for FMCG brands to communicate their messages effectively and build lasting connections with young consumers.

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