EFFECT OF A BRAND STORY STRUCTURE ON PERCEIVED BRAND IMAGE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF IMMERSION IN A BRAND STORY OF A LUXURY HOTEL

by

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To my son, Ethan Jaewon Chung, I love you so,

You are so special, I hope you know.
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ABSTRACT

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Creating a more positive brand image in the competitive luxury hotel industry is an important goal for managers of such hotel brands. However, there are some skeptics as to the effectiveness of branding strategies of luxury hotels in developing a positive brand image for consumers. It has been suggested that consumers can be easily confused by the plethora of brand choices in the luxury hotel, making it difficult to remember a specific brand value differentiated from other choices. Based on psychographic research of luxury hotel consumers, these consumers have a tendency to prefer hedonic benefits stimulating emotional and symbolic benefits over functional benefits. However, current practices of luxury hotel branding are focused more on offering functional benefits, such as investments in upgrading facilities to compete with rivals. The present study explored previous research on branding based on compelling brand story, which has the potential to stimulate emotional and symbolic benefits of consumers and empirically tested effects of brand story structure on perceived brand image. Furthermore, this research measured the mediating effect of immersion in a brand story on the relationship between brand story structure and perceived brand image. To test the impact of brand story on brand image effectively, this study invented a fictitious brand and corresponding story in order to limit consumers’ previous brand knowledge. After developing eight versions of stories manipulated with three elements of brand story structure (2x2x2), this study conducted a survey, with the help of a survey research firm, for targets who had experienced staying at one of five luxury hotels in the past year. Based on the significant results of brand story structure affecting perceived brand image and narrative immersion, this study suggested that a compelling brand story with a good structure has the potential to enhance positive perceived brand image, mediated by narrative immersion. This research contributes to the theoretical field
of luxury hospitality in that it highlights the importance of brand storytelling and immersion into a brand story, as no previous research focused on this issue. Also, this research provides practical implications to develop and manage a compelling brand story, including ways for general managers to utilize brand story structure to convey their distinctive brand values and enhance consumers’ positive perceptions of the brand image.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. General Background

Many luxury hotels have focused on branding strategies to gain competitive advantage among the increased brand choices (Olsen et al., 1998). This trend has led to many hotels relying on capital investments through increased physical presence and personalized service (Bailey & Ball, 2006). Nevertheless, it has been argued that consumers experience confusion among the plethora of hotel brands and branding strategies (Gibson, 2003; So et al., 2013). Many luxury hotel brands have managed branding from a products perspective by increasing the functional benefits of their product or service, such as enhancing physical presence of the hotel facilities (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009). For consumers, increased quality of hotel facilities, including the building itself, lobbies, and guest rooms, may bring them satisfaction during their stay, but enhancing brand differentiation may not be effective overall because hotels can easily imitate the physical changes of their rivals.

This research explored a brand storytelling approach that may deliver the symbolic and emotional benefits of a well-structured brand story to hedonic consumers. Mossberg (2012) suggests that successful hotel brand management is based primarily on brand storytelling to satisfy hedonic consumers’ brand experience. Additionally, well-known cult brands, like Apple, Starbucks, or Harley-Davidson, among others, have well-constructed stories, instantly increasing brand meaning in consumers who visit their stores by stimulating their subconscious memory about the brand (Kitabayashi, 2004). Luxury hotel consumers evaluate services more favorably when advertising describes authentic brand elements in a narrative form versus when it describes only functional attributes through logical reasoning (Padgett & Allen, 1997). This storytelling strategy is powerful and advantageous, as luxury hotels need to communicate symbolic and functional benefits to potential guests (Chen & Rothschild, 2010).

However, brand stories have not been fully utilized by many luxury hotel brands. Although many luxury hotels have brand stories on their official websites, the stories are not narrated proficiently or organized effectively (Ryu et al., 2017). Consumers may hardly
be immersed in the story due to a lack of persuasion and causality (Velleman, 2003). Outside the hotel industry, strong brands apply brand storytelling to communicate with consumers and induce emotional connections between consumers and brands (Ragas and Bueno, 2002). Many successful brands have well-structured brand stories to boost the audience’s acceptance and further immersion in brand stories. However, based on the current practices of luxury hotels, only 16% of brands have well-structured stories with all three structural elements of a brand story (Ryu et al., 2017). This empirical research on the effects of brand story structure (plot, historical connection, and narrative voice) on perceived brand image can provide practical implications by identifying elements that effectively induce immersion in the brand story. Much has been researched about the power of storytelling, but a limited number of empirical studies have been conducted.

The structure of a brand story can influence the extent of consumers’ immersion in the story. Not surprisingly, well-written and well-structured stories are more likely to transport readers into the narrative world. According to the narrative transportation theory, immersion in a story is measured by the level of transportation (Escalas, 2004). Considering bestsellers, well-structured stories are rated as more effective at transporting compared to stories containing fewer structural elements (Wang & Calder, 2006). Green and Brock (2000) state that low level of chronological order has been shown to disrupt immersion. In contrast, clear plot in a brand story easily induces consumers’ positive responses and beliefs in the brand (Escalas, 2004a); this is because the brain’s processing of a clear story plot mirrors general information processing method (Deighton et al., 1989).

Therefore, individuals’ immersion in a story, in addition to facilitating identification, may increase positive perceived brand image (Escals, 2004b). In previous research on narrative immersion, immersion included strong affective responses and reduced critical thought, which in turn induced favorable brand attitudes and brand evaluations (Escalas, 2006). Therefore, the influence of a well-structured brand narrative on perceived brand image is of substantial value to research because brand image is an important factor necessary to “maintain a relatively high score rating among loyal consumers” (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). Because immersion may enhance brand image, it is important to explore factors that influence individuals’ transportation into a narrative and how that transportation enhances their perceived brand image.
The study reported here focused on two questions. The first was whether emplotment, historical connection, and a first-person narrator in brand story structure would increase individuals’ tendency to become immersed in a narrative and have positive perceived brand image. The second question was whether narrative immersion would increase perceived brand image, and if so, whether narrative immersion mediates between elements of brand story structure and the perceived brand image. To test the brand story structure hypothesis, this research attempted to manipulate an invented story by creating eight versions of the story with varying degrees of clarity of plot, historical connection, and narrative voice.

1.2. Statement of Problem

Poor storytelling can cost companies a great deal of money invested in enhancing their brands’ physical appearances and in promoting the delivery of favorable brand images that would be differentiated from those of their competitors. However, by focusing on branding with a well-structured story, brands can build a long-term meaning, which stimulates consumers’ subconscious memory. The focus on brand storytelling can operate like an amplifier of branding efforts. With a well-structured story, a servicescape can be created as a themed stage based on the story (Mossberg, 2008). This is important to luxury hotel consumers having hedonic characteristics of “experience, entertainment, exhibitionism and evangelizing,” which are subjective and experiential (Holbrook, 2000).

Many hotel researchers suggest that brand storytelling is an effective way to highlight a luxury hotel’s brand identity in their servicescape (Ågren & Ölund, 2007; Ferrari, 2015; Mossberg, 2008). This is because luxury hotel consumers tend to spend more time experiencing the servicescape, due to the long duration of their stays, than they do consuming goods (Mossberg, 2008). Luxury hotels have ample opportunity to attract their guests to live in the fantasies of their brand story, which is what guests want from their luxury experience (Wu & Liang, 2009). Even though consumers of luxury hotels need high levels of aspiration and pleasure from their hedonic experiences compared to in the consumer-goods industry, luxury hotels have concentrated more investments in physical attributes of hotel facilities, similar to frequently used brand differentiation strategy in the product industry (Haktanir & Harris, 2005). However, functional attributes are easy to
follow from its rivals (Veríssimo & Loureiro, 2013). Also, memories of good functional attributes are prolonged shorter than memories of good symbolic and emotional benefits (Veríssimo & Loureiro, 2013). Therefore, luxury hotels need to consider brand storytelling to enhance aspiration and pleasure from symbolic, emotional, and experiential benefits (Huang, 2012).

A compelling brand story with a well-organized structure is important to enhance the power of brand storytelling (Kent, 2015; Mossberg, 2008; Woodside et al., 2008). However, Ryu et al. (2017) showed that the problem is more than half (57.7%) of the 118 five-star hotels were not utilizing brand stories in their official websites. Even though all the brands have their own stories, such as those about their origins and their founders, many brands listed fragments of historical events on their websites without a narrative plot of their brand stories (Ryu et al., 2017). This research analyzed three elements of a compelling brand story based on Stern’s (1995) criteria. The structural elements (Kent, 2015; Stern, 1995) of a clear plot, historical connections, and a first-person narrator were not always presented in the stories of the analyzed luxury brands. The most important element, specifically having a clear plot, was found in 26 brands (26.3%) among 118 brands. Of the luxury hotels that had brand stories on their websites, only 16% had well-structured stories with a clear plot, historical connections, and a narrator (Ryu et al., 2017). Most sampled hotels contained only one or two elements from Stern’s criteria (Ryu et al., 2017). This research shows that many luxury hotels are not utilizing brand storytelling efficiently and have not developed a well-structured brand story.

Although studies have examined the power of storytelling, empirical studies on brand storytelling and brand story structure in luxury hotel settings are non-existent. The lack of empirical studies on the effects of brand stories on consumers’ perceptions in luxury hotels should not be interpreted as a lack of managerial interest in a brand story (Lundqvist et al., 2013). Therefore, the present study will examine how structural elements of a compelling brand story impact perceived brand image and have a mediating effect on immersion in the story. Additionally, this research investigates what element is the most effective to lead immersion in a brand story.
1.3 Research Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of brand story structure on perceived brand image in the luxury hotel setting and the mediating effect of immersion on a brand story. Much literature has been conducted on perceived brand image in luxury hotels (Baloglu & Pekcan, 2006; Kim & Kim, 2005; Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009; Mazanec, 1995). However, only few studies have examined the brand storytelling in the luxury hotels. Furthermore, to our knowledge, this is the only study to look at the effect of brand story structure on immersion in a brand story and on perceived brand image within the realm of luxury hotels. Therefore, the research objectives of this study are:

• To empirically investigate the influence of the variation of plot, historical connection, and narrators of the brand story on consumers’ perceived brand image and immersion in a story;
• To examine the mediating effect of narrative immersion on the relationship between each element of brand story and perceived brand image.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is the first attempt to understand the effect of brand story structure and the mediating effect of story transportation on perceived brand image in luxury hotel brands. It is unique in that it looks specifically at brand story elements, which may affect brand beliefs. It adds to the literature on brand story structure by examining its effects on immersion in a brand and perceived brand image. It also contributes to the field of luxury hospitality in that it highlights the importance of brand storytelling and immersion in a brand story, as no research has focused on this issue. In addition, it enhances research within the luxury hotel segment, as fewer studies exist compared to other segments.

Brands with a persuasive, well-structured story may perform their managerial and commercial branding better than brands with a poorly structured brand story (Yoo, 2009). In addition, a well-structured story of a luxury hotel brand is more likely to be remembered by consumers than a poorly structured one (Batey, 2015). A well-made brand story can entertain and convince consumers with the fantasy created by the brand story (Matzler et
al., 2007). For example, a study found that high levels of immersion in a story were related to low negative responses to the contents of the story (Green & Block, 2000). A prior study has found a compelling brand story with clear plot, historical connections, and clear character of brand persona ensures immersion in a story (Huang, 2011). Given that the luxury hotel industry focuses on delivering memorable brand experience, this finding is critical.

Understanding how story-based messages affect consumers’ cognitive processes and how consumers respond to such messages will reduce many managerial concerns about a luxury hotel brand. Managers can structure their brand stories to build a compelling brand image. To amass more loyal guests than do other brands, applying the compelling brand story to a thematic servicescape can help provide entertainment and a convincing experience via the brand story (Mossberg, 2008). Through these staged experiences, consumers draw the brands and services into their fantasies (Wu & Liang, 2009). These practical applications may help managers and marketers adjust their branding strategies to increase consumer loyalty. Additionally, luxury hotels can use brand story with compelling story structure to communicate their heritage as a brand storyteller (Kent, 2012). At a strategic comprehensive level, a brand story with a clear plot can entice consumers and employees with its brand essence and its philosophy based on a clear description of its origin, i.e., why the hotel exists and how the founders created its value (De Chernatony, 2010). At a marketing level, a well-structured brand story helps develop brand uniqueness using different historical events. At a personnel level, well-structured brand story can be help management and employees communicate the brand essence and brand vision. As a storyteller, if brands want to deliver the brand essence to guests, management and marketing executives can reassess their brand stories based on the components of a compelling brand story.

1.5. Organization of Study

The organization of this study proceeds in the following manner. Chapter one delivers the justification of the study. This chapter discusses the general background of the research, statement of the problem, the research purpose and objectives, and the significance of the research. Chapter two reviews literature related to luxury hotel brand,
brand stories in luxury hotels, brand story structure, immersion in a brand story, and perceived brand image. It outlines why luxury brands need to develop and manage structure of brand story to enhance perceived brand image through immersion in the story. The chapter also discusses the concept of story and how it relates to consumers’ cognitive processes. The narrative transportation theory is introduced as the background of the immersion concept and measurement of immersion in the story. The chapter concludes with development of the research hypotheses. Chapter three outlines the methodology employed to study how structural elements of luxury hotel brand story impact perceived brand image. Specifically, the design of the research, procedures, stimulus materials designed for the experiment, two parts of the pretest, main test with sampling, questionnaire design, and reliability assessment utilized are discussed. Chapter four discusses the results obtained from the data analysis. Finally, chapter five presents the discussion, conclusions, implications, limitations, and recommendation for future research.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Luxury Hotel Brands

Luxury hotels have consistently focused on branding strategies in order to gain a competitive advantage in the market (Olsen et al., 1998). Sangster et al. (2001) suggested that “the big hotel operators now almost universally accept that the right brands can give competitive advantage” (p.141). A variety of reasons have been cited in the literature for the growth of branding strategies within the luxury hotel industry. Success in luxury hotel brands depends on the ability to charge a price premium over rival hotels and convince customers the cost is worth paying. For brand owners, brand asset is helpful to expand their hotels into a variety of distributions, such as owner-operation, management contracting and franchising (Sangster et al., 2001). Additionally, brand loyalty is an ultimate goal of luxury hotels’ development of brand equity. Through the loyalty from consumers, brands can gain market share against their rivals and can in turn reduce marketing costs.

There are some doubters as to the effectiveness of banding strategies of luxury hotels. It has been argued that the plethora of luxury hotel brands may lead to consumers’ confusion and inability to remember a specific brand value differentiated from other choices (Gibson, 2003). According to Bailey and Ball (2006), the power of the brand may be overstated in the luxury hotel industry, because brand practices show that the consistency of branding strategy both within and between brands is poor. This implies that more effective and consistent branding strategies could improve a luxury hotel’s brand equity. Luxury hotel branding needs to be based on a compelling brand story that demonstrates and conveys differentiated brand essence compared to rivals to potential guests (Mossberg, 2008; Kent, 2015). Hotel brands should focus on maintaining consistency in the overall branding, from a compelling brand story to servicescape, to deliver thematic and entertaining experiences (Mossberg, 2008).

This study postulates that brands are important in helping luxury hotels satisfy their hedonic consumers. Thus, this paper discusses several definitions of the term “luxury hotel brand.” Much research of the luxury hotel brand has adapted generic brand definitions rather than proposing industry-specific definitions. According to Tarrant (2003), luxury
hotel brand is a “distinguishing name and/or symbol to identify a luxury hotel and to
differentiate its products or services from those of competitors” (p. 3). Tarrant’s definition
incorporates the roles of branding as a differentiator and as a risk reducer. Also, luxury
hotel brands are defined as attempts by luxury hotels to create and deliver new products to
the hedonic customer to differentiate it from the competition (Olsen, 1998).

2.2. Psychographic Characteristic of Luxury Hotel Consumers

According to Lu & Pras (2011), luxury hotel consumers can be explained via
psychographic variables better than only relying on sociodemographics. While
demographics explain “who” the consumer is, psychographics explain “why” they buy.
According to Walls et al. (2011), studies on psychographic characteristic of luxury hotel
consumers may provide practical implications for hotel executives looking for ways to
develop experience marketing strategy. The main psychological dimension of luxury hotel
consumers that emerge from literature is their hedonic characteristic (Joseph-Mathews et
al., 2009). They feel that using luxury hotel brands can elevate social status and other
people will look up to use them (Sondoh et al., 2007). Therefore, it is important that others
recognize the brand they are using (Walls et al., 2011).

A hedonic consumer is more likely to be sensitive to the environment and prefers
more information having many sensory cues (Joseph-Mathews et al., 2009). Therefore,
these consumers accept new story and idea depending on the varying levels of emotional
stimulations of each brand story (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Also, based on the
definition of luxury hotel brand, a luxury hotel brand needs to understand hedonic attributes
of its consumers to gain a competitive advantage among competitors. Compared to
product-related benefits highlighting functional and concrete attributes, hedonic attributes
of luxury hotel consumers are abstract and complex benefits (Lageat et al., 2003).
Therefore, a hedonic benefit is defined as a higher-level attribute that is connected to
consumer benefits (Lageat et al., 2003). For example, “cleanliness of room” is a functional
attribute of luxury hotel while “elegance” is a hedonic attribute (Snelders & Schoormans,
2004). According to Wakefield and Blodgett (1994), when consumers are hedonic, their
level of pleasure has a direct effect on their satisfaction with the brand experience. Thus,
many researchers consider the following three experiential aspects of luxury hotel
consumption: “fantasy, feelings and fun” (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Mossberg, 2008; Veríssimo & Loureiro, 2013). Recently, the three F’s (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982) experiential dimensions were extended to four E’s “experience, entertainment, exhibitionism and evangelizing” (Holbrook 2000). These works had in common an emphasis on highlighting and examining abstract and hedonic aspects of brand value.

However, the functional features of luxury hotels also need to be linked to abstract and hedonic attributes to increase memorable associations with the brand image (Hofstede et al., 1999). Even though consumer satisfaction with abstract and hedonic attributes is important to luxury hotel guests, most of the current luxury hotels focus more on and promote more physical attributes than hedonic benefits (Ryu, 2017). Nevertheless, thanks to “search” features, we know that luxury hotel guests want to know about concrete hotel features that are functional; before consumers stay at a luxury hotel, they want to know what they will experience so they evaluate brand value (Lageat et al., 2003). For this reason, brands often describe physical attributes in a straightforward way (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). The following section continues to explain why memorable hedonic and functional attributes are important in brand storytelling.

2.3. Brand Story

2.3.1. The Essence of Stories

Storytelling has been used in management and marketing and captures and maintains consumers’ attention much more than facts (Lundqvist et al., 2013). Telling stories can connect with the life of readers or create an emotional connection in various other ways (Woodside et al., 2008). The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that retrieving, reliving, or repeating stories by readers results in “proper pleasure”—a catharsis (Hiltunen, 2002). Holt (2003) and Jung (1959) described the catharsis that comes from an experience of one or more archetypal myths which were learned during the readers’ childhood. Archetypes make consumers achieve deep connection and sense making from subconsciousness (Butcher, 1961).

Because of the ubiquity of storytelling, the structure of a good story goes back tens of thousands of years and originates in Greek and Roman philosophy (Fisher, 1984). Oral traditions have developed a formula for a good story that effectively passes down religious
and cosmological beliefs through speeches and stories (Kent, 2015). Stories serve as a powerful and persuasive tool to leave brand associations with consumers. Schank (1999, p.12) suggested that “human memory is story-based” and “stories are especially interesting prior experiences, ones that we learn from.” The origins of what make people interact and connect are actually related to the subconscious of the human psyche (Wertime, 2002). Beyond the facilitation of communication that occurs on a conscious level, there is the process of subconscious connection in the minds of human being (Louchakova & Warner, 2003). In the depths of the human mind, the universal image of archetypes is inherent in the individual unconscious to help create personal aspirations (Ambos & Birkinshaw, 2010). Stories are linked with associations to archetypes that are inherent in the unconscious minds of all individuals (Jung, 2014).

The concept of archetypes comes from Carl Jung’s pioneering studies in the scientific domain of psychology (Jung, 1938; 2014). Prior to Jung, philosophers, chiefly Carus and von Hartmann, presented the concept of the unconscious portion of the mind. Jung added the notion of archetypes as “forms or images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the earth as constituents of myths” (Jung, 2014, p. 4). The notion of archetypes has profound relevancy as the foundation to understanding why people create strong human connections when they encounter a story (Knox, 2001). When readers encounter stories, instantaneous reactions are occurring on conscious and unconscious levels. According to Von Franz (2001), Jung argued that archetypes “are not only elementary ideas, but just as much elementary feelings, elementary fantasies, elementary visions” (p. 7). As human motivations often start beyond the conscious level of the human psyche, people connect with archetypal persona in the story and often seek excitement, fantasies and fun in the stories (Cawelti, 2014). Therefore, by examining the process of storytelling, companies and brands can glean some insights into how to harness archetypal power in the stories presented to consumers (Woodside et al., 2007).

2.3.2. Brand Story

Brands have used stories to create a brand culture internally and externally (Mossberg, 2008). Storytelling is associated with all elements and stakeholders of brands (Escalas, 2004). There have been studies of storytelling by various brand stakeholders.
Many storytelling studies have determined that the associations, netnography, and memorable incidents with a specific brand are related through stories via thematic interviews (Black & Kelley, 2009; Gabbott & Hogg, 1996; Hopkinson & Hogarth-Scott, 2001; Koll et al, 2010; Schembri et al, 2010). Communications studies have examined the role of narrative processing of storytelling in advertisements (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004; Escalas, 2004; Woodside & Megehee, 2009) and in consumer goods (Salzer-Mörling, 2004; Hsu et al., 2009). In this study, a brand story refers to a firm-originated story having a brand initiation that tends to be either purely conceptual or conceptual combined with case descriptions (Deighton, 1992; Mossberg & Johansen, 2006).

Even though empirical studies regarding the impact of brand stories on consumers’ perceptions are scarce, this should not be interpreted as a lack of managerial interest in a brand story (Lundqvist et al., 2013). Strong brands like Apple and Harley Davidson have brand values in their stories and engage consumers to experience the representations of the stories through their servicescapes (Baker and Boyle, 2009). Brand storytelling has the unique potential to go beyond information and resonate with consumers on a deeper level (Barsky & Nash, 2002). The strong brands have real or invented stories that induce perceptions of their uniqueness, which is essential to maintaining a brand community (Mossberg, 2008). The creation of a story is essential to connecting consumers with luxury hotel brands experientially (Caru & Cova, 2016).

A brand story delivers content about where the brand comes from, what the brand’s values are, and why consumers use the brand (Mckee & Fryer, 2003). The compelling story behind a brand addresses brand values and builds a bridge between the brand and the consumer (Fog et al., 2010). Stories are stored in memory in multiple ways: factually, visually and emotionally, making it highly likely that the consumers will remember them (Mossberg, 2008). In a brand story, storytellers can turn the brand, the founder, or the employees into heroes. It can instigate associations with specific plots of stories people learned when they were young (Kelley & Littman, 2005).

A brand story is useful to improve message relevancy with readers because it stimulates conscious and subconscious associations in readers’ minds (Megehee & Woodside, 2010). When consumers see a commercial image of a brand and subsequently stay at one of the chain’s hotels, different interactions occur instantaneously: conscious and
subconscious connections (Wertime, 2002). According to Jung, the subconscious part of the mind includes the collective unconscious where the archetypes reside, the individual personality, and cultural lessons. People’s subconscious reactions to the brand result from the interaction of the collective unconscious and the individual unconscious (Wertime, 2002). Consumers are likely to gravitate to brand persona that reflect their characteristics and personalities, or at least who they think they want to be (Malär et al., 2011). They instinctively and consciously have an attachment to the things that are matched well with them (Wertime, 2002). In Figure 1, the conscious and subconscious connections influence the way that consumers interpret the stories of the brands they’ve seen and experienced (Wertime, 2002).

![Figure 1. The connection points of consumers’ minds (Wertime, 2002)](image)

A compelling brand story is perceived as more convincing than facts; thus, it can help increase brand trust, raise awareness, and make the brand unique (Kaufman, 2003; Kelley & Littman, 2005). The most surprising power for a brand occurs when a story has been retrieved, relived, and passed down through narrative word-of-mouth communication by consumers (Simmons, 2001). Meanings that accompany the story may resonate in the audience’s minds and influence them deeply (Chatman, 1980). The great brands might stand for one word or idea in consumers’ conscious minds and they often evoke multiple archetypes on a subconscious level (Wertime, 2002). While archetypes are intangible and
pose a unique management challenge, they are nevertheless worthy of a disciplined approach to nurturing them as company assets (Högström et al., 2015).

2.3.3. Brand Stories in Luxury Hotels

Story-based messages are assumed to be particularly well suited for luxury hotel brands thanks to the characteristics of their guests. While satisfaction in holistic multisensory experiences is important throughout the hotel industry, it is nowhere near as important as in luxury properties of which guests have high expectations (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000). Positive consumer experiences in luxury hotels are essential because they will lead the guest to wish to return or stay longer, and to recommend the property to others (Nasution & Mavondo, 2008). Luxury hotel brands need to communicate both symbolic and experiential features to create a positive experience for hedonic consumers (Padgett & Allen, 1997). A tourist is narrativistic in communicating their memories of staying different places, sharing stories as representations of their lived experiences (McCabe & Foster, 2006).

Luxury hotel consumers with hedonic characteristics have a tendency to seek brand stories that create experiences which appeal to their emotions and fantasies (Silverstein and Fiske, 2003). Storytelling can evoke internal imagery that stems from emotional response, memory of past experience, and innate fantasy, and brings pleasure through the mental activities it stimulates (Lageat et al., 2003). In order to induce mental pleasure, a luxury hotel brand needs to consistently maintain the customer-brand experience along all customer-brand touch points, exhibiting the credibility of the brand to consumers in the process (Passikoff, 2006). In other words, compelling brand storytelling for luxury hotels is about delivering and sharing the compelling brand story consistently, effectively, and continuously to guests.

Brand storytelling research on luxury hotels has not extended to the perspective from literary criticism of a story as “an influential source of new ideas” (Marcus and Fisher 1986:5). Thus, the influence of Stern’s brand story structure (1998), of White’s analysis of historical narratives (1987), and of Woodside’s analysis of philosophies in brand storytelling (2011) has not yet spread to the luxury hotel industry. Consequently, the fields of philosophy (Danto, 1985), sociology (Richardson, 2000), psychology (Halasz, 1988),
Despite the importance of storytelling in promoting brand experience in luxury hotels, storytelling was found to be used by only 68 brands out of 118 luxury hotel brands in a study examining this phenomenon (Ryu et al., 2017). And although many brands do tell stories, not all stories are compelling enough to create a distinctive brand identity. Most sampled hotels’ stories have insufficient structural elements to create a compelling brand story (Ryu et al., 2017). For example, some brand stories listed numerical information without a causality of events and other brands did not present historical connections between a brand and a story. Numerical data are raw material rather than verbal information (Stern, 1998). Therefore, brands need to create and present their brand stories to transcend the brand essence, vision, and value in a memorable and compelling way to consumers (Batey, 2015). On the other hand, in many brand stories, there is a clear plot, and there are connections made between significant events in the brand’s history (Ryu, 2017). For potential consumers, a well-organized story with compelling elements can help immerse them in a story and understand the brand more deeply than a story lacking structural elements (Corrie & Lane, 2010).

A study based on Tobias’s (2011) classification found that the most-used plot type (used by 13 brands) in luxury hotel brand stories was a transformation plot (Ryu et al., 2017). A transformation plot has four chronological components: a description of a past challenging situation for the company/brand, followed by narration of a search phase where the company’s personnel searched for a solution regarding the challenging situation, a solution, and finally a transformation. In addition to the transformation plot, the adventure and the pursuit plots were also found to be frequently used when brands want to convey how they dealt with challenges in accomplishing their goals. The adventure and the pursuit plots can appeal to hotel guests who are adventurous (Holjevac, 2003). Some brands employed more than one plot in their story narrative.

### 2.4. Brand Story Structure

A brand story is comprised of chronological sequence that keep events together and develop a point that readers consider valuable (Lundqvist et al., 2013; Shankar & Goulding,
Many brands have their own stories, but telling a good story is a key to success (Huang, 2010). A well-structured story can convey the meaning of a brand to consumers. A good narrative with key structural elements helps people think and deconstruct events and experiences into smaller pieces for easy processing (Herman 2003). Hence, telling a brand story using good structure can be a powerful way to deliver brand messages and build up the relationship. Putting brand messages in narrative form helps people make sense of and retain the information the brand presents them. Several studies proposed elements of a compelling brand story in a contextual and a structural way. Table 1 shows a list of contextual elements of compelling brand stories.

Table 1. Previous research on elements of compelling brand stories (Gill, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researchers</th>
<th>Key points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual elements</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Rossiter & Bellman (2005) | Needs to project expertise, sincerity, likeability and powerful characteristics  
Expertise fosters esteem and respect  
Sincerity promotes trust and corporate citizenship  
Stakeholders will identify with the organization if they like what it stands for  
Organizations are leaders as a result of their perceived power |
| Boje (2008)          | Move beyond text to a living example  
Use collective memory from the organization  
Supplement the individual’s memory with organizational memory  
Decentralize the narrative  
Sense-making from retrospective, here-and-now, prospective narrative |
| McKee (2003)         | Display a struggle between expectation and reality  
Personalize the message  
Present all the statistics, including the negatives Acknowledge the weaknesses along with the strengths  
Self-knowledge is the root of great storytelling |
Contextual elements are important for constituting a compelling brand story. In order to construct a compelling plot, some contextual elements are necessary to stimulate the collective human subconscious and they are different for plot types of each story (Wertime, 2002; Booker, 2004; Tobias, 2011). Stern’s (1998) theory on key elements of a good brand story is more appropriate for this research compared to other theories. Even though many scholars in Table 1 suggested several content elements that need to be included for a compelling story, there is no one-size-fits-all set of content elements for all plot types. On the other hand, Stern’s theory on structural elements of a compelling brand story can be applied to heterogeneous plot types and can encompass contextual elements of other researchers (Table 1). To investigate the effects of brand story structure, Stern’s (1998) theory provides a good starting point for testing the effectiveness of structural elements that might enhance immersion in a brand story and ultimately result in a favorable perceived brand image. This study extended Stern (1998)’s theory on structural elements of a compelling brand story with concepts suggested by Kent (2012); their theories are a structural basis which can be applied to different types of plots and encompass different theories from other researchers. Thus, the present study attempts to investigate the telling (emplotment), the tale (historical connection), and the teller (narrative voice) of a brand story suggested by Stern (1998) and their influences on immersion in a brand story and ultimately on perceived brand image.
2.4.1. Telling: Emplotment

A structural element that makes a story compelling is its strong organization of historical events in an intelligible way (Velleman, 2003). Emplotment is essentially the assembly of a series of events into a narrative beneath a plot. Consumers are affected by stories because plot placement contributes a major thematic setting (Russell, 2002). Emplotment occupies a major place in the story and builds a connection between the characters in the story and archetypal persona stored in reader’s memory (Russell, 2002). As White (1975, p.7) explains, “Providing the ‘meaning’ of a story by identifying the kind of story that has been told is called explanation by emplotment.”

“Plot is defined as an ordered sequence of events made coherent by causality, linear structure, and purpose”, while a “story” is defined as a chain of events randomly set forth (Stern, 1998, P. 55). Plot thus serves the important role of organizing experiences into a logical and meaningful sequence. Aristotle signifies chronological sequencing as one reason for the pleasure experienced from hearing a story (Stern, 1998). It is an essential attribute that organizes events with a beginning, middle, and an end, because people desire a coherent universe that make sense to them (Stern, 1998).

In Aristotle’s Poetics, the attributes of plots are a linear time progression of events, parsimony (the unities)—no irrelevant material—and causation, or motivation for the events. Plots demonstrate cause and effect to present a compelling story on a subject. Despite the casual use of “story” and “plot” as synonymous terms, a “story” has a chronological sequence, but it does not require causality of events. On the other hand, a “plot” is an organized narrative with both chronological sequence and causality. Research on storytelling imposes “plot” on diverse brand “stories” (Woodside, 2010; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010; Lundqvist et al., 2013; Kent, 2015). Aristotle proposed that a plot, or muthos, can hang a portrayal of events together by necessity or probability (Velleman, 2003). The necessities and probabilities that Aristotle stated are related to causality of events occurring in different types of plots that arouse certain archetypes (Velleman, 2003, p. 2):

“Plots are either simple or complex. ... The action, proceeding in the way defined, as one continuous whole, I call simple, when the change in the hero's fortunes takes
place without Peripety [Reversal] or Discovery; and complex, when it involves one or the other, or both. These should each of them arise out of the structure of the Plot itself, so as to be the consequence, necessary or probable, of the antecedents. There is a great difference between a thing happening proper hoc and post hoc.”

According to Aristotle, a plot delivers antecedents of each event to build a causality following a probable consequence. A causal plot in a story was explained well in the remarks of Forster (Forster, 2010, p. 133):

“‘The king died and then the queen died,’ is a story. ‘The king died and then the queen died of grief’ is a plot. ... Consider the death of the queen. If it is in a story we say ‘and then?’ If it is in a plot we ask ‘why?’ That is the fundamental difference between a plot and a story.”

Forster (2010) suggested that causal explanation is the key element of a plot answering to why questions. The beginning of a plot is expected to provide a preliminary explanation so that the reader can understand what follows and to introduce a narrative voice in the form of a reliable narrator who will lead readers through the story (Stanzel, 1984). The end of a plot is expected to bring events to a close in a manner consistent with the story’s overall meaning (Stern, 1998).

Stern (1998) stated that an appropriate plot should maintain the emotional connection between the brand and consumer. The emotional connection is drawn from immersion in a well-organized and logical plot. The contents of linear sequencing and causality are different in each type of plot. A plot organizes events occurring in a story based on chronological order and causality (Woodside, 2012). Some brands contain elements of several plot types, such as genre or contexts. According to Tobias (2011), there are 20 master plots with different archetypal themes and different causalities (Table 2). The master plots have existed in almost every story ever told for thousands of years (Tobias, 2011) The master plots serve as a tool for brands to tell their events as stories and enhance identification with the brand persona (Kent, 2015).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of plot</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adventure</td>
<td>The protagonist goes on an adventure, but with less of a focus on the end goal or the personal development of hero and more action for action's sake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascension</td>
<td>The protagonist starts in the virtual gutter and shows their ascension to becoming a better person from stress that would defeat a normal person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descension</td>
<td>Opposite of ascension, a person of high standing descends to the gutter and sympathetically as they are unable to handle stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Strongly focused on the character of the hero who discovers something great or terrible and hence must make a difficult choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape</td>
<td>In a kind of reversal of the rescue, a person must escape, but there are elements of capture and unjust imprisonment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbidden Love</td>
<td>Lovers are breaking some social rules, such as engaging in an adulterous relationship and suffering from their inner conflicts and others discovering their tryst.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>A perennial tale of lovers finding one another and becoming separated in some way, but eventually ending with a final joyous reunion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maturation</td>
<td>A special form of transformation, in which a person grows up. The veils of younger times are lost as they learn and grow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metamorphosis</td>
<td>The protagonist is physically transformed. The story may then continue with the changed person struggling to be released or to use their new form for some particular purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuit</td>
<td>The focus is on a chase, with one person chasing another and cornering them. Finally, the pursued person may be caught or may escape.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quest</th>
<th>The hero searches for something, someone, or some place. In reality, they may be searching for themselves, with the outer journey mirrored internally.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rescue</td>
<td>Somebody is captured, who must be released by the hero or heroic party. A triangle may form between the protagonist, the antagonist, and the victim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenge</td>
<td>A wronged person seeks retribution against the person or organization which has betrayed or otherwise harmed them or loved ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riddle/Mystery</td>
<td>This plot entertains the audience and challenges them to find the solution before the hero, who steadily uncovers clues and hence the final solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivalry</td>
<td>Two people or groups are set as competitors that may be good hearted or bitter enemies. Rivals often face a zero-sum game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>The nobler elements of the human spirit are extolled as someone gives much more than most people would give. The person may not start with the intent of personal sacrifice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temptation/</td>
<td>A person is tempted by something that would somehow diminish them, often morally. Their battle is thus internal, fighting against their inner voices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation</td>
<td>It leads to change of a person in some way, often driven by unexpected event. After setbacks, the person learns better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underdog</td>
<td>Similar to rivalry, but where one person (usually the hero) has less advantage and might normally be expected to lose. The underdog usually wins through greater determination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wretched Excess</td>
<td>The protagonist’s behavior goes beyond what’s normally accepted in the world, and the veneer of civilization is thin.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4.2. Tale: Historical connection

When reading a tale, readers often doubt whether or not it is a real story. A brand story can be an invented story or a real story. It is not necessary for the story to be real, but the story will most likely be believed as “a true story” if there are some historical connections that ring true to readers (Loebbert, 2005). If the events in the story do not accord with historical evidence, a story will lose its credibility (Holt & MacPherson, 2010). Historical connections that are made need to fit customers’ mental perception of how things “ought to be” (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Therefore, historical connections of a story are perceived by the audience regardless of the truth of the story.

In narrative processing theory, dimensions related to historical connections have been explained with a term of authenticity. There are many previous qualitative and empirical research studies that exhibited a positive relationship between authenticity and immersion in a story (Algharabat & Dennis, 2009; Richardson, 2013; Mariampolski, 2006; Novelli et al., 2012; Wissmath et al., 2009). However, the term “authenticity” has a criticism of the source of confusion as “a philosophical concept which has been uncritically introduced into sociological analysis” (p. 374). According to Novelli et al. (2012) and MacCannell (1973), the quest for authenticity is a primitive concept still left undefined. Thus, this study utilizes the concept of historical connections that represent evidence of events occurred in the history of a brand. Historical connections reach out to establish narrative credibility for readers (Freeman, 1998; White, 2009).

On the other hand, crafted brand stories with a multiplicity of historical details are not always assumed to be compelling accounts of “things that really happened exactly as they really happened” (Miller, 1990, p. 68). Tens of millions of historical narratives exist in the marketing of luxury hotel brands, but most are not compelling (Kent, 2015). A compelling story involves narrative fidelity with convincing characters based on historical connections with brand events. An excellent example is that historical examples are utilized to construct a mental connection to a brand mythos, not just listing historical events in a brand story. The Stein Collection story, for example, tells how the life of Stein Eriksen became a core philosophy of the luxury hotel—a legendary experience—after his accomplishment in the Olympic Games—a classic pursuit story:
“A legendary man to say the least, Stein Eriksen is recognized around the world as the “Grandfather of Freestyle Skiing.” Norwegian born and raised in a family of Nordic ski enthusiasts, Stein Eriksen was an avid ski jumper by the age of five... Stein attracted world attention in the 1952 Olympic Games in Oslo, Norway, where he won the Gold Medal in the Men's Giant Slalom... The new Stein Eriksen Residences offer many of the traditions synonymous with its legendary namesake. This high-end lodging opportunity for guests is punctuated by the 5-Star, “flawless” service and experience guests have come to expect at Stein Eriksen Lodge...”

The mission of a brand is to identify, describe, and utilize historical data in the brand story (Gossman, 1978; White, 1987; Stern, 1998). Furthermore, individuals with prior knowledge or experience relevant to the historical events of the story (e.g., had a family who experienced the Revolutionary War: were knowledgeable about American fraternities) showed greater immersion in the story. Historical connection could increase consumers’ trust in the brand and further change their perceived image. These attributes could be addressed in the marketing communication and serve as an indirect route to create overall credibility of a brand story.

2.4.3. Teller: Narrative Voice

Stories representing the “voice” of the brand and passages of brand-generated prose were interspersed in the blocks of brand events beneath a plot (Chatman, 1980). Based on Stern’s (1998) framework, narrative voice explains the way of conveying a story to be like viewing a thought process or recounting experiences of story characters. Stories with a first-person narrative voice telling his or her own story could be more persuasive as a brand persona than those with a third-person narrative voice (Huang, 2010). Typically, a first-person narrative revolves around the first-person narrator as the protagonist and delivers the main character’s inner thoughts openly to the readers (Banerjee, 2012).

According to previous studies on Construal Level Theory (CLT), psychological distance relates to the way people accept the ideas in the story (Trope & Liberman, 2010). In CLT, social distance from the teller throughout the storyline is one of the dimensions of
psychological distance (Trope, 2012). Many researchers have argued that a first-person narrator (FPN; who narrates using “I” or “we”) is closer in psychological distance to the readers than a third person narrator, and is more effective at inducing immersion in a story. A first-person narrator can be a first-person protagonist or a first-person peripheral narrator as “a witness, an observer, a chronicler, and a biographer” (Stanzel, 1986; p. 201). This narrator allows consumers to see the universe of the narrative events from the viewpoint of the narrator’s mind (Mollová, 2015). In the third-person narrative, all characters in a story are referred to in third person such as “he,” “she,” “it,” or “they” by the narrator, but not as “I,” “we” (first-person), or “you” (second-person) (Herman et al., 2010). Third-person narratives have an unspecified entity or person that conveys the story who is not a character within the story (Segal et al., 1997).

The storytellers and audiences are important elements of constructing a story because the interaction and relationship between them affect how the stories are processed and how the audiences perceive the stories (Huang, 2010). In order to tell a good story, narrators play an important role as they have the power to decide how to tell stories and what contents to keep or put away. Brand story narrators serve the functions of leading the audience to induce immersion in a brand story. In the brand narratives, using sentences such as “I witnessed it,” “I heard of it,” “I was on the scene,” or “this is my personal experience” are examples of first-person narratives (Loebbert, 2005). Personal experience and inner thoughts from a first-person narrator have a lower degree of mental interventions than those from a third-person perspective (Edmiston, 1989). Research on linguistics and construal level theory argues that a third-person perspective (for instance, “he” or “she”) creates more psychological distance from past selves than a first-person perspective (Libby et al., 2005).

Previous research has shown that participants who read a first-person diary-style narrative expressed a more immersed and positive attitude toward the contents than participants had toward a story by a non-first-person-narrator (Green, 2004). Telling a narrative through the first-person perspective (Dickson, 1982; Slater & Rouner, 1996) versus the third-person perspective (Baesler & Burgoon, 1994; Greene & Brinn, 2003; Kopfman et al., 1998) may also influence immersion in a brand story. “Transportation into a narrative world has been conceptualized as an experience with a convergent process,
where all mental systems and capacities become focused on events occurring in the story” (Green & Brock, 2000, p. 701).

**2.5. Immersion in a Story**

Immersion in a story is defined as a combination of attention, imagery, and emotions concentrated on occurrences in a story (Baek & Morimoto, 2012; Green & Brock, 2000; Nell, 1988). Gerrig’s (1993) analogy to physical travel has been based on immersion concept. “Someone is transported as a result of performing certain actions. The traveler goes some distance from his or her world of origin and returns to the world of origin, changed by the journey” (Gerrig, 1993, pp.10–11). The feeling of being lost in a story (Nell, 2002) occurs, therefore, when the consumer is “absorbed into the story, becomes part of the story and lives the story from the inside” (Green & Brock, 2000). The audience may consciously or unconsciously keep distance from real-life affairs and instead engage the narrative world built by the writer (Green et al., 2004).

Narrative transportation can “cause affective and cognitive responses, beliefs, and attitude and intentional changes” (Van Laer et al., 2013, p. 804). In the previous research, audiences immersed in a narrative world were likely to make changes in their real-world beliefs. For example, participants transported to a story about a crime against a frail girl at a shopping mall believed more that malls could be a dangerous place than less transported audiences (Green & Brock, 2000). Transportation was also associated with reduced negative image on story contents and sympathizing with characters (Green & Brock, 2000). As covered in the above section, the role of story structure in enacting archetypal plots with historical connections by a first-person storyteller is a further consideration of the brands to induce transportation (Lloyd & Woodside, 2013).

Previous research suggests that the quality of writing is highly connected to transportation (Green & Brock, 2002). Some well-structured literature, including bestseller stories, is investigated as more transporting than narratives having fewer elements of story structure (Green & Brock, 2000). A well-structured story may be more likely to induce immersion of readers (Miall & Kuiken, 2002; Oatley, 2002), in addition to changes in story-related beliefs (Ottati, Rhoads & Graesser, 1999), particularly when individuals are transported (Miall & Kuiken, 2002). Therefore, this study hypothesizes that certain
elements of story structure need to be included in order to transport consumers: clear plot with compelling characters and settings, strong historical connections for a credible story, and narrative voice leading a storyline.

H1: Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel with a clear plot will induce a higher degree of immersion in the story than one with an unclear plot arrangement.
H2: Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel containing a large number of historical connections will induce a higher degree of immersion in the story than one having fewer historical connections.
H3: Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel told by a first-person narrator will induce a higher degree of immersion in the story than one told by a non-first-person narrator.

Immersion in a brand story can be measured with a transportation imagery model (TIM) scale. The transportation imagery model (TIM) measures whether story immersion occurs through transportation and investigates two factors from the extent of transportation: imagery ability and absorption propensity (Green & Brock, 2002). Imagery ability is defined as consumer's ability to visually rehearse the scene through mental imagery without an imposed stimulus (Van Laer et al., 2013). Due to this ability, people can be immersed into storylines and sympathize with the characters’ feelings. Tellegen and Atkinson (1974) defined absorption propensity as the tendency to immerse oneself fully in terms of attention and emotions. Readers’ strong involvement in a story enhances the ability to transport into the story (Green & Brock, 2002). The phenomenological moment of being transported into a story world may change readers’ real-world beliefs in several ways: enhancing positive image response, creating attachments to or feelings for characters, and making the narrative world seem more real and narrative events more like personal experience (Green et al., 2004). The present study is focused on the former mechanism of belief change: increased positive perception of a brand image.
2.6. Perceived Brand Image

Positive perception of brand image by consumers has been regarded as an important goal for luxury hotels to maintain their positions within a competitive market. Perceived brand image is defined as the image regarding the brand associations in people’s minds. A positive image could improve the brand’s market performance (Shocker & Srinivasan, 1979). Keller (1993) defined brand image as “perceptions of a brand from the cluster of brand associations in consumers’ memories” (Huang, 2010, p. 309). Brand image is related to all images that consumers perceive about a brand (Dobni & Zinkhan 1990). The collection of brand associations indicates what customers think and feel about a brand. Brand associations are connected with attributes and associations of companies, products, and service of a brand (Aaker & Biel, 2013).

Consumers recollect several aspects of beneficial values when they associate the brand with an image. According to Sondoh et al. (2007), five beneficial values were utilized to measure perceived brand image within the consumer’s mind: (1) experiential benefit, (2) symbolic benefit, (3) social benefit, (4) functional benefit, and (5) appearance enhancements. These five aspects of brand value were selected to measure consumers’ overall psychological associations with brand image after reading a brand story without staying at the hotel described in the story.

2.6.1. Perceived Brand Image and Immersion

A person immersed in a brand story can be involved in the story in terms of cognition and emotion and may experience vivid mental images of the story and the brand. Compared to less immersed individuals, more immersed audiences showed fewer critical and negative beliefs about the contents of the story. Stories can sweep consumers away to different universes created in the brand story, and then readers can be fully absorbed into a narrative world (Green & Brock, 2000). The benefits of narrative immersion are increasingly being recognized by marketing academics.

For example, in a pioneering scholarly article on narrative transportation, Escalas (2013) details that the narrative transportation consumers perceive include strong affective responses and low critical thoughts that affect perceived brand image. According to Escalas
(2004b), immersed readers showed that positive feelings from the brand story become associated with the brand image. Green and Brock (2000) demonstrate that consumers show less analytical and critical thoughts in narrative immersion in the context of stories. Based on the Wright’s (1973) findings, fewer critical thoughts generated by narrative transportation help enhance positive brand image. Therefore, this research suggests that immersion may be a key procedure for building a positive brand image from a narrative impact:

H4: Immersion in brand story will positively enhance the perceived brand image in consumers’ minds.

2.6.2. Perceived Brand Image and Brand Story Structure

Knowing how to tell a good story is a key to earning a positive brand image in the eyes of consumers (Huang, 2010). Every brand of luxury hotels has its own story, but not all stories are well-structured (Ryu et al., 2017). From an emotional-branding perspective, Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel (2006) argued that brands must invest in stories that inspire and captivate consumers. These stories must be organized well to demonstrate compellingly how the brand can enrich consumers’ lives (Thompson et al., 2006). Thus, the strategic objective of a well-structured brand story is to build meaningful and affective bonds with luxury hotel guests and, in doing so, to become part of their lives and memories as an important link to positive brand image (Atkin, 2004). Over the past few years, many strong brands have focused on well-structured stories, such as Tous, Apple, Nike, IBM, McDonald’s, and Starbucks (Atkin, 2004; Belk & Tumbat, 2005).

A well-structured brand story aids cognitive processing by helping readers think and follow the events that occur in the story, breaking them into smaller pieces (Herman 2003). According to Huang (2010, p.309), “What a brand means to customers comes partly from its story since the brand story helps people interpret the world and create meanings.” Meanings accompany the story, and when the audience remembers these meanings, their perceptions of the brand image are influenced (Huang, 2010). Hence, a good brand story demonstrating favorable brand meanings can be an easy way to build up the relationship with luxury hotel guests, and telling a good brand story with an influential structure can be
an effective way to form an affective image for a brand. Therefore, the hypotheses of this study are that the following elements of brand story structure need to be included in order to induce a positive brand image: emplotment, historical connections for a credible story, and the first-person narrator.

H5: Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel with a clear plot will induce a higher level of positive brand image than one with an unclear plot arrangement.

H6: Other things being equal, a brand story for a luxury hotel containing high historical connections will induce a higher level of positive brand image than one perceived as containing a lower number of historical connections.

H7: Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel told by a first-person narrator will induce a higher level of positive brand image than one told by a third-person narrator.

2.6.3. Impact of Immersion and Perceived Brand Image on Brand Story Structure

Narrative immersion may mediate the relationship between brand story structure and the inducing of favorable associations with the brand image. A well-written brand story can help narrative processing be understood and remembered easily when the story is read (Keller, 1993). The prior research shows that the relationship between narrative transportation and narrative processing is positive (Escalas, 2004a). During the process of narrative transportation, readers will automatically store in their memories some of the story’s contents about the hotel’s functional, symbolic, experiential, social and appearance attributes (Russell, 2002). Consumers who engage in narrative processing can transport their attention from critical thinking regarding the content of the information to generating positive affect, resulting in favorable associations.

Stern (1998) suggested that narrative processing enables consumers to understand complex stories rapidly. Consumers would match new information to episodes stored in their minds to understand the story (Huang, 2010). Therefore, if a brand communicates a brand story that stimulates consumers’ memories, it would build up the linkage between consumers and the brand. When the brand story can stimulate subconscious recollections in the consumers’ memories, the brands may form a deep connection as perceived brand image in consumers’ minds (Escalas, 2004a). If consumers perceive a brand as a persona
throughout the brand story, consumers may prefer the brands and have fewer critical images of them (Matthews and Wacker, 2007). Therefore, immersion in a compelling brand story may be an effective way to positively enhance consumers’ perceived brand image. While a potential consumer is absorbed into a story, the person may become less aware of real-world affairs, which could lead to negative images of the brand (Green and Block, 2000). Immersion in a story has the potential to mediate between brand story structure and perceived brand image. The following hypotheses were suggested in this research:

H8: Immersion in a story mediates the relationship between emplotment and perceived brand image.

H9: Immersion in a story mediates the relationship between historical connections and perceived brand image.

H10: Immersion in a story mediates the relationship between first-person narrator and perceived brand image.

Figure 2. A multiple mediation model guided by the hypotheses
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to empirically investigate how varying degrees of brand story structure, clarity of plot, historical connection, and narrators will influence transportation and perceived brand image.

3.1. Research Design

The proposed hypotheses were examined by experimental research. This approach was chosen because it provided control over other exogenous variables (Andaleeb, 1996). In line with recent work in the field, this approach has been adopted in order to analyze the effects of story elements (Chiu et al., 2012; Huang, 2010). This study was conducted according to a between-subjects 2 X 2 X 2 experimental design to examine the proposed research framework (Figure 1) with several modified stories containing varying degrees of compelling story elements. The 2 X 2 X 2 factorial design manipulated emplotment (presence/absence), historical connection (presence/absence) and first-person narrator (presence/absence). The three components of brand story structure investigated by this study were operationally defined as follows (cf. Figure 3):

*Emplotment—High Clarity of Plot Versus Low Clarity Plot:*

Due to the nature of a story, it’s hard to develop a plot that lacks clarity (Russell, 2002). Therefore, the high and low levels of clarity of plot were divided under experts’ advice in linguistics and communications. The high or low level of clarity of plot in the stories for the test were defined according to whether they provided readers with causality, linear structure, and purpose for the story. High clarity of plot in a story should create a meaningful sequence that develops emotional connection and identification between the story and the readers (Kent, 2015). The degree of emplotment was coded 1 = high level of clarity of plot and 0 = low level of clarity of plot.

*Historical Connections—High Degree of Historical Connections Versus Low Degree of Historical Connections:*

The high and low degrees of historical connections in the stories of the test were defined according to whether they delivered historical evidence of events described in the
stories of the test. Based on a linguistic expert’s advice, levels of large or small numbers of historical connections were divided. A high degree of historical connections in a story should lead to narrative fidelity with convincing characters based on historical connections with brand events (Stern, 1998). The degree of historical connections was measured 1=high degree of historical connections and 0=low degree of historical connections.

*Narrative voice—First-Person Narrator (FPN) Versus Third-Person Narrator:*

The presence or absence of a first-person narrator in the context of the test should determine the reader’s degree of psychological distance from the narrator. Stories in the test narrated by a first-person narrator should bring audiences a closer psychological distance from events occurring in the story than stories with a third-person narrator (Mollová, 2015). The presence or absence of FPN was measured 1=first-person narrator and 0=third-person narrator.

Thus, for the purpose of this study, each of the three components dealt with a dichotomous variable having two opposite values. In non-experimental settings these variables are continuous, not dichotomous. The three components were brought together into a three-factor study (2 X 2 X 2) with emplotment, historical connection and first-person narrator being the between-subjects factors. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of eight 2 X 2 X 2 conditions.
The dependent variable was perceived brand image. The intermediate variable was immersion in a brand story. Questionnaires were employed to collect data. The survey was designed to ask participants’ perceived brand image and narrative immersion after reading a randomly assigned story from eight stories developed for this research. Within each of these eight conditions, each subject read a two or three line text passage. The data was then analyzed with the goal of finding generalizations from the sampled participants to a larger population within this segment. According to Lindquist (1953), this $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design requires statistical analysis based on a three-way ANOVA.

### 3.1.1. Data Collection Procedure

Modified brand stories were used to manipulate the varying degrees of story elements; the stories were developed over several stages before being finalized. Eight versions of the brand story with varying degrees of historical connection and clarity of plot were created for the research. With the eight modified stories, two parts of the pretest were conducted: 1) receiving feedback from three experts to control the quality of experimental
stories, and 2) conducting a pilot survey to confirm the validity of measurements. After the pilot study, the main experiment was conducted between the 13th and 16th of November, 2017. The subjects were contacted using Survey Sampling International (SSI) (2017), a Connecticut-based research company dedicated to survey sampling and administration. This company specializes in statistically drawn online samples and conducts surveys utilizing more than 3,500 lists of targeted individuals who have given their permission to be sent surveys on a selected topic (SSI, 2017). This survey was conducted by using the SSI Dynamix™ methodology. This methodology controls access to panels by sending surveys to qualified panelists based on profiling (SSI, 2017). Screen-outs can reduce the temptation to cheat on surveys and remove the self-selection bias inherent in traditional contact methods (SSI, 2017).

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire in English since the participants were living in the U.S. An online questionnaire was deemed most appropriate due to the short length of the survey. Additionally, the majority of panelists recruited by the survey firm preferred online surveys to paper surveys. The survey included an online consent form that advised each participant of the purpose and process of this research, the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and the potential risk and benefits. The participants were asked to read the online consent form. When participants agreed to the consent form, they could then participate in the survey.

A questionnaire was utilized to assess the effects of brand story structure on transportation and perceived brand image. The questionnaire included questions about participants’ feelings towards a perceived image of a described brand after reading a brand story. The researcher designed the logic of the survey to randomly assign to each participant one brand story from eight versions of experimental stories. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to answer questions about their age, gender, location, ethnicity, income, and education level. Participation and completion of the survey were voluntary.

3.1.2. Stimulus Materials

In order to control for subjects’ previous knowledge of existing brands, an invented brand and corresponding stories were crafted for the experiment (Huang, 2010). A luxury
hotel brand contains both hedonic and symbolic values (Lageat et al., 2003). Additionally, the persuasive effects of a story come from the emotional responses of hedonic consumers of luxury hotels (Green and Brock, 2000). Therefore, this study created a fictitious brand and corresponding stories to test participants’ transportation into a story and their image of the described brand. Based on a between-subjects 2 X 2 X 2 factorial design, eight stories (Appendix A) are manipulated by clarity of plot (high/low), historical connection (high/low), and narrative voice (first person narrator/third person narrator), as listed below:

- Story 1. High clarity of plot, high historical connection, and first-person narrator (FPN)
- Story 2. High clarity of plot, high historical connection, and third-person narrator (TPN)
- Story 3. High clarity of plot, low historical connection, and FPN
- Story 4. High clarity of plot, low historical connection, and TPN
- Story 5. Low clarity of plot, high historical connection, and FPN
- Story 6. Low clarity of plot, high historical connection, and TPN
- Story 7. Low clarity of plot, low historical connection, and FPN
- Story 8. Low clarity of plot, low historical connection, and TPN

In the first stage, the best-structured story was used. It contained a clear plot and historical connections, and employed a first-person narrator. Then, each element of the brand story structure was removed, one by one, to manipulate the other seven conditions from the first story. There was an issue about how to classify high or low levels of clarity of plot and historical connections. Therefore, based on comments from linguistic experts in the first phase of the pretest, high and low degree of clarity of plot and historical connections were designated. All of the story versions with the manipulation of the three elements employed in the main test are presented in Appendix A.

The clarity of the plot in the stories was constructed with a causal relationship, an explanation about the origin, a linear time arrangement, and a rational arrangement of scenes. For example, in the high plot clarity condition, this study organized events chronologically in the story (James proposed to Evelyn in 1927; she promised to marry
him if he built a house for her; James established a house and the two married in 1932; they had many happy experiences in the house; James died in a car accident; in 1933, Evelyn decided to transform the house into a hotel to commemorate his love). For the stories lacking clarity of plot, the sequence of events was related out of order (James died in a car accident in 1932; James proposed to Evelyn in 1927; she promised to marry him if he built a house for her; James established a house and the couple married in 1932; Evelyn decided to share the house as a hotel to commemorate his love in 1933).

In brand stories, historical connection is represented by having a clear time and origin of the brand, a long brand history, a traceable origin, and a logical plot (Beverland, 2005; Huang, 2010). Therefore, this study created details such as character information (award-winning architect James Douvris; accomplished musician Evelyn White), origin of the brand (James and Evelyn established the Douvris hotel in Charleston, South Carolina, at the beginning of the twentieth century), a clear time of origin (the Douvris opened on January 4, 1933, to national acclaim), along with a traceable and long brand history (Evelyn kept the hotel until she was no longer physically able to live there. Though the ownership has included several partners since the late 1980s, guests continue to embrace the Douvris as their romantic refuge), which appeared in the historical connection but not in the low historical connection conditions.

The narrative voice was manipulated in the storylines with a leading voice by either a first- or third-person narrator. The stories led by a first-person narrator employed “I” when presenting information (several decades later, as I visited Douvris, I could feel the legacy of the Douvris; I experienced a secure and private realm; I could have spent my entire stay choosing a bottle; I fell in love with Douvris). The third-person stories have a dry tone with objective description of the hotel experience (guests can feel the legacy of the Douvris couple; guests can experience a secure and private space; guests will fall in love with Douvris).

3.1.3. Questionnaire Design

Subjects were randomly assigned to one of eight experimental groups, and those within each experimental group received the same version of the brand story.
Questionnaires were distributed assessing immersion in a story and perceived brand image. After reviewing the assigned story about the brand, subjects were asked to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part contained a set of questions measuring immersion in the aforementioned story. Subjects’ immersion in a narrative world was measured by Gerrig’s (1993) TIM scale on transportation, to capture its major dimensions, including cognitive, affective, and imagery involvement. It included 11 general items and one imagery item specifically related to the target narrative. Example scale items included “I could picture myself in the scene of the events described in the narrative,” “I was emotionally involved in the narrative,” and the reverse-scored item, “After finishing the narrative, I found it easy to put it out of my mind.” The imagery item was measured with a question: “While reading the narrative I had a vivid image of Douvris.” Responses were measured by a seven-point Likert scale ranging from not at all to very much.

The second part of the questionnaire collected measures of perceived brand image. Five aspects were measured by 13 brand image items to determine whether the subjects would perceive the brand as having (1) experiential benefit, (2) symbolic benefit, (3) social benefit, (4) functional benefit, and (5) appearance enhancement. These five aspects of brand image were adopted from Sondoh et al.’s (2007) study because they were shown to be appropriate variables in measuring consumers’ psychological dimensions on brand image after reading a story about an invented brand.

3.2. Pilot Study

3.2.1. Pilot Study—First Part: Feedback from Three Experts

As the first part of the pilot study, this research requested feedback from experts in linguistics and communications about the quality of an invented story and the other seven modified versions; they were asked whether the elements of brand story structure were well delineated. The background of this pretest and descriptions of each element were provided (Appendix B). Comments from three experts specializing in rhetoric, linguistics, and communications were used to help make improvements to the experimental manipulations. Improvements of the story quality are discussed below:
1. An expert in communications introduced construal level theory, utilizing classifications of narrator perspective, to lead immersion in a narrative. Based on construal level theory, differences among the dimensions needed to be shown in the modified stories (Liberman et al., 2007). For third-person narrator stories, the time of the messages needs to be uni-dimensional and the target audience is not specified, in order to develop psychological distance from the narrative voice. Based on construal level theory, messages from the third-person narrator were revised into dry language, not unlike information presented in the news. Also, recommendation messages were removed in order to avoid specifying the target audience.

2. Some sentences having two elements of the story structure were manipulated twice, due to the overlapping classifications. For example, the explanation about the brand’s origin can be interpreted as involving both historical connections and clarity of plot. Thus, this research removed those sentences to represent the effect of categorical variables with three mutually exclusive categories on some dependent variables.

3. Based on criticisms of message length, eight versions of experimental stories were rewritten in a more concise way, to deliver the messages more effectively to respondents.

3.2.2. Pilot Study - Second Part: Narrative Processing and Immersion

The second part of the pretest measured the qualities of eight crafted stories (Appendix A) and tested the extent to which participants thought about narrative immersion and perceived brand image. Participants who had experienced five-star hotels in the last year were contacted personally by the researcher of this study. Eighty-nine respondents read a randomly assigned story from the eight versions. Then, the respondents rated each statement on the narrative structure scale (Escalas, 2004) and on the TIM scale (Gerrig, 1993). The two scales were used as the study’s primary dependent variable for the main test (Appendix C). Ten participants were dropped due to the incompletion of the survey. The final results of the pretest had 79 respondents.
Measuring Story Quality

This pretest explored narrative processing from eight stories to test whether the structure of the crafted eight stories were described well or not and whether the stories led to narrative immersion. Narrative Structure Coding Scale (Escalas et al., 2004) was utilized to measure whether the story-based text consisted of narrative elements. The thoughts were coded for the degree to which these thoughts told a well-developed story using the six-item scale shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Narrative Structure Coding Scale Items (Escalas, 2004a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>To what extent do these thoughts/does this story consist of actors engaged in actions to achieve goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>To what extent do these thoughts/does this story let you know what the actors are thinking and feeling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>To what extent do these thoughts/does this story provide you with insight about the personal evolution or change in the life of a character?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>To what extent do these thoughts/does this story explain why things happen, that is, what caused things to happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>To what extent do these thoughts/does this story have a well-delineated beginning (initial event), middle (crisis or turning point), and ending (conclusion)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>To what extent do these thoughts/does this story focus on specific, particular events rather than on generalizations or abstractions?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. These items are measured on 5-point scales, anchored by not at all (1) and very much so (5).

Items one and four examine the causality from a story. Item five addresses the chronological sequence, whether the participants are aware of a clear beginning, middle, and end. Item three investigates respondents' thoughts on development of a character. Item two addresses the Bruner’s landscape of consciousness that readers are aware of—the psychological state of the protagonist following the thinking and feeling of characters. According to Bruner (1990), there are two landscapes to a narrative: the landscape of action and the landscape of consciousness. The landscape of action is comprised of events that
are visible to the ordinary observer: the initiation of events, protagonist’s actions, and solutions. The landscape of consciousness induces the audience to feel the story’s character(s) through close psychic distance. Bruner (1990) suggested that a story with both a landscape of action and consciousness is a better story than one that includes only a landscape of action. Finally, item six measures the readers’ thoughts on description of specific events compared to generalizations or abstractions.

Measuring Narrative Immersion

After answering the narrative processing questions, participants responded to Gerrig’s (1993) TIM scale on immersion to see whether there were different levels of transportation between stimuli. The TIM scale was also utilized in the main test. One hundred adults living in the U.S. who had experienced five-star hotels within the past year participated in the pretest. Eight versions of stories were randomly assigned to the eight treatment conditions for each story. Each participant read the brand story first; then filled out the questionnaire.

3.3. Main Test

Subjects were randomly assigned to each of eight experimental groups, and those within each experimental group received the same version of the brand story. Questionnaires assessing subjects’ perceived brand image and narrative immersion were distributed. After reviewing the introduction and the assigned story about the brand, subjects were requested to complete the questionnaire. Demographic information was collected at the end.

The main test has two dependent variables: immersion in a story and perceived brand image. Subjects were requested to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statements adopted from Gerrig’s (1993) transportation imagery model (TIM) scale and Sondoh et al’s (2007) perceived brand image scale. The TIM scale included 11 general items and one imagery item capturing its major dimensions of cognitive, affective, and imagery involvement from Gerrig’s (1993) study. Perceived brand image was measured by 13 items to determine whether the subjects would perceive the brand as having (1) experiential benefit, (2) symbolic benefit, (3) social benefit, (4) functional benefit, and (5) appearance enhancement (Sondoh et al., 2007). A higher sum of scores on these items
represented more positive brand image and immersion in the story.

3.3.1. Sampling

This research conducted an experiment of between-subjects design using respondents recruited by a survey research firm for a purposive sampling strategy. Several sampling criteria were used to select the research subjects.

1. The survey data collected information on adults living in the U.S. However, for this study, only respondents who had stayed in a luxury hotel within the past year were chosen. The luxury hotel segment was selected for two considerations: (1) the luxury hotel segment communicated both symbolic benefits and functional value to consumers. Its consumers have a tendency to seek hedonic values, inducing fantasies, feelings, and fun (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). As the luxury consumers have highest hedonic values among hotel segments, a well-structured and compelling brand story as the underlying determinants of fantasies and fun has a potential to generate significant effects on the perceived brand image; (2) a brand story invented by the experimenters contains luxury contents as a luxury hotel brand. If a respondent to the survey feels resistance to the luxury segment, immersion in a brand story is likely to fail (Kim & Kim, 2005). In order to remove heterogeneous preferences, this study chose potential consumers of luxury hotels who have stayed in luxury hotels.

2. This research selected only those respondents who reported “for leisure” as the main purpose of a trip. According to Wakefield and Blodgett (1994), individuals looking at the time spent at a hotel for leisure purposes seek more symbolic and emotional value from the stay than would people who stayed for business purposes. This limitation attempts to prevent the bias of data resulting from the constraint of luxury hotel usage. Thus, this study better reflected respondents’ minds on immersion in the story and on perceived brand image after consuming a story.
3.3.2. Participants

For the purposes of this study, a luxury hotel is defined as a five-star rated and full-service hotel. The survey was sent to adults living in the U.S. who have stayed at luxury hotels within the past year. This process increases external validity by indicating as much homogeneity as possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This survey was distributed by a survey research firm that has a list of consumer panelists. With the help of the survey firm, subjects who have stayed at one of the following hotels were targeted:

- The Four Seasons,
- Waldorf Astoria,
- St. Regis Hotels,
- Park Hyatt
- Mandarin Oriental

After obtaining Purdue University Institutional Review Board approval, 430 subjects were contacted regarding participation in the study, resulting in 413 valid questionnaires collected. The subjects were adults living in the U.S. who had experience staying at five-star hotels, particularly at luxury hotels within the past year. The purpose of the research was explained and an online survey link was provided to them. About 59.62% of subjects were female and 40.38% were male, with an average age of 35 years.

3.4. Statistical Methods and Procedure

To test the hypotheses of the research, a three-way ANOVA method, regressions and Sobel test were employed. The statistical analysis was utilized to test three independent variables of brand story elements on perceived brand image and to test the mediating role of immersion in a story. Before testing the hypotheses, the Cronbach’s alpha was tested to measure the internal reliability of the survey items. After obtaining the solid alphas, the main effects of the factorial design were performed using three-way ANOVA. In order to find a role of mediators, regressions and a Sobel test were carried out.
3.4.1. Reliability Assessment

A method typically used to assess reliability in the survey approach is internal consistency. Internal consistency investigates “how unified the items are in a test or assessment” (Salkind, 2003: 114). Many research surveys have used Cronbach’s alpha as the measure of internal consistency (Gliem and Fliem, 2003). Carmines and Zeller (1974) provided Cronbach’s alpha (1951) in mathematical notation, and the verbal expressed formula is as follows:

\[
\text{Alpha} = \frac{\text{number of observations}}{(\text{number of observations} - 1)} (1-\text{the sum of item variances})
\]

\[
\text{Alpha} = \frac{(\text{number of observations}) (\text{mean inter-item correlation})}{(1+ \text{mean inter-item correlation}) (\text{number of observations} - 1)}
\]

Where the mean inter-item correlation = Average of all the correlation coefficients for the various measures.

Owing to the nature of the survey research, internal consistency was measured for its reliability on perceived brand image and immersion in a story. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), the accepted cut-off of the Cronbach’s alpha value is 0.70, in order to test the internal reliability as scale items. Cronbach’s alpha and Correlations were calculated using SAS University Edition. Additionally, the internal consistency among the various measures was obtained.

3.4.2. Data Analysis

This research design included independent variables consisting of three dichotomous variables. Each variable was coded with 1 or 0 for the high or low degree and the presence or absence of the variable. After getting the survey results, SAS University Edition was used for calculating effects raised by ten hypotheses.

In order to test Hypotheses 1–3, a three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to examine whether significant mean differences existed among narrative immersion in terms of different elements of brand stories. In order to test Hypotheses 5 to
7, a three-way ANOVA was utilized to measure whether significant mean differences existed among perceived brand image in terms of different elements of brand stories. The three-way ANOVA calculated effects of three dichotic independent variables on continuous dependent variables. Furthermore, this ANOVA was proper to a between-subjects factorial design. The three-way ANOVA has been frequently used in the psychological literature in the published studies that utilized the 2 X 2 X 2 design (Kroonenberg, 2008). The three-way ANOVA has also been referred to as a “factorial ANOVA” or a “three-way between subjects ANOVA” (Nouri, 2000). After exercising the three-way ANOVA, the cell means for a three-factor experiment were displayed in the form of a table like the other published articles to compare the means between eight conditions (Huang, 2012; Kroonenberg, 2008). Also, graphs of cell means represented the main effect or interaction effect based on the significant results of the ANOVA test. This research completed the three-way ANOVA by measuring all of the possible $F$ ratios and testing each $p$-value for statistical significance. The $F$ statistic is equal to MSG/MSE, in which MSG is the mean square and MSE is the mean square error (Moore & McCabe, 1993). A sufficiently large $F$ ratio represents group differences. The $p$-value for the significance level was set at 0.05 for this research. For Hypothesis 4, regression, which is a one-way ANOVA, was employed to test the relationship between immersion in a story and perceived brand image.

In order to test Hypotheses 8–10, regression was also utilized to test the mediation of immersion in a story for the relationship of each brand story element—emplotment, historical connections, and first-person narrator—to perceived brand image. Many researchers have introduced several statistical mediation effects because “the concept of mediation gets to the heart of why social scientists become scientists in the first place” (Hayes & Preacher, 2014; p. 451). Among the several statistical methods (Chandler & Pronin, 2012; Legault et al., 2011; Pedersen et al., 2011; Ronay et al., 2012; Werle et al., 2011), Kenny’s (2016) method has been popularly used via SAS program. Kenny (2016) suggested a variant of the causal steps method by examining whether group differences on Y revealed in an analysis of variance (ANOVA) disappear after controlling for a proposed mediator. Three regressions were performed to test the mediation effects on an independent variable, a mediation variable, and a dependent variable. The first regression tested the
effect of the independent variable (i.e., emplotment, historical connections, or first-person narrator) on the dependent variable of perceived brand image (the $Y \leftarrow X$ model). The second regression was performed if the first regression showed the significant result. The second regression tested the impact of the same independent variable on the mediator of immersion in a story (the $M \leftarrow X$ model). If the $p$-value of the second regression showed the significant level less than 0.05, the third regression was exercised on the third regression (the $Y \leftarrow MX$ model). The final model tested the dependent variable as a function of the mediator and independent variable. The significance of the second and third regressions represented that the indirect effect is nonzero. Therefore, the Sobel test was performed to test the indirect effect when both models were ordinary regression models (Sobel, 1982).
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

This chapter shows the findings from the data analysis used to answer the stated hypotheses. The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of brand story structure on immersion in a story and perceived brand image. The relationships between structural elements of brand story (emplotment, historical connections, and first-person narrator) and immersion in a story and perceived brand image were examined with the three-way ANOVA. Results are reported separately for each dependent variable: immersion in a story and perceived brand image. The mediating role of immersion in a story on the relationship between brand story structure and perceived brand image was also measured with regressions and the Sobel test. Pretest results, descriptive statistics, reliability assessments, and the hypotheses results are presented.

4.1. Pretest Results

Measurement of Story Quality

The reliability for each item on the Narrative Structure Coding Scale (Table 3) was tested. The six items were averaged for each respondent to form one narrative score for each invented story. The Cronbach’s alpha value was equal to 0.78 for the six items of 79 respondents, which is above the accepted cut-off value of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Therefore, all stories are well-delineated as a good story measured by Escalas’s (2004) scale for narrative structure.

Measurement of Narrative Immersion and Perceived Brand Image

The reliability for each item on the TIM scale (Gerrig, 1993) was tested. The twelve items were averaged for each respondent to form one narrative score for each invented story. The Cronbach’s alpha value was equal to 0.75 for the 12 items of 79 respondents, which is above the cut-off value of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Additionally, the pretest result from three-way ANOVA on narrative immersion showed that first person narrator was not significant ($p$-value = 0.23). After getting the linguistic expert’s advice, the stories with the first-person narrator were revised into the diary style in order to develop
the clarity difference between a first-person narrator and third-person narrator (Mollová, 2015). The final stories for the experimental design are found in Appendix B.

The reliability of perceived brand image scale was assessed (Sondoh et al., 2007). The thirteen items were averaged for each respondent to form one narrative score for each invented story. The Cronbach’s alpha value was equal to 0.92 for the 13 items of 79 respondents. Each had solid Cronbach alphas above the cut-off value of 0.70 (story 1 $\alpha = .89$, story 2 $\alpha = .91$, story 3 $\alpha = .98$, story 4 $\alpha = .92$, story 5 $\alpha = .88$, story 6 $\alpha = .88$, story 7 $\alpha = .89$, and story 8 $\alpha = .72$). Based on the results, eight stories were perceived by the respondents to have a positive brand image. Even though story eight (low clarity of plot, low historical connections, and a third person narrator) was not a well-structured story, respondents had positive answers for perceived brand image.

4.2. Main Test Results
4.2.1. Descriptive Data

One-thousand adults were contacted for the study via a survey system and were offered a survey by the research firm. After a survey was uploaded in the system, they received a notification via personal e-mail. A total of 430 surveys were collected, indicating a response rate of 43%. However, this study removed 13 surveys because they were incomplete, missing questionnaire items about perceived brand image and narrative immersion. Therefore, a total of 413 valid surveys were utilized for the statistical analysis. All participants were residents of the United States who were able to complete the survey in English. About 59.62% subjects were female and about 40.38% were male, with an average age of 35 years.

Respondents are highly educated with 74.3% of participants holding a college or university degree or equivalent, while 25.7% earned a high school diploma. More than 24% of respondents earned a total income ranging from US$50,000 to $74,999. Those with an annual income ranging from US$75,000 to $99,999 comprised 22.6% of the respondents, and 16.23% earned US$100,000 to 149,999. Roughly more than 70% of respondents showed higher annual income than the national average, which is $57,617 based on the 2016 Census (Guzman, 2017). Therefore, this sample of affluent subjects may well represent luxury hotel guests. Income is the most important factor out of the four
determinants for luxury hotel consumers: gender, age, geography, and income (Escalera, 2013).

Also, the target sample being luxury hotel consumers, it is not surprising that the subjects in the sample, who can afford the luxurious purchase, are not young. Approximately 41.51% of the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 39 years old, 26% were between 40 and 49 years old, 18.9% were 20 to 29 years old, and 8.9% were 50 to 59 years old. This research also investigated the participants’ ethnicity, which showed that more than 73% of respondents were white, 11.3% were Asian, 9% were African American, 2.64% were Hispanic, and 1.5% were Native American.

Table 4. Demographic characteristics of samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
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<th>%</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>40.38%</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>59.62%</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.26%</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>73.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–29</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18.87%</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>41.51%</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>26.04%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.68%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or older</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.64%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.66%</td>
<td>Less than $25,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed some college</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>$25,000 to $34,999</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13.96%</td>
<td>$35,000 to $49,999</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>42.26%</td>
<td>$50,000 to $74,999</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>24.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed some postgraduate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
<td>$75,000 to $99,999</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>22.64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 continued

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12.83%</td>
<td>$100,000 to $149,999</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D or other professional degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.51%</td>
<td>$150,000 or more</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2. Reliability measurement

The reliability for each dimension, overall perceived brand image, and immersion in a brand story were tested. The Cronbach’s alpha value for immersion in a story was equal to 0.73 for the 12 items. Additionally, the Cronbach’s alpha value for the 13 items of perceived brand image was 0.92. The experiential, symbolic, social, functional, and appearance dimensions were 0.86, 0.70, 0.73, 0.86, and 0.74, respectively. Results revealed an acceptable reliability for the overall scale as well as items measuring each dimension.

4.3. Hypotheses Testing

4.3.1. Brand Story Structure and Immersion in a Story

Results are reported on Hypotheses 1–3. Hypothesis 1 stated, “Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel with a clear plot will induce a higher degree of immersion in the story than one with an unclear plot arrangement.” Hypothesis 2 proposed that “Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel containing a large number of historical connections will induce a higher degree of immersion in the story than one having fewer historical connections.” Hypothesis 3 stated “Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel told by a first-person narrator will induce a higher degree of immersion in the story than one told by non-first person narrator.” Gerrig's (1993) Transportation Imagery Mole scale on narrative immersion was used to test Hypotheses 1–3. Table 5 shows the number of subjects assigned to each experimental group and the average values of immersion in a story.

Descriptive statistics for immersion in a story are reported in Table 5. The table shows the number of subjects assigned to each experimental group and the average values of immersion in a story. Several observations may consider the result of the descriptive data (Carrell, 1982). The mean value of immersion into the story in the clear plot group
(4.69) is higher than in the unclear plot group (4.00) (Figure 4). This indicates that the group reading stories with a clear plot tended to rate their immersion in the story quite higher than the group reading stories with an unclear plot. The mean value of immersion in the story in the high historical connections group (4.57) is higher than in the low historical connections group (4.12) (Figure 5). This indicates that the group reading stories narrated by a first-person protagonist was likely to rate their immersion into a story higher than the group of stories narrated by a third-person protagonist. The mean value of immersion into the story in the first-person narrator group (4.48) is higher than in the third-person narrator group (4.21) (Figure 6). The group consuming stories with high historical connections also reported higher immersion than the group consuming stories with low historical connections.

Table 5. Number of subjects and mean values of immersion in each experimental group (N=413)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emplotment</th>
<th>Historical connection</th>
<th>Narrator</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear Plot</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>First-person</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Third-person</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>6.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>First-person</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Third-person</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear Plot</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>First-person</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Third-person</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>5.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>First-person</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Third-person</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>5.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4. Main effect of emplotment on immersion in a story

Figure 5. Main effect of historical connections on immersion in a story
With a three-way ANOVA, three independent variables of immersion in a story were tested. In order to determine main effects in terms of the three components of brand story structure—emplotment, historical connections, and first-person narrator—the data were subjected to a three-way ANOVA, through the SAS University Edition package of statistical programs. The General Linear Models (GLM) procedure performed a test using the three-way ANOVA. The results were reported in Table 6. Results show that the emplotment \( (F_{1,405} = 84.94, p < 0.0001) \), historical connections \( (F_{1,405} = 44.89, p < 0.0001) \), and the first-person narrator \( (F_{1,405} = 14.48, p = 0.0002) \) all have significant main effects on narrative immersion. Therefore, the results support H1, H2, and H3.
### Table 6. ANOVA table for immersion in a story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emplotment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>62.265</td>
<td>62.265</td>
<td>84.94</td>
<td>&lt; .0001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32.908</td>
<td>32.908</td>
<td>44.89</td>
<td>&lt; .0001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emplotment*Historical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.197</td>
<td>0.197</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.6042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.612</td>
<td>10.612</td>
<td>14.48</td>
<td>0.0002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emplotment*FPN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.7364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical*FPN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.151</td>
<td>2.151</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>0.0875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emplotm<em>Historic</em>FPN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.838</td>
<td>0.838</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.2855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>296.896</td>
<td>0.733</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>405.951</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** $p<0.01$

### 4.3.2. Perceived Brand Image and Immersion in a Story

The relationship between immersion in a story and perceived brand image was reported for Hypothesis 4. H4 stated “Immersion in a brand story will positively enhance the perceived brand image in consumers’ minds.” With a one-way ANOVA, the relationship between immersion in a story and perceived brand image was tested. In order to determine the relationship, the data were subjected to a one-way ANOVA, through the SAS University Edition package of statistical programs. The regression procedure performed a test using the one-way ANOVA. The results were reported in Table 7. Results show that immersion in a brand story ($t_{1,411} = 10.3, p < 0.0001$) has a significant effect on perceived brand image. Therefore, the results support H4.
Table 7. ANOVA table for perceived brand image and immersion in a story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Parameter Estimate</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t Value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.28814</td>
<td>0.12509</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>&lt;.0001**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|            |     |                    |     |         |          |
|            |     | F Value            |     | <.0001** |
| Model       | 1  | 130.27966          | 130.27966 | 410.33  | <.0001** |
| Error       | 411 | 130.49193          | 0.3175  |         |          |
| Corrected Total | 412 | 260.77159          |         |         |          |

Note: ** p<0.01

4.3.3. Perceived Brand Image and Brand Story Structure

Results are reported for Hypotheses 5–7. Hypothesis 5 stated, “Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel with a clear plot will induce a higher level of positive brand image than one with an unclear plot arrangement.” Hypothesis 6 proposed that “Other things being equal, a brand story for a luxury hotel containing high historical connections will induce a higher level of positive brand image than one perceived as containing a lower number of historical connections.” Hypothesis 7 stated, “Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel told by a first-person narrator will induce a higher level of positive brand image than one told by a third-person narrator.” Participants recollected several aspects of values in perceived brand image. In Sondoh et al.’s (2007) perceived brand image scale, five beneficial values were used to test Hypotheses 5–7. Table 7 shows the number of subjects assigned to each experimental group and mean values of dependent variables.

Descriptive statistics for perceived brand image are reported in Table 7. The table indicates the number of subjects assigned to each experimental group and the mean values of perceived brand image. The mean value of perceived brand image in the clear plot group (4.33) is higher than that of the unclear plot group (3.69) (Figure 7). The group reading stories with a clear plot showed higher perceived brand image than the group of stories with an unclear plot. The mean value of perceived brand image in the high historical connections group (4.22) is higher than those in the low historical connections group (3.80) (Figure 8). This indicates that the group reading stories narrated by a first-person protagonist tended to rate their perceived brand image higher than in the group of stories narrated by a third-person protagonist. The mean value of perceived brand image in the
first-person narrator group (4.13) is higher than in the third-person narrator group (3.89) (Figure 9). This shows that the group reading stories with the first-person narrator was likely to rate their perceived brand image higher than in the group reading stories with the third-person narrator.

Table 8. Number of subjects and mean values of perceived brand image in each experimental group (N=413)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emplotment</th>
<th>Historical connection</th>
<th>Narrator</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear Plot</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>First-person</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Third-person</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>First-person</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Third-person</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear Plot</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>First-person</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Third-person</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>First-person</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Third-person</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 7. Main effect of emplotment on perceived brand image

Figure 8. Main effect of historical connections on perceived brand image
With a three-way ANOVA, three independent variables of perceived brand image were tested. In order to determine main effects in terms of the three components of brand story structure—emplotment, historical connections, and first-person narrator—the data were subjected to a three-way ANOVA. The General Linear Models (GLM) procedure performed a test to the three-way ANOVA. The results were reported in Table 8. Results show that the emplotment ($F_{1,405} = 35.69, p < 0.0001$), historical connections ($F_{1,405} = 37.75, p < 0.0001$), and the first-person narrator ($F_{1,405} = 8.84, p = 0.0031$) all have significant main effects on perceived brand image. Therefore, H5, H6, and H7 receive support.

Table 9. ANOVA table for perceived brand image

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emplotment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18.843</td>
<td>18.843</td>
<td>35.69</td>
<td>&lt;.0001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18.875</td>
<td>18.875</td>
<td>35.75</td>
<td>&lt;.0001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emplotment*Historical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.7451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.668</td>
<td>4.668</td>
<td>8.84</td>
<td>0.0031**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. Main effect of narrative voice on perceived brand image
Table 9 continued

| Emplotment*FPN | 1  | 2.600 | 2.600 | 4.92 | 0.207 |
| Historical*FPN | 1  | 0.258 | 0.258 | 0.49 | 0.4847 |
| Emplotm*Historic*FPN | 1  | 1.633 | 1.633 | 3.09 | 0.0794 |
| Error           | 405| 213.838| 0.528 |
| Corrected Total | 412| 260.772 |         |

Note: ** \( p < 0.01 \)

### 4.3.4. Mediation of Immersion in a Story

The present research had the objective of determining the mediating role of immersion in a story on each element of brand story structure and perceived brand image. A mediator helps explain the relationship between two variables (Kenny, 2016). Hypothesis 8 stated, “Immersion in a story mediates the relationship between emplotment and perceived brand image.” Hypothesis 9 stated, “Immersion in a story mediates the relationship between historical connections and perceived brand image.” Hypothesis 10 stated “Immersion in a story mediates the relationship between first-person narrator and perceived brand image.”

Therefore, the Sobel Test was employed three times to test the mediation effect of immersion in a story on each element of a brand story and perceived brand image. In the first test for Hypothesis 8, emplotment was the independent variable, immersion in a brand story was the mediator, and perceived brand image was the dependent variable. When narrative immersion was set into the equation, perceived brand image remained significant at the 0.01 level (\( p = 0.000 \)). Results also indicated a significant relationship between immersion variable and perceived brand image (\( \beta = 0.569, t = 18.71, p < 0.0001 \)). In the second test for Hypothesis 9, the variable of historical connections was the independent variable, immersion in a brand story was the mediator, and perceived brand image was the dependent variable. When narrative immersion was set into the equation, perceived brand image remained significant at the 0.01 level (\( p = 0.000 \)). Results also indicated a significant relationship between immersion variable and perceived brand image (\( \beta = 0.549, t = 18.89, \))
In the final test for Hypothesis 10, the first-person narrator was the independent variable, immersion in a brand story was the mediator, and perceived brand image was the dependent variable. When narrative immersion was set into the equation, perceived brand image remained significant at the 0.01 level \( (p = 0.001) \). Results also indicated a significant relationship between immersion variable and perceived brand image \( (\beta = 0.564, t = 19.88, p < .0001) \). Therefore, H8, H9, and H10 were supported.

Table 10. Effect of emplotment and immersion in a story on perceived brand image

|                          | Step 1 \((Y \leftarrow X)\) | t   | Step 2 \((M \leftarrow X)\) | t   | Step 3 \((Y \leftarrow MX)\) | t   | Step 4 (Sobel Test) | Pr>|Z| |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|-----|---------------------|------|
| Emplotment \((X)\)       | 0.4272                        | 5.66** | 0.7768                      | 8.63** | -0.01503                   | -0.25 | 7.8362              | 0.000 |
| Immersion \((M)\)       |                               |      |                             |      | 0.56947                     |      |                     |      |
| F                        | 32.01**                       |      | 74.46**                     |      | 204.73**                    |      |                     |      |
| \(R^2\) for each step   | 0.0723                        |      | 0.1534                      |      | 0.4997                      |      |                     |      |
| \(\Delta R^2\)          | 0.0811                        |      | 0.3463                      |      |                             |      |                     |      |
| \(Adj R^2\) for each step | 0.07                          |      | 0.1513                      |      | 0.4972                      |      |                     |      |
| \(\Delta Adj R^2\)      | 0.0813                        |      | 0.3459                      |      |                             |      |                     |      |

Note: ** \(p<0.01\)
Table 11. Effect of historical connections and immersion in a story on perceived brand image

| Step | Historical Connections (X) | Immersion (M) | Sobel Test | Pr>|Z| |
|------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| Step 1 | 0.4307 5.71** | 0.5703 6.09** | 0.5174 2.03** | 5.7936 0.000 |
| Step 2 | 0.5495 18.89** | 0.5495 18.89** | 0.0734 0.0827 | 0.5046 |
| Step 3 | 0.0093 0.4219 | 0.0093 0.4219 | 0.0712 0.0827 | 0.5022 |
| Step 4 | 0.0093 0.4219 | 0.0093 0.4219 | 0.0712 0.0827 | 0.5022 |

Note: ** p<0.01

Table 12. Effect of first-person narrator and immersion in a story on perceived brand image

| Step | First-person narrator (X) | Immersion (M) | Sobel Test | Pr>|Z| |
|------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| Step 1 | 0.2123 2.73** | 0.3216 3.33** | 0.0310 0.55** | 3.2865 0.001 |
| Step 2 | 0.5640 19.88** | 0.5640 19.88** | 0.0179 0.0263 | 0.5 |
| Step 3 | 0.0084 0.4737 | 0.0084 0.4737 | 0.0179 0.0263 | 0.4975 |
| Step 4 | 0.0084 0.4737 | 0.0084 0.4737 | 0.0179 0.0263 | 0.4975 |

Note: ** p<0.01
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study was designed to investigate how structural elements of a compelling brand story impact consumers’ perceived image of a brand as mediated by immersion in a story. There is limited literature examining the empirical effect of brand storytelling on consumers’ perception. In addition, there is no prior research on brand story structure and immersion into the brand story within the luxury hotel setting.

Positive brand image perception by consumers is an ongoing goal of luxury hotel marketers (Kim & Kim, 2005), and a compelling brand story often positively impacts brand image (Hirschman, 2010; Lundqvist et al., 2013). Consumers’ positive brand experience has been shown to be related to immersion in brand storytelling (Mossberg, 2008). The structure of a story has been identified as a major factor in narrative immersion, because the empirical finding has shown that well-structured stories can increase narrative transportation. Based on the significant results of this research, managers and marketers of luxury hotels need to manage brand story structure, narrative immersion, and perceived brand image together. In the current luxury hotel industry, many luxury hotels have not utilized brand storytelling efficiently. As a result, the significant result of brand story structure on perceived brand image may offer a differentiated approach to make their consumers fascinated by brand stories of luxury hotels. This study represents one of the few within the luxury hotel context to examine the relationship between brand story structure and perceived brand image. It is also the first within the luxury hotel context to test the mediating effect of immersion in the brand story on the relationship between brand story structure and perceived brand image.

5.1. Discussion

This study empirically explored the role of brand story structure in consumer perceptions of luxury hotel brands by asking for their psychological responses after reading manipulated stories with different levels of brand story structure. This study attempted to comprehensively examine the effect of brand story structure on perceived brand image and narrative immersion in a specific hotel segment. It was found that respondents who read stories with more structural elements of a clear plot and historical connections showed the
highest level of positive perceived brand image and narrative immersion. Also, a significant mediating effect of narrative immersion between brand story structure and perceived brand image was identified. That is, the data demonstrated that positive perceived brand image in a luxury hotel setting is not simply induced by brand story structure but rather by a narrative immersion that is increased by a brand story with a good structure.

Escalas’s (2004) narrative transportation research emphasized the impact of narrative immersion on the favorable and less analytic brand image reported by highly immersed respondents. The result of Hypotheses 8–10 extended the notion of Escalas’s (2004) research to the role of narrative immersion mediating the relationship between brand story structure and perceived brand image. Similarly, Huang (2012) indicated that scores on perceived brand image items answered after reading a well-structured brand story were higher than stories with poor structure. However, Huang’s (2012) study did not cover the mediating role of narrative immersion on brand story structure and brand image. Therefore, the present study is meaningful for the hotel industry and hospitality research, as it is the first attempt to show the mediating role of immersion in a brand story on the relationship between brand story structure and perceived brand image. Based on the findings of this study, it is posited that narrative immersion is created when individuals respond to well-structured stories with distinctive brand values in the story, stimulating their conscious and subconscious connections. Cognitive psychologists also suggest that humans are ideally set up to be immersed in stories via subconscious connections of archetypes, personality, and cultural lessons they learned (Schank, 2012).

Due to luxury consumers having higher hedonic values than consumers of other hotel segments, a well-structured and compelling brand story can be a determinant of developing fantasies and fun to generate positive effects on the perceived brand image. The well-structured story “embodies the perception formed when hedonic consumers coalesce around new information formed by consumers’ encounters with” luxury hotel brand stories (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994, p. 9). These innately emotional and symbolic experiences, however, are impacted by fantasies developed from storytelling in luxury hotels (Pullman & Gross, 2004). These factors may include cognitive experience, fantasy, excitement, cultural lessons, personality, and many other factors (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982;
Knutson, Beck, Kim, & Cha, 2009; Titz, 2008). Therefore, luxury hotels can deliberately cultivate distinct branding by staging experiences based on a compelling brand story and include an environmental servicescape for consumers to live the brand story.

Empirical results of this research demonstrate that consumers tend to perceive brand image positively and are more easily immersed in the narrative world when the brand story has a clear plot—that is, events in a story have an easy-to-follow order. In turn, the immersion resulting from a clear plot mediates increased positive brand image. When the brand story includes a large number of historical connections as evidence of the events that occurred in a story, consumers are likely to have positive perceptions about the brand and more narrative transportation. When consumers feel a close psychological distance with a protagonist narrated in first-person, they tend to have a more positive brand image. Brand stories with a clear plot can display characters and events in a story well and form immersion status in the readers’ cognitive processing. Also, in a clear plot, brand stories effectively represent the brand essence and its core strength and help brands to deliver favorable meanings for consumers. After reading brand stories with a clear plot, consumers can better understand the brand meaning and thus the stories’ positive associations with the brand image.

When the brand story includes a high degree of historical connections as evidence of the occurred events in a story, consumers are likely to have positive perceptions about the brand and more narrative transportation. The credibility of a brand story based on historical connections could help consumers make sense of the brand. Regardless of the crafted stories with an invented brand attached to this survey, adopting historical connections makes the stories seem real and trustworthy. Findings from the perceived brand image scale indicated that when consumers read the brand story with high historical connections, they perceived more positive images toward the brand and were immersed more in the brand story. Therefore, the audience trusted the brand more when the story was manipulated to have high historical connections within the story characters or events. For example, brand story of The Stein Collection, which is introduced in the Literature Review section, delineated its historical events and its founder as a legendary figure. The high historical connections in The Stein Collection would induce consumers’ perceptions of the brand story’s credibility and the brand’s reliability. In this research, the manipulation of
historical connections detailed the origin of the brand and indicated that the founder had developed the brand. The aim of delineating the brand’s origins and creators was to enhance historical connections in the brand story and boost the brand’s image. Brand managers could utilize these ideas when creating or revising brand stories.

When consumers feel that there is a small psychological distance between themselves and the narrator—as is the case when the narrative is in first person—they tend to have a more positive image of the brand. Brand stories told by first-person narrators induce and enhance favorable images of brand story and brand associations. Since the brand story narrated in first-person can arouse the audience’s sympathy or empathy for archetypal characters, consumers are more immersed than in a brand story by a third-person narrator. Through the process of immersion in a story, consumers feel fewer negative thoughts on the brand described in the story. Therefore, the stories told by the first-person narrator helped build a positive brand image.

An interesting point is that the mean values of the perceived brand image of eight versions of brand stories were all above 3.5, which is the average point of the perceived brand image value (1 to 7). This indicates that stories with unclear plot, low historical connections, and a third-person narrator also enhance a certain degree of positive brand image. This finding supports the notion of Mossberg (2012) that brand storytelling, regardless of the story structure, could enhance to a certain degree the brand image of luxury hotels.

The present study further found that brand stories with more elements of good story structure have a significantly more positive brand image and more narrative immersion than stories with fewer elements of good story structure. Therefore, luxury hotels need to care about their brand story whether the story is structured as a compelling brand story to consumers or not. The result indicates that luxury hotels’ brand managers need to consider how to structure brand stories to bring a positive brand image instead of merely listing the years of brand events.
5.2. Discussion of Hypotheses

5.2.1. Brand Story Structure and Immersion in a Story

Respondents who participated in this study had above average levels of immersion in the story when they read stories containing each structural element of a brand story of a luxury hotel: emplotment, historical connections, and first-person narrative voice.

In previous studies, effects of story structure on narrative immersion have been researched. Structure of a story has been identified as a major factor in narrative immersion because the empirical findings have shown that well-written and well-structured stories can enhance narrative transporation (Escalas, 2004). Best sellers mostly have many elements of a good story structure and they induce a higher degree of narrative immersion than less well-structured stories (Wang & Calder, 2006). The above proposition was mostly confirmed with studies of the story structure of advertisements. In communications research, story structure and narrative immersion were studied in narrative theory and transportation imagery model, i.e. chronology of storylines in TV commercials.

Even though consumers of luxury hotel brands have high aspirations and derive pleasure from storytelling that transports their imagination to a setting in which those aspirations are fulfilled (Mossberg, 2008), the association between brand story structure and narrative immersion in the luxury hotel setting has not been researched. Additionally, 84% of luxury hotels examined in a study by Ryu et al. (2017) were found to not utilize brand storytelling effectively and had not constructed a well-structured brand story. Therefore, this study assumed that there might be a positive relationship between brand story structure and narrative immersion in a luxury hotel brand story, i.e., a well-structured brand story increased the level of narrative transportation. Thus, consumers who read a well-structured brand story may understand brand value and the history of the luxury hotel brand described in the story better than with a poorly structured brand story. This study showed the same results: including the clarity of plot, historical connections, and first-person narrator in a brand story increased narrative immersion in the story.

Hypothesis 1, which stated that “Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel with a clear plot will induce a higher degree of immersion in the story than one with an unclear plot arrangement,” was supported. Stories having a clearly described plot in this study demonstrated moderate to high levels of immersion in the story. The survey
participants also exhibited relatively high scores of general and imagery items on the narrative transportation scale. This result shows that stories which include a causal relationship between events and characters, an explanation about the brand’s origin, a linear time arrangement, and rational scenes arrangement, tend to transport consumers deep into the narrative world.

This result supports the notion of Huang (2012) that the clarity of the plot in a story enhances narrative transportation. According to Stern (1994), the clarity of plot strengthens immersion in a story because a clear plot can enhance identification by readers with protagonists of the story. The present study found that respondents read stories with a clear plot showed an above average narrative immersion level. Further investigation may show that readers’ identification with protagonists could mediate the relationship between clarity of plot and narrative immersion.

Hypothesis 2, which stated that “Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel containing a large number of historical connections will induce a higher degree of immersion in the story than one having fewer historical connections,” was supported. Participants in this experiment showed high levels of immersion in the story after reading stories with a large number of historical connections in this experiment. This demonstrates that stories with a causal relationship, clear time of brand origin, long history of the brand, traceable origin, and rational plot are likely to enhance immersion in the narrative setting. This supports White’s (1993) notion that causal connections with historical evidence can build the credibility of the story and the events that occurred in it, which has an important role in narrative immersion.

Even though there are many previous qualitative and quantitative studies in which a positive relationship between historical connections and narrative immersion was found (Algharabat & Dennis, 2009; Richardson, 2013; Mariampolski, 2006; Novelli et al., 2012; Wissmath et al., 2009), the current research was the first study to specifically show such a relationship in the luxury hotel setting. Narrative fidelity with convincing characters based on historical connections can enhance the credibility of luxury hotel brands described in the story. This result can be applied by utilizing historical examples to construct a mental connection to a brand mythos, rather than just listing historical events in a brand story.
Historical connection could increase consumers’ trust in luxury hotel brands and serve as an indirect route to create overall credibility of a brand story.

Hypothesis 3, which stated that “Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel told by a first-person narrator will induce a higher degree of immersion in the story than one told by non-first-person narrator,” was supported. Respondents in this survey showed higher levels of narrative immersion after reading stories with a first-person narrator than those with a third-person narrator. This demonstrates that stories with a first-person narrator tend to bring readers into a narrative world because consumers feel personally involved when they read first-person narrated stories (Mollová, 2015). This supports construal level theory (1993), which states that a narrator who details events from a first-person perspective (FPN) is closer in psychological distance to the readers than a third-person narrator, and is effective at inducing immersion in a story.

Brand stories narrated from a first-person perspective also enhance narrative immersion and may strengthen emotional connection between consumers and the luxury hotel described in the story. Luxury hotel brands struggle with consumers’ loyalties (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000), and making an emotional connection through first-person narratives may help to develop consumer loyalty in a highly competitive industry. Also, in the luxury hotel industry, most brand stories are narrated from a third-person perspective (Ryu, et al., 2017). As a result, the significant impact of first-person narrated stories on narrative immersion may offer a differentiated approach to fascinate consumers by brand stories of luxury hotels.

### 5.2.2. Perceived Brand Image and Immersion in a Story

Respondents in this survey showed a significant positive relationship between narrative immersion and perceived brand image. Hypothesis 4, which stated that “Immersion in a brand story will enhance perceived brand image in consumers’ minds,” was supported. This shows that immersion in a brand story has a positive relationship with perceived brand image. This demonstrates that consumers more immersed in a brand story of a luxury hotel tend to have a more positive brand image than less immersed consumers. This supports Escalas’s (2013) notion that consumers with higher narrative transportation have strong affective responses and a low level of analytical thoughts that might negatively
affect perceived brand image. Positive feelings from the brand story among immersed readers are associated with the perceived brand image as emotional benefits. Therefore, the fewer critical thoughts generated by narrative transportation, the more positive reception of brand image. This research shows that immersion is a key process for building a positive brand image using narrative presentation.

Positive brand image is one of goals which luxury hotel branding can accomplish. Therefore, this research may contribute to extending the research realm of enhancing positive brand image through narrative immersion. Narrative immersion can sweep consumers away to different universes created in the brand story, and bring about a favorable image of the brand. This pioneering research on the relationship between narrative immersion and positive brand image can be widely applied to the marketing of luxury hotel brands.

### 5.2.3 Perceived Brand Image and Brand Story Structure

Participants in this survey had above average levels of perceived brand image when they read stories containing each structural element of a brand story of a luxury hotel brand: emplotment, historical connections, and narrative voice.

According to Huang (2012), significant effects of specific brand story structure elements on perceived brand image have previously been demonstrated. Consumers perceived brands more positively when they read stories with more structural elements of a brand story (Huang, 2012). Research has shown that well-structured stories can enhance brand image perception by consumers. Also, the relationship between brand story structure and perceived brand attitude has been examined in narrative theory studies. However, this research is the first to examine the relationship between brand story structure and perceived brand image in the luxury hotel setting. Because managers and marketers need to enhance brand image, brand story structure may be an efficient starting point to enhance their brand image. Due to the relative lack of brand storytelling in the luxury hotel industry, there is great potential to enhance brand image.

Participants who read stories with a clear plot had above average levels of perceived brand image. Hypothesis 5, which stated, “Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel with a clear plot will induce a higher level of positive brand image than one
with an unclear plot arrangement” was supported. This indicates that a brand story with a clear plot of a luxury hotel can enhance positive perception of consumers’ thoughts on the brand. A clear plot makes it easy for readers to follow the events that occur in the story and shows the strengths of the brand. Thus, consumers who read a brand story with a clear plot have a more positive image of the brand. According to Herman (2003), when readers receive narrative information with a clear plot, they have fewer negative thoughts about the contents of the story.

Hypothesis 6, which stated “Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel pertaining high historical connections will induce a higher level of positive brand image than one perceived as lower historical connections,” was supported. After reading stories with high historical connections, participants indicated a more positive perceived brand image than for stories with low historical connections. Historical connections increase consumers’ perceptions of credibility in the story and the brand and further influence their perceived image. This demonstrates that historical connections establish narrative credibility of readers (Freeman, 1998; White, 2009).

Hypothesis 7, which stated “Other things being equal, a brand story of a luxury hotel told by a first-person narrator will induce a higher level of positive brand image than one told by a third-person narrator,” was supported. Participants in this survey demonstrated high positive brand image after reading stories narrated in the first-person than those in the third-person. Stories with the first-person narrative voice telling his or her own story could be more persuasive as a brand persona than those with the third-person narrative voice (Huang, 2012). According to previous studies on Construal Level Theory (CLT), many researchers have argued that a first-person narrator who narrates events from a first-person perspective is closer in psychological distance from the readers. The close psychological distance leads to a more favorable image of the brand described in the story (Trope & Liberman, 2010).

5.2.4. Mediation of Immersion in a Story

The present study has demonstrated that brand story structure and narrative immersion individually influence perceived brand image. However, based on previous research, there is a possibility that narrative immersion mediates the relationship between
brand story structure and perceived brand image (Escalas, 2013, 2014; Huang, 2012). Therefore, this research examined three constructs together in the luxury hotel context. Hypothesis 8, which stated “Immersion in a story mediates the relationship between emplotment and perceived brand image” was supported. This shows that a more structured brand story with a clear plot enhances consumers’ narrative immersion, and which thereby improves consumers’ perceived brand image. Also, Hypothesis 9, which stated “Immersion in a story mediates the relationship between historical connections and perceived brand image,” was supported. Brand stories with historical connections induce a high degree of narrative immersion and the narrative immersion enhances positive brand image. Hypothesis 10, which stated “Immersion in a story mediates the relationship between first-person narrator and perceived brand image,” was supported. The findings showed that stories narrated by the first-person impact high level of narrative immersion and the immersion enhances positive perceived brand image.

Research on the impact of narrative immersion and brand story structure on perceived brand image within the luxury hotel setting is scarce. The results of the mediating effect in the present study partially reflects Escaleta’s (2013) research on narrative transportation enhancing brand attitude and beliefs. According to Green and Brock (2000), story structure impacts narrative transportation and persuasiveness of narrative. A well-structured brand story with clarity of plot, historical connections, and a first-person narrator shows the strongest narrative immersion and the most positive perceived brand image, compared to other stories lacking at least one structural element. Therefore, narrative immersion mediates the relationship between brand story structure and perceived brand image.

5.3. Major Conclusions

Luxury hotel brands and managers should care about developing and managing their brand stories, not only because brand image is enhanced when consumers are immersed in brand stories, but also because consumers will simply enjoy a well-structured brand story, and pleasure from narrative immersion in a good story will help consumers remember brands in a positive way. If a luxury hotel is new and has no brand story yet, carefully developing a brand story with clear plot, historical connections, and first-person
narration will help the first guests to become immersed in the brand story more easily and make the brand more memorable than similar hotels boasting eclectic interior or functional attributes. If a luxury hotel has a brand story already, managing and revising it as a compelling brand story would be helpful to highlight its brand strength to consumers. Furthermore, within luxury hotels, storytelling is associated with all elements and stakeholders of brands. Therefore, other stories related to the hotel need to include theme and essence in the brand story to deliver it effectively to employees, consumers, and other stakeholders. The conclusions that facilitate immersion in a brand story and enhance perceived brand image are:

- Immersion in a brand story mediates the relationship between each element of brand story structure and perceived brand image demonstrating that managers need to manage three constructs together
- Elements of brand story structure influence narrative immersion through easy-to-follow plot with clear characters and events, historical connections enhancing credibility, and first-person narrator with close psychological distance
- Strongly immersed consumers show fewer critical and negative thoughts on the contents of the story, and favorable feelings from the immersion have a positive relationship with perceived brand image
- Stories with clarity of plot lead to higher levels of narrative immersion and positive perceived brand image
- Stories with historical connections enhance narrative immersion and positive perceived brand image
- Stories with a first-person narrator increase narrative immersion and positive perceived brand image
- A well-structured brand story with clarity of plot, historical connections, and a first-person narrator shows the highest level of narrative immersion and most positive perceived brand image, compared to other stories lacking at least one structural element
5.4. Practical Implications

One of the main implications of this research is that it provides empirical findings about how brand story structure plays important roles in enhancing perceived brand image. Luxury hotel brands can utilize a brand story structure to develop and manage their brand image from the themed branding based on a compelling brand story. This paper found that clarity of plot was the most effective element to induce immersion in a story and ultimately increase perceived brand image. At a marketing level, marketers can utilize a well-structured story for highlighting strong points of brand value to differentiate a brand from its competitors. In the case of luxury hotels with a brand story, but not one that is well-structured, marketers of the brand can improve the delivery of the story based on the order of priority of structural elements suggested in this paper. In the case of luxury hotels without a brand story, marketers of these hotels can use the results of this research to persuade their managers to invest in developing a well-structured brand story. In addition, they can transform customers’ brand experience into a fun experience with immersion in a well-structured story. Ultimately, brand image in luxury hotels will be enhanced thanks to a story-based brand experience. As storytellers, if management and marketing executives want to deliver the brand essence to guests, they need to reassess their brand stories and make sure they are based on the structural components of a compelling brand story.

In the current luxury hotel industry, most brands lack a storytelling strategy and most list a simple historical timeline without a story (Ryu et al., 2017). While they promote their high-quality facilities, services’ favorable pricing, and other benefits, most overlook creating an emotional connection with consumers. Although all brands have their own brand essence and servicescape, a brand story is often missing. It is important to integrate the overall brand offerings into a memorable and compelling story that resonates with guests. This lack of effective brand storytelling suggests many opportunities. For example, historical connections with a clear plot could be employed by luxury hotels as a strategy to provide consumers a sense of credibility surrounding the brand and its brand story. This strategy can generate trust in and emotional bonding with a brand.

At a hotel executive level, the findings suggest that managers can build more memorable and clear stories by utilizing structural elements of a compelling brand story. They need to put brand values and the core concept of brand essence, such as a story about
why the hotel exists and how value was created by the founders, in a well-structured brand story. For example, if not many historical connections exist in a brand’s history, managers can place more importance on including the elements of clarity of plot and a first-person narrator, which can develop an easy-to-follow story with close psychological distance to readers. By adopting a structural perspective of its brand story suggested by this research findings, a brand story can present a vision to its consumers with a memorable and clear story structured by elements suggested in this research. At a personnel level, this begs the question of how management and employees can communicate the brand essence and how they realize the hotel vision. Through the story, the employees also need to meet, serve, and communicate with consumers. Consumers can better envision a brand story when a memorable and clear story is structured by the elements suggested in this research. To maximize the effects of the brand storytelling, managers need to ensure that the brand story elements are employed throughout all branding activities. Performance of the brand servicescape and brand activities as a thematized stage of living the story are crucial to integrate branding into one compelling brand story (Ryu et al., 2017). Through these staged experiences, consumers draw the brands and services into their fantasies, which they really want from their luxury experience (Wu and Liang, 2009). These practical applications can help managers and marketers adjust their branding strategies to achieve the desired level of their brands.

Even when the brand has a plot, such as in the case of the Stein Collection, the brand story alone is not enough to build meaning for consumers. The story needs a consistent effort on the part of the brand to make the story tangible in the servicescape at every consumer touch point. When a business is built around a story, the elements in the servicescape need to display cues from the story. For luxury hotel brands, brand storytelling is a key to success in developing a strong brand and achieving brand differentiation. For industry practitioners, brand storytelling can serve as a guideline to enhance the servicescape, to facilitate the interaction among the guests as well as guests with the employees, and to differentiate from competitors.
5.5. Theoretical Implications

The results and discussion sections suggested theoretical implications from the findings, but this section will discuss some of them in detail. This research adds to the literature on the structure and effects of brand stories, and can be applied in the luxury hotel context. This research developed and tested a conceptual model of the relationship between brand story structure and perceived brand image and the mediating effect of transportation into the story. It was a significant application of the transportation imagery model in the field of luxury hotels, explaining how a positive brand image could be created by a brand story. The results of this study suggested that perceptions of a brand’s image are related to many elements that comprise a compelling brand story.

This research explored brand story structure and examined the impacts of variations of plot, historical connections, and narrator on perceived brand image and transportation into the story. Plot, historical connections, and narrator of the brand story all had a significant relationship with perception of brand image and transportation into the story. Therefore, the findings of this study contributed to studies on effects of the brand story’s structure on the brand image. When the brand story has a clear plot throughout, consumers are likely to be immersed in the story and perceive the brand positively. When the brand story is regarded as having historical connections, consumers are likely to be immersed in the story and perceive the brand positively, and a brand story narrated by a first-person narrator can help consumers form a positive brand image as well. These significant relationships contribute to theoretical development about the effect of a well-structured brand story on brand image.

Previous studies on stories and storytelling in the hospitality industry were not focused on the luxury hotel industry. Therefore, the present study extends the storytelling research within the hospitality industry. Prior studies in the hospitality setting about storytelling were researched more from perspectives of consumer behavior such as online reviews from consumers or brand netnography (Black & Kelley, 2009; Hsu et al., 2009). A qualitative study from the perspective of brand storytelling was conducted on the relationship between servicescape and storytelling in a themed hotel (Mossberg, 2008). In addition, several tourism researchers have studied stories about travel destinations and attractions (Woodside & Megehee, 2009; Mathisen, 2014; Olsson et al., 2016) or visitors’
storytelling about their experience (Hsu et al., 2009; Woodside et al., 2007; Tussyadiah et al., 2011).

There are many studies on defining key elements of a compelling brand story (Rossiter & Bellman, 2005; Boje, 2008; McKee, 2003; Matthews & Wacker, 2007; Stern, 1998). However, most of the studies (Rossiter & Bellman, 2005; Boje, 2008; McKee, 2003; Matthews & Wacker, 2007; Dowling, 2006; Denning, 2006; Prusak, 2001) leaned toward contextual elements of a compelling story such as having a plot twist, a struggle of protagonists, identified stakeholders, presenting statistics, etc. In order to construct a compelling plot, some contextual elements are necessary to stimulate the collective human subconscious and they are different for plot types of each story (Wertime, 2002; Booker, 2004; Tobias, 2011). However, there are no one-size-fits-all contents for a compelling brand story (Kent, 2012). Therefore, this study extended Stern’s (1998) theory on structural elements of a compelling brand story with concepts suggested by Kent (2012). Furthermore, the current study provides a tool for measuring brand story elements of general plots. To investigate effects of brand stories, Stern (1998) provided a good tool for testing effectiveness of structural elements that might enhance immersion in a brand story and ultimately perceived brand image.

Researchers studying story structure and its elements mostly published qualitative studies. There are few empirical studies testing brand story structure on consumers’ brand perception. Therefore, this study addresses a significant gap in the literature. On the other hand, the communications field has many studies with the ultimate goal of finding the effective narrative elements to persuade consumers with commercial advertisements (Megehee & Spake, 2012). The previous studies on narrative theory and transportation imagery model (TIM) have suggested that well-structured stories can achieve changes in brand attitude such as brand evaluation, ad attitude (Escalas, 2004), or willingness to pay (Lundqvist et al., 2013). In order to examine these theories, this study utilized literature regarding narrative theory and used the Transportation Imagery Model scale as one of its measures. Furthermore, the study represents the first attempt within the luxury hotel context to confirm mediating effects of brand story structure.
5.6. Limitations and Future Studies

Some limitations exist in this study and recommendations for future research are identified to expand the research implications of this study. The present study investigated a one-way causal relationship from brand immersion to perceived brand image. However, these two variables might be correlated variables. Due to the nonexistence of a previous perceived brand image for a fictitious brand, this research could not test whether there is a two-way causal relationship between the variables.

This research investigated the effect of brand story structure on immersion and brand image, not on brand attitude. Therefore, from this research, this study cannot conclude that brands with a well-structured story will increase market performance. Future research needs to investigate the impact of brand story structure on brand attitude and purchasing intentions. Because general managers of luxury hotels strive to increase the financial performance of the hotel, future research on brand attitude and purchasing intentions of consumers may deliver valuable information to them about brand storytelling.

This research tested brand story structure, but telling a story is also important. In order to test the impact of brand story structure on consumer behavior, channels for brand storytelling need to be considered for the experiment. In reality, brand stories are usually delivered via specific channels such as print, SNS, Youtube, internet, etc. In the communication literature, there are several prior studies about the comparison of channels to find the most effective to deliver a message or a brand story (Coombs & Holladay, 2009).

The present study postulated that emplotment, historical connections, and narrative voice are structural elements of a good brand story. These three elements came from Stern (1994) and Kent (2012)’s studies. Stern (1994) suggested that three dimensions of a story—telling, tale, and truth—are key elements of a good brand story. Also, this study applied terms of emplotment and historical connections suggested by Kent (2012) on tale and telling parts to extend their meanings. However, there have been diverse suggestions on “What is a well-structured story” and “Which elements constitute a good brand story.” This research did not test empirical research about whether “these factors [are] truly elements of good story structure”; therefore, further empirical tests on the three elements of a good brand story need to be exercised.
Tobias (2011) suggested 20 master plots, but this study utilized a crafted story with a “Love” master plot to reduce heterogeneity of preference. However, based on the theory of Kent (2012), different plot types can bring different results in empirical studies. Therefore, this research needs to be investigated from a different viewpoint of plot types. According to Ryu et al. (2017), pursuit and adventure plots were frequently utilized in luxury hotel brand stories. Therefore, the relationship between brand story structure and narrative immersion or brand image should be investigated with stories with pursuit or adventure plot types.

Based on Mossberg’s (2008) study, the servicescape in the luxury hotel setting has an important role in telling a brand story. Because luxury hotel users are staying and experiencing the servicescape more than consumers in a product-based industry, the servicescape can be utilized effectively to make their guests live in a brand story (Ryu et al., 2017). Future research needs to incorporate the role of brand storytelling and the fact that a brand’s servicescape needs to be strategically orchestrated based upon the brand story. Deeper insight into consumers’ experiences is required to validate the application of compelling brand storytelling principles in luxury hotels. A further stage of brand storytelling moves the story from envisioning to engagement, where consumers can enact promoting the brand by themselves to make the story their story and, in turn, share it with others (Baker and Boyle, 2009).

This empirical study measured the effectiveness of the varying degree of stories in terms of how well readers are immersed in the stories and how they perceived an image of the brand. This finding cannot be interpreted such that the impacts for brand image are the same as the effects for brand attitude. Also, in the previous literature, the fact that correlations between brand image and brand attitude have not been found every time (Petty et al., 1983) challenges this assumption and suggests that the memory-attitude relationship is not necessarily linear. Since memory on brand image may be a poor predictor of purchasing behavior (Mackie & Asuncion, 1990), research on the effectiveness of brand image using story elements should investigate both memory and attitude effects. Future studies may determine not only how a brand story is cognitively processed to a perceived image of the brand, but also how it affects consumers' purchasing attitudes. Additionally, luxury hotels were selected as the focus of this study. However, in the overall hospitality
setting, consumers have a tendency to enjoy emotional attachment and react sensitively to experience, entertainment, exhibitionism and evangelizing, which represent the characteristics of service consumers. In future studies, researchers could examine the effect of brand story structure on the overall hospitality setting or for other products or service categories.
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APPENDIX A. PILOT STUDY—FIRST PART

Background
This study conducts research on the effects of elements of a brand story on immersion in a story. I would love to hear from experts about the quality of stories prior to pretest, whether the elements of story were well-delineated or not. This will help us make improvements to the modified stories and main experiment. If you have any question or wish to obtain information regarding the research result, please contact: Kyungin Ryu (ryu27@purdue.edu), School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Purdue University.

The stories are about an invented tale of the fictitious luxury hotel brand “Douvris.” Eight versions of the brand story with varying degrees of “clarity of plot,” “historical connection,” and “narrative voice” were created for the pretest.

What are the elements of Brand Stories?
Hirschman (1988) and Stern (1995) argued that there are three key components of the effectiveness of a brand story: the telling (clarity of plot), the tale (historical connection), and the teller (narrative voice).

1) Historical connection (Beverland, 2005; Huang, 2010) is having a clear time of brand origin, a long history of the brand, traceable origin, and rational plot.
   a. Description of Historical Connection: A story would not need to be a real story, but the story would be believed as “a true story” if it embraced some historical connections to people in real life (Loebbert, 2005). A story loses its clarity and integrity of the argument if it does not accord with historical evidence in the brand, and appears to distort or hide the truth (Holt and MacPherson, 2010). What is perceived to be historical connection must fit into customers’ mental perspectives of how things “ought to be” (Grayson and Martinec 2004).

2) Clarity of plot is having a causal relationship, an explanation about the origin, the linear time arrangement, and rational scenes arrangement of the brand.
   a. Description of Clarity of Plot: Plot thus serves the important role of organizing experiences and making them meaningful in a logical sequence. It is an essential attribute that organizes events with a beginning, middle, and an end (Stern, 1994). Stern (1994) stated that an appropriate plot should always maintain the emotional connection between the brand and consumer.

3) Narrative voice was manipulated in the storylines with a leading voice by either a first or third person narrator.
   a. First-person narrator: The stories told by a first-person narrator employed “I” when presenting information.
   b. In the third-person stories, the stories have a dry tone of objective description about the hotel experience. [Pretest stories are as follows.]
APPENDIX B. STORIES FOR MAIN TEST

[Story 1. Clear plot, high historical connection, and first-person narrator]

When I met my future husband, James Douvris, who is an award-winning architect, I was an accomplished musician. James and I initiated the Douvris hotel in Charleston, SC, at the beginning of the twentieth century. One weekend in March 1927, James proposed to me on our favorite hike at the Stairway to Heaven (Haiku Stairs) on the island of Oahu, HI. I promised to marry him if he would always make me laugh at a house with a balcony that overlooks a rose garden.

James returned home and started a plan to build a luxury and elegant mansion in Charleston. It took three years to construct the house. Soon, we fell in love with the mansion and got married at its rose garden in 1932. As the Douvris couple, we enjoyed laying down on the vintage bench in the rose garden and being immersed in the fragrance of white roses and romantic breeze of sunset. Sadly, our happy marriage did not last long. James died in a car accident in December of 1932, less than one year into our marriage. After the tragic accident, my heart was broken from the pain of separation of death. However, I cannot leave our house due to a romantic memory. I had decided to share the pleasant breeze of the house with others by operating the house as a hotel named Douvris to remember his love. Douvris opened on January, 4, 1933 to national acclaim as five-star hotel. I kept the hotel until I was able to manage hotel facilities. Though the ownership now includes several partners since the late 1980s, guests continue to embrace Douvris as their romantic refuge.

Several decades later, whenever I visit Douvris, I still feel the legacy of our love revolving around the calm sweep of the rose garden in the distant sunlight, with the promise of warmth and intimacy at the end of the day. I can experience a secure and private realm with stunning contemporary décor and a broad range of service on request worthy of a five-star establishment. With a 14,000-bottle wine cellar, I have spent my entire stay choosing a bottle from the list. I also love a spectacular view of Douvris’ sprawling 15-acre grounds and the highlight of Charleston’s rural retreats. The large pool, sweeping staircase, and state of the art lobby are only some of the meticulously detailed
spaces of the hotel. This fulfills my desire to feel the romantic escape we experienced in 
Douvris. Guests vising Douvris will fall in love with Douvris like it’s their second home.

[Story 2. Clear plot, high historical connection, and third-person narrator]
Award-winning architect James Douvris and accomplished musician Evelyn White initiated the Douvris hotel in Charleston, SC, at the beginning of the twentieth century. One weekend in March 1927, James proposed to Evelyn on their favorite hike at the Stairway to Heaven (Haiku Stairs) on the island of Oahu, HI. She promised to marry him if he would always make her laugh at a house with a balcony that overlooks a rose garden.

James returned home and started a plan to build a luxury and elegant mansion in Charleston. It took three years to construct the house. Soon, they fell in love with the place and got married at its rose garden in 1932. The Douvris couple enjoyed laying down on the vintage bench in the rose garden and being immersed in the fragrance of white roses and romantic breeze of sunset. However, their happy marriage did not last long. James died in a car accident in December of 1932, less than one year into their marriage. After the tragic accident, Evelyn decided to share the romantic breeze of the house with others by operating the house as a hotel named Douvris to remember their love. Douvris opened on January, 4, 1933 to national acclaim as five-star hotel. Evelyn kept the hotel until she was no longer physically able to live there. Though the ownership now includes several partners since the late 1980s, guests continue to embrace Douvris as their romantic refuge.

Guests can feel the legacy of the Douvris couple revolve around the calm sweep of the rose garden in the distant sunlight, with the promise of warmth and intimacy at the end of the day. Guests can experience a secure and private realm with stunning contemporary décor and a broad range of service on request worthy of a five-star establishment. With a 14,000-bottle wine cellar, guests are able to spend their entire stay choosing a bottle from the list. Guests will also enjoy a spectacular view of Douvris’ sprawling 15-acre grounds and the highlight of Charleston’s rural retreats. The large pool, sweeping staircase, and state of the art lobby are only some of the meticulously detailed
spaces of the hotel. This can fulfill guests’ desire to experience the romantic escape in *Douvris*. They will fall in love with *Douvris* like it’s their second home.

[Story 3. Clear plot, low historical connection, and FPN]

*Douvris* was initiated by James Douvris and Evelyn White in Charleston, SC. James proposed to Evelyn on their favorite hike at the island of Oahu, HI. She promised to marry him if he would always make her laugh at a house with a balcony that overlooks a rose garden. James built a luxury and elegant mansion in three years and then they got married at its rose garden.

The Douvris couple enjoyed laying down on the vintage bench in the rose garden and being immersed in the fragrance of white roses and romantic breeze of sunset. However, their happy marriage did not last long. James died in a car accident less than one year into their marriage. After the tragic accident, Evelyn decided to operate the house as a hotel named *Douvris*.

Several decades later, as I visited *Douvris*, I could feel the legacy of the Douvris couple revolve around the calm sweep of the rose garden in the distant sunlight, with the promise of warmth and intimacy at the end of the day. I experienced a secure and private realm with stunning contemporary décor and a broad range of service on request worthy of a five-star establishment. With a 14,000-bottle wine cellar, I could have spent my entire stay choosing a bottle from the list. I also enjoyed a spectacular view of *Douvris’* sprawling 15-acre grounds and the highlight of Charleston’s rural retreats. The large pool, sweeping staircase, and state of the art lobby are only some of the meticulously detailed spaces of the hotel. This fulfilled my desire to experience the romantic escape in *Douvris*. I fell in love with *Douvris* like it was my second home.

[Story 4. Clear plot, low historical connection, and third-person narrator]

*Douvris* was initiated by James Douvris and Evelyn White in Charleston, SC. James proposed to Evelyn on their favorite hike at the island of Oahu, HI. She promised to marry him if he would always make her laugh at a house with a balcony that overlooks a rose garden. James built a luxury and elegant mansion in three years and then they got married at its rose garden.
The Douvris couple enjoyed laying down on the vintage bench in the rose garden and being immersed in the fragrance of white roses and romantic breeze of sunset. However, their happy marriage did not last long. James died in a car accident less than one year into their marriage. After the tragic accident, Evelyn decided to operate the house as a hotel named *Douvris*.

Guests can feel the legacy of the *Douvris* couple revolve around the calm sweep of the rose garden in the distant sunlight, with the promise of warmth and intimacy at the end of the day. Guests can experience a secure and private realm with stunning contemporary décor and a broad range of service on request worthy of a five-star establishment. With a 14,000-bottle wine cellar, guests are able to spend their entire stay choosing a bottle from the list. Guests will also enjoy a spectacular view of *Douvris*’ sprawling 15-acre grounds and the highlight of Charleston’s rural retreats. The large pool, sweeping staircase, and state of the art lobby are only some of the meticulously detailed spaces of the hotel. This can fulfill guests’ desire to experience the romantic escape in *Douvris*. They will fall in love with *Douvris* like it’s their second home.

[Story 5. Unclear plot, high historical connection, and FPN]

In December of 1932, award-winning architect James Douvris died in a car accident and then accomplished musician Evelyn Douvris decided to operate their first house as a hotel named *Douvris* to remember their love. One weekend in March 1927, James proposed to Evelyn on their favorite hike at the Stairway to Heaven (Haiku Stairs) on the island of Oahu, HI. James started a plan to build a luxury and elegant mansion with a balcony that overlooks a rose garden as their first house in Charleston, SC. Soon, they fell in love with the place and got married at its rose garden in 1932. The Douvris couple enjoyed laying down on the vintage bench in the rose garden and being immersed in the fragrance of white roses and romantic breeze of sunset. *Douvris* opened on January, 4, 1933 to national acclaim as five-star hotel. Evelyn kept the hotel until she was no longer physically able to live here. Though the ownership now includes several partners since the late 1980s, guests continue to embrace *Douvris* as their romantic refuge.

Several decades later, as I visited *Douvris*, I could feel the legacy of the *Douvris* couple revolve around the calm sweep of the rose garden in the distant sunlight, with the
promise of warmth and intimacy at the end of the day. I experienced a secure and private realm with stunning contemporary décor and a broad range of service on request worthy of a five-star establishment. With a 14,000-bottle wine cellar, I could have spent my entire stay choosing a bottle from the list. I also enjoyed a spectacular view of Douvris’ sprawling 15-acre grounds and the highlight of Charleston’s rural retreats. The large pool, sweeping staircase, and state of the art lobby are only some of the meticulously detailed spaces of the hotel. This fulfilled my desire to experience the romantic escape in *Douvris*. I fell in love with *Douvris* like it was my second home.

[Story 6. Unclear plot, high historical connection, and third-person narrator]

In December of 1932, award-winning architect James Douvris died in a car accident and then accomplished musician Evelyn Douvris decided to operate their first house as a hotel named *Douvris* to remember their love. One weekend in March 1927, James proposed to Evelyn on their favorite hike at the Stairway to Heaven (Haiku Stairs) on the island of Oahu, HI. James started a plan to build a luxury and elegant mansion with a balcony that overlooks a rose garden as their first house in Charleston, SC. Soon, they fell in love with the place and got married at its rose garden in 1932. The Douvris couple enjoyed laying down on the vintage bench in the rose garden and being immersed in the fragrance of white roses and romantic breeze of sunset. *Douvris* opened on January, 4, 1933 to national acclaim as five-star hotel. Evelyn kept the hotel until she was no longer physically able to live here. Though the ownership now includes several partners since the late 1980s, guests continue to embrace *Douvris* as their romantic refuge.

Guests can feel the legacy of the *Douvris* couple revolve around the calm sweep of the rose garden in the distant sunlight, with the promise of warmth and intimacy at the end of the day. Guests can experience a secure and private realm with stunning contemporary décor and a broad range of service on request worthy of a five-star establishment. With a 14,000-bottle wine cellar, guests are able to spend their entire stay choosing a bottle from the list. Guests will also enjoy a spectacular view of *Douvris*’ sprawling 15-acre grounds and the highlight of Charleston’s rural retreats. The large pool, sweeping staircase, and state of the art lobby are only some of the meticulously detailed...
spaces of the hotel. This can fulfill guests’ desire to experience the romantic escape in *Douvris*. They will fall in love with *Douvris* like it’s their second home.

[Story 7. Unclear plot, low historical connection, and FPN ]
Award-winning architect James Douvris died in a car accident and then accomplished musician Evelyn Douvris decided to operate their first house as a hotel named *Douvris* to remember their love. James proposed to Evelyn on their favorite hike at the island of Oahu, HI. James started a plan to build a luxury and elegant mansion with a balcony that overlooks a rose garden as their first house in Charleston, SC and got married at its rose garden. The Douvris couple enjoyed laying down on the vintage bench in the rose garden and being immersed in the fragrance of white roses and romantic breeze of sunset.

Several decades later, as I visited *Douvris*, I could feel the legacy of the Douvris couple revolve around the calm sweep of the rose garden in the distant sunlight, with the promise of warmth and intimacy at the end of the day. I experienced a secure and private realm with stunning contemporary décor and a broad range of service on request worthy of a five-star establishment. With a 14,000-bottle wine cellar, I could have spent my entire stay choosing a bottle from the list. I also enjoyed a spectacular view of *Douvris’* sprawling 15-acre grounds and highlight of Charleston’s rural retreats. The large pool, sweeping staircase, and state of the art lobby are only some of the meticulously detailed spaces of the hotel. This fulfilled my desire to experience the romantic escape in *Douvris*. I fell in love with *Douvris* like it was my second home.

[Story 8. Unclear plot, low historical connection, and third-person narrator]
Award-winning architect James Douvris died in a car accident and then accomplished musician Evelyn Douvris decided to operate their first house as a hotel named *Douvris* to remember their love. James proposed to Evelyn on their favorite hike at the island of Oahu, HI. James started a plan to build a luxury and elegant mansion with a balcony that overlooks a rose garden as their first house in Charleston, SC and they got married at its rose garden. The Douvris couple enjoyed laying down on the vintage bench in the rose garden and being immersed in the fragrance of white roses and romantic breeze of sunset.
Guests can feel the legacy of the Douvris couple revolve around the calm sweep of the rose garden in the distant sunlight, with the promise of warmth and intimacy at the end of the day. Guests can experience a secure and private realm with stunning contemporary décor and a broad range of service on request worthy of a five-star establishment. With a 14,000-bottle wine cellar, guests are able to spend their entire stay choosing a bottle from the list. Guests will also enjoy a spectacular view of Douvris’ sprawling 15-acre grounds and the highlight of Charleston’s rural retreats. The large pool, sweeping staircase, and state of the art lobby are only some of the meticulously detailed spaces of the hotel. This can fulfill guests’ desire to experience the romantic escape in Douvris. They will fall in love with Douvris like it’s their second home.
APPENDIX C. SURVEY

A survey on the effects of brand stories on brand image

Dear Participant,

We are inviting you to take part in this research by participating in a survey that will take about 10 minutes. You must be at least 18 years old, currently live in the U.S., and have stayed at a luxury and elegant hotel for leisure within the past year to answer our questions. Participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time.

This study is part of my thesis research. It explores whether and how the structural elements in a hotel brand story may change a consumer’s perception of the brand.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors. Data collected from the survey will remain confidential as no personal result will be reported in the data analysis. There is no foreseeable risk associated with participating in this research project. This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the researchers and practitioners to learn more about effects of brand stories on brand image. If you choose to participate in this project, please answer all questions as honestly as possible.

If you have questions about your rights as a subject, you may contact the Purdue University Human Research Protection Program at (765) 494-5942, or irb@purdue.edu. And you may also write to the following address: Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032, 155 S. Grant St., West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114.

If you have questions, comments or concerns about this research project, you can contact to one of the researchers. Please contact: Kyungin Ryu at (765)-607-0446 (ryu27@purdue.edu), Dr. Xinran Lehto at (765)-496-2085 (xinran@purdue.edu), and Dr. Susan Gordon at (765)-494-8031 (gordon31@purdue.edu), School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Purdue University.

Survey

Text: Please read a brand story as below.

(A participant will read one brand story randomly from eight brand stories of Appendix B)
1. Below are listed some statements that indicate how you would feel about the brand story described in the previous page. For each statement, please indicate to what extent you agree with it. »1« means the statement showed your feeling not at all, and »7« means the statement showed your feeling very much.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all (1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>Very much (7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While I was reading the narrative, events going on in the story were vividly imagined.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I was emotionally involved in the narrative.</td>
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<td>While I was reading the narrative, I could easily picture the events in it taking place.</td>
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<td>The events in the narrative have changed my life.</td>
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<td>The events in the narrative are relevant to my everyday life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I found my mind wandering while reading the narrative.</td>
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<td>I could picture myself in the scene of the events described in the narrative.</td>
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<tr>
<td>After finishing the narrative, I found it easy to put it out of my mind.</td>
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<tr>
<td>While reading the narrative I had a vivid image of <em>Douvris</em>.</td>
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<td>I found myself thinking of ways the narrative could have turned out differently.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was mentally involved in the narrative while reading it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I wanted to learn how the narrative ended.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Q2. Below are listed some statements that indicate the brand image of *Douvris*. For each statement, please indicate to what extent you agree with it. »1« means you completely disagree with it, and »5« means you agree with it completely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree (1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>Strongly agree (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Douvris brand makes me feel good.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Douvris brand makes me feel delighted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>After knowing about the Douvris hotel, this brand will increase my frequency of staying at a hotel.</td>
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<td>This brand gives me pleasure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I stay at the Douvris hotel, I feel it may prevent me from looking cheap.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Douvris brand emulates the perceptions that I have of a desirable lifestyle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>This is a hotel that I can recommend to my social group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I stay at this hotel, I feel that service from this hotel would make me feel accepted.</td>
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<td>If I stay at this hotel, I feel it would improve others’ positive perception of me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I stay at this hotel, I feel it would perform as it promises in the brand story.</td>
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<td>If I stay at this hotel, I feel it can satisfy my expectation of this brand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I stay at this hotel, I feel it will create a good impression of me among other people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staying at this hotel would be more effective to my satisfaction than other hotels.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographic Questions

Q3. What is your age?

- 18–20
- 21–29
- 30–39
- 40–49
- 50–59
- 60 or older

Q4. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

Q5. In what country do you currently reside?

- United States
- Other (please specify)

Q6. What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?

- Less than $25,000
- $25,000 to $34,999
- $35,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $74,999
- $75,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 or more

Q7. What is your ethnicity?

- African American
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Pacific Islander
- White
- Native American
- Other

Q8. What is your education level?

- Completed some high school
- High school graduate
- Completed some college
- Associate degree
- Bachelor’s degree
- Completed some postgraduate
• Master’s degree
• Ph.D or other professional degree

Thank you for participating in our survey!

***End of Survey***