

**“THE IMPACT OF STORYTELLING MARKETING ON CONSUMER PURCHASE  
INTENTIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF BRAND IMAGE IN THE REAL ESTATE  
SECTOR”**



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The Impact of Storytelling Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intentions: The Mediating Role Of  
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## Author's Declaration

I, Muhammad Saad Tariq , Enrollment Number 01-322241-010, hereby declare that the thesis titled “*The Impact Of Storytelling Marketing On Consumer Purchase Intentions: The Mediating Role Of Brand Image In The Real Estate Sector*” is my original work. This thesis has not been submitted previously by me for the award of any degree at Bahria University Islamabad or any other institution in Pakistan or abroad. I fully understand that should any part of this declaration be found to be wrong, even after the conferment of the degree, the University holds the right to revoke my MBA degree.

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## ABSTRACT

The contemporary understanding of real estate market in Pakistan is undergoing a deep structural change that brings it from old transactional promotional models into the new and developed narrative-based frameworks embedded in emotions and humanity-oriented branding. This study examines the effects of storytelling marketing on consumers purchase intentions in the high-risk and high involvement property sector with particular reference to the mediating role of brand image. The research is anchored in the framework Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) that integrates Signaling Theory and Narrative Transportation Theory in order to explain the process of translation of inputs of digital marketing into internal psychological perceptions as well as subsequent behavioral outcomes. The work overcomes a critical trust deficit and pervasive wait and see consumer sentiments as a result of past administrative opaqueness and current macroeconomic volatility in Pakistan.

The research has a quantitative, cross-section approach and information is gathered from a sample of 285 potential investors and homebuyers located in major metropolitan hubs, such as Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. The analysis was done by Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4 software package in order to measure the complex interrelationships between the variables. The conceptual framework investigates two main independent variables: digital storytelling dimensions which include credibility, resonance and extensibility, content delivery dimensions which include narrative structure, theming and perceived aesthetics.

The empirical results prove that both the digital storytelling and the content delivery has a significant positive effect to the consumer purchase intentions and prove the main hypotheses to be true. One of the important conclusions of this study is the nuanced role of brand image in

mediating. The results of mediation analysis prove that the concept of brand image is able to mediate the relationship in resonance, the structure of the narrative, theming, and the perceived aesthetics. This means that emotional and visual cues need a reputation building phase in order to have an effective influence on intent. On contrary, the mediating effect of brand image was not supported on credibility and extensibility. In case of trust deficient Pakistani market these variables are direct functional signals where a sense-perceived reliability and persistence is enough to trigger immediate purchase intention and eliminate the need for an emotional bridge between brand.

The theoretical implications of this study go beyond the S-O-R model in understanding high ticket property acquisition in the important developing economies by moving Signaling Theory forward by the concept of defining the functional and emotional signals. Practically, the findings are a strategic road map for real estate developers, which shows that while aesthetic excellence across social networks like Instagram is the recipe for establishing long-term brand equity, factual credibility is the most efficient way turn passive observation into tangible financial commitment. This study concludes that humanity-oriented branding based on verifiable authenticity if it provides the psychological scaffolding needed on which to build market stability in the context of an ever more competitive and data saturated landscape.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The world of real estate is in the middle of a fundamental paradigm shift away from archaic and transactional promotional models towards a sophisticated and narrative driven model based on emotional engagement and humanity-oriented branding. For decades, the industry has been built around a bricks and mortar philosophy of marketing collaterals whereby most often were based on a functional requirement (square footage, structural materials and technical amenities), as a way to communicate value to potential investors. However, this utilitarian mode of operation has come to be more and more obsolete in a modern market place where the products are so severely homogenized that competing developments often look virtually indistinguishable to an overwhelmed and skeptical public (Yang, Lyshenko, & Xiao 2024). This sea of sameness has meant that traditional adverts that have operated on a high features approach are no longer thought adequate to engender high involvement purchase decisions as consumers now place their values with lived experience and communal value rather than physical dimensions. In the particular context of Pakistan these problems are aggravated additionally by a problem which has afflicted many other countries, that of trust deficit, a product of the old administrative opaqueness in Pakistan and lack of transparency of documentation of land holdings. This systemic uncertainty coupled with the prevailing macro economic volatility and rising cost of construction have led to overall wait and see attitude among the local and overseas investors who often find themselves in state of cognitive hesitation in order to avoid capital risk.

In order to close down this trust deficit and to break away from the stagnation of the market, real estate developers are increasingly turning towards digital storytelling as an important signal

mechanism that is targeted to curb market information asymmetry. Through by making use of narrative transportation marketers can transport past the transactional silos possessed by the past, instead, presenting property developments as curated functional communities that supply ontological security and also a feeling of personal sanctuary (Kaur, Saini, Behl, & Poonia, 2024). This is what I refer to as a strategic evolution taking advantage of the dimensions of narrative credible, emotional resonance and aesthetic excellence, to solve the psychological uncertainty inherent in the acquiring of high risk and high ticket properties. Crucially, the impact of these digital narratives are not instantaneous and, instead, storytelling serve an immersive stimulus involved in penetrating the internal cognitive state of the consumer which act primarily via the mediating power of the brand image (Chang, 2025). As Pakistani property sector is in the process of undergoing the structural transition to digitization and is defined by PropTech integration and modernization of land records, the ability to write authentic and extensible stories has resulted in being a differential point for competitive survival. Reframing the reputation of the developer from that of the builder to a legitimate partner in the journey of the resolutions in someone's lifestyle, storytelling marketing helps to support the psychological scaffolding that is needed to turn the passive observer into a concrete purchaser. Consequently a serious academic research on the confluencing of narrative esthetics and consumer psychology is in need to understand the erosion of real estate enterprise in an increasingly unstable and data saturated economic environment to maintain a long term stability.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

In the past, the real estate marketing industry was run by the traditional way of promotion (Yang, Lyshenko, and Xiao, 2024). This way of advertising was characterised by its strict

prioritization of functional specifications and cost-based metrics. During this period, property listings were mostly utilitarian in nature. Marketing collateral was almost exclusively on the bricks and mortar of a development, such as certain types of units, total square footage, and the current price per square feet. This descriptive and technical approach eventually led to a unification in the real estate sector. Due to the fact that the same functional language and measures were being used by the developers, various projects became virtually indistinguishable from one another. This lack of differentiation meant that it was becoming increasingly difficult for real estate firms to attract the attention of modern buyers who have become more skeptical of standard corporate claims (Yang et al., 2024).

With the dynamic change in trends of marketing, the movement towards emotional branding has come as a response to the inevitable and external pressures that have been mounting, such as the global economic instability or the great shift in consumer behavior that is observed after the global pandemic. According to Ahmad Bakri, Rosman, and Ismail (2021), listing the physical features of a project is no longer a guarantee of success in the market. The researchers contend that the modern key to competitive advantage is a greater understanding of consumer needs and the provision of added value that goes beyond the physical product. This realization has forced a strategic move away from dry advertisements towards a humanity-oriented strategy. Rather than merely selling a physical structure modern real estate advertising now seeks to create the background of daily life. This approach is aimed at satisfying a client psychologically before they make a decision that transforms the property from being a financial asset to a personal sanctuary (Yang et al., 2024).

In the light of the contemporary Pakistani field and the more wider global property market, this maturing is best seen in the rapid emergence of digital storytelling. Rather than depending on old-

fashioned classified ads developers are now using precision marketing to solve the problems associated with poor branding (Dai Youhao, 2023). By using different social platforms and short form video content, marketers are able to create emotional resonance by demonstrating community of culture and shared human experiences. This narrative approach makes it possible to have a more authentic connection with the audience. According to Chang (2025) the credibility of such digital narratives is crucial, as it serves as a signal of trust in a market where most buyers may perceive themselves as (lacking) people to trust. Effective storytelling is therefore used here to bridge this gap by positioning the brand as a trusted partner in the consumer's journey (Chang, 2025).

Ultimately, the real estate industry has been turned from the process of selling products to the more complicated task of selling life styles, to people. In this new paradigm, the image of a brand is based not on a collection of buildings but on the narrative of a functional community. Kaur, Saini, Behl and Poonia (2024) put it that digital storytelling is an inestimable tool to enhance brand image among consumers because it mitigates the uncertainty of high-value purchases. It is important to appeal to people's emotions. This evolution is part of a larger trend whereby the success of a real estate company is determined by the capacity of the company to combine the delivery of esthetic content with a brand message that is humanity-oriented, thereby affecting the purchase intentions through the mediating power of a strong and credible brand image (Yang et al., 2024; Kaur et al., 2024).

### **1.1.1 The Evolution of Real Estate Marketing: From Bricks-and-Mortar to Humanity-Oriented Branding**

The global real estate sector, including the fast evolving market in Pakistan, has always been dependent on the transactional model that focused on utility (physical) rather than emotional

connection with its audience. For decades the "traditional mode" of marketing property was characterised by a rigid emphasis on "bricks and mortar" specifications. Advertisements were often confined to functional information, such as square footage, number of bedrooms and technical quality of the infrastructure. However, this functional approach has become less and less effective in a modern economy where consumers are overburdened by choice and information. Yang, Lyshenko, and Xiao (2024) make the observation that they have in real estate enterprises where immense downward pressure is now being placed and a "homogenisation phenomenon" where various projects seem nearly identical to the untrained eye. This lack of differentiation often puts potential buyers in a "wait and see" mood which causes the market to stall and makes it difficult for developers to maintain consistent cash flow. To fight this, brands are shifting towards more humanity-oriented branding. This strategy entails a shift in the way that person is going to actually live in a space, and this shifts the focus from the building itself to the way of life it allows (Yang et al., 2024).

The usage of digital storytelling (DST) has been emerged as the main vehicle for this evolution. Kaur, Saini, Behl, and Poonia (2024) have highlighted that storytelling is a sophisticated tool used to reduce the high levels of psychological uncertainty that is a natural part of a property purchase. Because real estate is a high cost and high risk investment, consumers need more than just technical data to go from interest to intent. Statistics show that about 92% of consumers prefer brand advertisements that are constructed around digital stories because they are less like a sales pitch (Kaur et al., 2024). By their use of "theming" real estate developers have been able to create a narrative environment where the consumer is no longer just a target audience, but rather is the protagonist of their own domestic story. This immersive approach helps buyers to feel a sense of "psychological satisfaction" by telling a person mentally that this property is safe.

The method these stories work are best understood through the specific dimensions of credibility, resonance and extensibility in this paper. Chang (2025) suggests, for any narrative to have any joint to the consumer behavior, it must first be credible in itself. In the real estate industry, where the trust deficit can be large, credibility serves as an important signal of the developer's reliability and transparency. This is deeply rooted in Signaling Theory which proposes that efficacious narratives help cross the "information asymmetry" which often exists between the developer, who has all the details of a project, and the buyer who is taking a financial risk (Chang, 2025). When a story is able to create a state of resonance, the project will possess brand values that are in line with the personal aspirations of the buyer, for example social status, family heritage or a sense of community. Extensibility then ensures that this story is applicable across various digital channels from social media platforms to property portals so that the story can evolve along with the buyer's journey.

The role of brand image as a mediating variable is the last part of this evolutionary puzzle. Mazurek, Korzynski, and Krawczyk (2022) discuss how digital transformation has enabled developers to use virtual storytelling to build deep customer relationships that go far beyond a single transaction. This is especially relevant in the Pakistani context, where reputation of a developer is often the single most important factor for an investor. Chang (2025) shows that storytelling marketing does not always result directly into a purchase intention. Instead, the narrative works in a way that first reinforces or repairs the brand image. This improved image then becomes a psychological bridge that eventually led to the customer to intention to purchase. By moving away from a functional "bricks and mortar" approach towards a humanity-oriented story, real estate firms are able to create a sense of "place attachment" and trust. This strategic shift does not only help the project stand out within a crowded market but also ensures the long-term stable

development of the enterprise in an increasingly competitive market (Yang et al., 2024; Chang, 2025).

### **1.1.2 The Digital Transformation of the Pakistani Real Estate Sector**

Considerably, Pakistan real estate sector is in the process of structural transition as it is moving out of archaic and paper-based systems towards a digitized infrastructure. For decades this industry was backward by lack of transparency and had strong dependence on outdated Patwari system which was done manually and mostly the trust deficit issues were issued. However, the wave of digital transformation recently experienced is transforming these opacity work flow with complex technological solutions. Shahzad, Gill, Parvez and Raja (2023) made an assessment of the urban land administration systems in Pakistan on the basis of a Framework for Effective Land Administration. Their study reveals that although the country is on its way towards digitization, there is still major challenge in terms of human resources skills as well as integration of geographical information systems with the current administrative structure. Despite these hurdles, the vision of building smart cities in Pakistan is increasingly being linked to the standardization of land records and three dimensional modelling which are used to solve property disputes and to improve revenue collection. This modernisation is needed for the industry to overcome the traditional shackles and more humaized branding strategies.

Along with to this administrative digitalization goes to use data-driven planning tools. Akmal, Khan, Luqman and Ahmad (2022) highlighted that the utilization of geographical information system and remote sensing has established its position as one of the pillars of modernization in Pakistan. By using multicriteria evaluation methods, urban planners and developers in cities such as Sialkot may now do a better job of analyzing urban sprawl and land suitability with a precision

no one could have been able to do in the past. This spatial accuracy is important to storytelling marketing as it aids to the creation of a solid data base for digital storytelling. Email contact, phone calls and face-to-face meetings with a sceptical public give developers an opportunity to present verifiable spatial information as well as the precision of their project viability considerably greater credibility of their brand story. This technological basis implies accessible verifiable spatial information, which digital narratives need in order to be accessible as authentic to a sceptical public.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has also made a measurable impact in performance of the sector. Kanwal, Pitafi, Ahmad, Khan and Surahio (2022) suggests that the adoption of ICT is an important element for the efficiency of the markets in Pakistan, which helps in the modernization of the traditional sectors. This digital shift is particularly powerful in connection with a tech-savvy demographic which has preferred to engage with real estate brands via social media and mobile applications. This makes the aesthetic and the narrative elements of digital marketing to be more important than ever due to the fact that the buyer journey starts online now. Ullah and Al-Turjman (2023) seek the future of such transformation by exposing a conceptual framework for acceptance of Blockchain-based smart contracts in the real estate sector. Their research suggested that such decentralised systems can help improve transparency when it comes to deals regarding properties, which is especially useful for the Pakistani market, where fraud are a big concerns.

The evolution of the use of the technology of Property Development has changed the relationship between real estate brands and consumers in the region. Starr, Sarginor and Worzala (2021) that the advent of industrial technologies is disrupting traditional models of brokerage around the world. The private marketplaces in Pakistan have been using the centralized digital

platforms to install technologies giving buyers objective informations. This reduction in information asymmetry is critical in the development of a positive brand image. As it gives a power to the consumers with history price trends and verification tools by laws. SITs like virtual walkthroughs and ARs are offering a chance to potential investors, mainly overseas Pakistanis, to view a property remotely. This ability to take a buyer into a future home via a digital story is important to the concept of building place attachment and increasing purchase intent.

The digital transformation of The Pakistani Real estate sector is not only technological upgrade but the re-imagining of the property lifecycle. From the geographical information systems-based planning to the PropTech changes in brokerage, the sector is making more trustworthy environment. Whereas the issues on the land administration reform are not solved yet, the move towards smart real estate solution allows for the infrastructure of the story-telling marketing to flower. That changing digital landscape is empowering real estate companies to be much more focused on consumer engagement in an ever more competitive landscape.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The real estate market in Pakistan is currently going through a phase of severe economic volatility and a huge deficit of trust which complicates the decision making process of the consumer. Historically, real estate marketing has been carried out in a traditional mode that focuses on physical modes of advertising and marketing. Yang, Lyshenko, and Xiao (2024) contend that this reliance on bricks and mortar advertisements has led to simplification whereby developers use nearly identical metrics to describe their product. This lack of differentiation leads to a wait and see idea from potential buyers who find it increasingly difficult to distinguish between the reliability of various firms. Failure of traditional advertising to offer a unique value proposition

leads to stagnation of purchase intentions in a high involvement sector where the financial stakes are very high (Yang et al., 2024).

The nature of real estate is a high risk investment itself which is also a main challenge. Unlike fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) where purchases are frequently impulse driven or short term needs driven, real estate purchases are a life long commitment and major financial investment. Kaur, Saini, Behl, and Poonia (2024) emphasize on the consumers in this sector have a huge mental struggle which cannot be solved by traditional feature heavy ads. There is a growing skepticism among the Pakistani consumers on the traditional pitches especially in light of the past history of lack of transparency in land administration (Shahzad, Gill, Parvez, and Raja, 2023). Without a credible and resonant brand image, developers have a hard time selling buyers on their long term reliability.

There is a notable lack of empirical research in regards to the influence that narrative driven marketing has in the real estate buyer journey specifically. Much of the existing literature on storytelling marketing is focused on the FMCG or retail sectors where the decision making process is relatively simple. Storytelling is known to promote engagement, specific mechanisms of how credibility, resonance and extensibility affect brand image in high stake sectors are understudied (Chang, 2025). In the Pakistani context where ICT adoption is making the market modern, there is an urgent need to research how digital storytelling can bridge the trust gap. The digital shift is transforming the way consumers interact with brands, but developers have not yet a proven framework of how digital narratives can enhance the purchase intention through the mediation of brand image (Kanwal, Pitafi, Ahmad, Khan and Surahio, 2022).

The problem is firstly, the real estate industry in Pakistan still depends on functional marketing that does not address the skepticism of the high involvement buyer. Secondly, there is

a large theoretical and practical gap in understanding how the dimensions of digital storytelling namely narrative structure, theming and aesthetics can be leveraged to build a credible brand image. This study tries to address these gaps by studying the mediating role of brand image in the relationship between storytelling marketing and consumer behavior that gives a human-oriented solution for the current trust crisis in the Pakistani real estate (Chang, 2025; Kaur et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2024).

### **1.2.1 Market Downward Pressure and the "Wait-and-See" Consumer Sentiment**

The current real estate scenario in Pakistan is characterised by considerable macroeconomic volatility and structural instability which has put immense downward pressure on the performance of the market. This is illustrated by the rising construction costs, the fluctuating interest rates and the large economic shift which made property acquisition a high risk undertaking for the average investor. Many of the real estate enterprises are currently struggling for survival because of these adverse factors and thus a noticeable contraction in the sale of projects was observed (Yang, Lyshenko, and Xiao (2024). This external pressure has changed fundamentally the psychological state of the Pakistani buyer that is leading it away from active participation to so-called wait and see consumer sentiment. In this state of cognitive hesitation, potential buyers wait on the sidelines, carefully watching the fluctuations in the market and postponing buying decisions, in order not to lose their capital.

Yang, Lyshenko and Xiao (2024) find that where developers still use traditional bricks and mortar marketing that does not make one project stand out from the other. During a time of economic decline, when advertisements have been solely concerned with functional data, they do little to assuage the deep seated skepticism of the public. It is suggested that in such a challenging

environment, it is the ability of a marketing strategy to provide added value that goes beyond the physical product (Ahmad Bakri, Rosman, and Ismail, (2021). Shahzad, Gill, Parvez and Raja (2023) stated that paper based land records are not transparent which causes many discrepancies and this leads to an individual's desire in a cautious wait and see until a developer can prove his absolute reliability.

The role of digital transformation and the adoption of ICT is critical in addressing this market stagnation. Kanwal, Pitafi, Ahmad, Khan, and Surahio (2022) have shown that the integration of ICT has improved market in Pakistan, but it has also made the consumers more informed and more demanding. The wait and see sentiment is not just a passive state, but a rational response to lack of credible brand signals, storytelling marketing is a transformative strategy that can be a means of breaking this cycle of hesitation by being focused on credibility and resonance (Chang 2025). By using humanity oriented branding, developers can redirect the focus away from the unknown economic environment towards a stable and trustworthy brand image and this psychological bridge is crucial as purchase intentions in a high involvement sector like real estate are rarely driven by data alone but are instead the result of long term trust in the brand.

The adoption of smart technologies and PropTech platforms are helping to offer the verifiable data that can overcome this sentiment, which Akmal, Khan, Luqman, and Ahmad (2022) suggest that the use of GIS based planning and spatial accuracy acts as a signal of competence that can reassure cautious investors. But as Kaur, Saini, Behl, and Poonia (2024) show, technology is not enough without a narrative to help de-psychological uncertainty. The wait and see mood is a symptom of a crisis of trust that needs to be overcome with digital storytelling. By developing narratives that focus on the long-term lifestyle benefits and the security of the project, developers can shift the consumer from a state of observation to one of intent and the impact of storytelling

marketing on the consumer's purchasing intentions is mediated by its capacity to heal and reinforce the brand image, offering the emotional and rational security consumers demand in order to make a purchase despite the market's prevailing downward pressure (Chang, 2025; Kaur et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2024).

### **1.2.2 The Challenge of Product Homogenization and the Trust Deficit in Property Marketing**

Along with the change, the real estate market currently faces a severe homogenization phenomenon where various projects appear nearly identical due to a reliance on traditional bricks and mortar marketing (Yang, Lyshenko, & Xiao, 2024). When developers focus exclusively on functional specifications like unit size or price, they fail to create a unique value proposition, making it difficult for consumers to distinguish between brands, and this challenge is compounded by a deep seated trust deficit in property marketing, particularly in Pakistan, where historical issues in land administration and lack of transparency have led to significant skepticism (Shahzad, Gill, Parvez, & Raja, 2023). Consumers remain cautious of promotional claims that lack verifiable substance, because information asymmetry often favors the developer over the buyer,.

To address this matter, storytelling marketing must be utilized to build a credible brand image that goes higher than physical attributes. As Chang (2025) suggests, the credibility of a narrative is essential to overcome consumer skepticism and signal reliability in high stakes transactions. Developers cannot bridge the trust gap necessary to move a buyer from observation to intent without a distinct brand image built through resonant and authentic storytelling, This study argues that humanity oriented branding is the only effective way to counter product homogenization and restore trust in the Pakistani property market (Kaur, Saini, Behl, & Poonia, 2024; Yang et al., 2024).

### 1.3 Research Questions

RQ1. Does digital storytelling positively influence the consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan?

RQ1a. Does credibility of digital storyteller/marketer positively influence the purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan?

RQ1b: Does resonance of digital storyteller/marketer positively influence the purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.

RQ1c. Does extensibility of digital storyteller/marketer positively influence the purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.

RQ2. Does Content Delivery of digital stories positively influence the consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.

RQ2a. Does Narrative structure of the Content of digital stories positively influence the consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.

RQ3b. Does Theming of the Content of digital stories positively influence the consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.

RQ3c. Does Perceived esthetics of the Content of digital stories positively influence the consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.

RQ4 – Does Brand Image positively mediate the relationship between Content Delivery and consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.

RQ5 – Does Brand Image positively mediate the relationship between Digital storytelling and consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives:**

1. To evaluate the impact of digital storytelling on consumer purchase intention within the real estate sector of Pakistan.
  - 1a. To investigate the influence of the credibility of the digital storyteller or marketer on purchase intention in the Pakistani real estate market.
  - 1b. To assess the impact of resonance of the digital storyteller or marketer on consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.
  - 1c. To examine the effect of extensibility of the digital storyteller or marketer on purchase intention in the Pakistani real estate sector.
2. To determine the influence of content delivery of digital stories on consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.
  - 2a. To analyze the impact of the narrative structure of digital story content on consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.
  - 2b. To explore the relationship between the theming of the content of digital stories and consumer purchase intention in the Pakistani real estate market.
  - 2c. To evaluate the effect of perceived aesthetics of the content of digital stories on consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.
3. To analyze the mediating role of brand image in the relationship between content delivery and consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.
4. To examine the mediating role of brand image in the relationship between digital storytelling and consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.

This research effort has significant value both for the academic community as well as the professional landscape of the Pakistani property market by examining the intersection of narrative marketing and consumer behavior, the study addresses a critical gap in the marketing of high involvement products in developing economies.

### **1.5.1 Implications of the Findings for the Developers and Marketers in Pakistan**

The insights gained from this study can provide a strategic road map for Pakistani real estate developers who are presently facing pressure from the market going downwards and a huge trust deficit. This study demonstrates that humanity oriented branding is an important tool for differentiation in an environment of traditional advertisements have been homogenized. For the developers in the major urban centers such as Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad the research highlights that credibility is the most influential dimension of storytelling (Chang, 2025). Marketers can successfully communicate their trustworthiness to a sceptical public by focusing on genuine and verifiable stories. This is especially important in projects that focus on the overseas Pakistani population, since these investors place great importance on digital content in order to visualize the quality and legal status of their domestic investments.

As Kanwal, Pitafi, Ahmad, Khan and Surahio (2022) propose, the adoption of ICT has already started to modernize the Pakistani sector, but many firms do not have a narrative framework to take advantage of this technology. This research indicates that by paying attention to the story structure and perceived aesthetics of their digital stories, marketers can alleviate some of the psychological uncertainty that buyers experience when searching for a property (Kaur, Saini, Behl, & Poonia, 2024).

### **1.5.2 Theoretical Contribution to Narrative Marketing in High Involvement Sectors**

This study focuses on the real estate sector by applying S-O-R framework and Signaling Theory in particular. Previous research on storytelling marketing has largely focused on fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) or the retail sector this paper addresses the complexities of high involvement, high risk purchases. It extends the theoretical bases of narrative based marketing by explaining the role of certain dimensions like resonance and extensibility within a high ticket sales cycle (Chang, 2025). By identifying brand image as a partial mediator, the study provides a more complex picture of the consumer journey and suggests that the narrative does not necessarily create an impulse buy, but instead works by changing the consumer's perception of the brand.

It combines the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT 3) with the principles of brand management, as suggested by Kaur et al. (2024). This integration allows for a new view on the relationship between the technological convenience of digital storytelling platforms and the aesthetics experience to influence brand reputation. By studying these dynamics in a developing market such as Pakistan, the research helps in adding a cross cultural dimension to the global theories of branding. It challenges the assumption that functional marketing is enough in developing markets and proves that emotions such as resonance and credibility are global factors of trust and intention to purchase in high-stake sectors. Chang et al., 2025.

### **1.6 Scope and Delimitations of the Study**

The scope of this research is particularly confined to the real estate industry in Pakistan. It is focused on the impact of digital storytelling as it is delivered via modern PropTech platforms and social media channels. The study is focused on potential property buyers and investors who

live in major metropolitan areas like Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad as these areas are the most active areas for digital real estate marketing.

The delimitations of the study are that it focuses on residential and mixed use real estate projects, and excludes any purely industrial or agricultural land transactions. Additionally, the study is focused on digital storytelling as opposed to traditional offline storytelling such as billboard or print advertising. While the research is aware of the importance of macroeconomic variables, such as inflation and interest rates, it does not try to measure these as independent variables instead it is focused entirely on the psychological and marketing mechanisms that influence purchase intention through the mediation of brand image.

### **1.7 Definition of Key Terms**

**Storytelling Marketing:** A humanity oriented branding strategy that uses narrative techniques to link the brand values to the consumer aspirations (Chang, 2025; Yang et al., 2024).

**Brand Image:** The group of associations and beliefs that consumers have about a particular real estate developer or project that is a psychological perception of reliability and quality (Chang, 2025).

**Purchase Intention:** The probability or the decision to purchase a property or invest in a real estate project based on their overall evaluation of the brand (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004; Chang, 2025).

**Credibility:** The perceived authenticity and truthfulness of the individual narrating the digital story or the story being told (Chang, 2025; Simmons, 2019).

**Resonance:** The emotional connection between the brand story and realized life experiences or world-view of the consumer (Gitomer, 2000; Chang, 2025).

Extensibility The Ability of a Brand Story to Remain Relevant and Evolve Across Multiple Digital Channels and Over Time (Vincent, 2002; Chang, 2025).

Digital Transformation: The structural transformation in the real estate sector from manual and paper based processes to the adoption of ICT, PropTech and the smart technologies (Kanwal et al., 2022; Ullah & Al-Turjman, 2023).

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Narrative Marketing

This research uses the Stimulus Organism Response framework with Signaling Theory and Narrative Transportation Theory as the main theorems for explaining the complex and often non linear psychological journey of the property buyer. The study offers a holistic lens within which the effectiveness of storytelling can be measured in the context of the Pakistani real estate market by synthesizing these theories.

##### 2.1.1 The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Model in Digital Spaces

The S-O-R model, which was first developed in environmental psychology, has been successfully adapted for digital consumer behavior in order to describe how online environments affect user behavior. In the particular context of this study, storytelling marketing and digital content delivery are the external stimuli that interact with the consumer. Chang (2025) argues that these stimuli do not lead to a purchase but penetrate the internal cognitive state of the consumer and this state is referred to as the organism. In real estate this internal state is manifested in the form of perceived brand image and the psychological trust that the buyer develops over time. Kaur, Saini, Behl, and Poonia (2024) suggest that the complexity of the digital stimuli, especially in an advanced technology such as virtual reality or high definition cinematography, means that there is a need for a nuanced understanding of how these signals are processed by the brain. By using the brand image as the mediating organism, this research recognizes that the buyer journey. In Pakistan it is an internal process of trust building and reducing risk before a significant financial

commitment is ever made. This model also enables investigation of the specific effect of various dimensions of a story on the internal perceptions of the consumer before reaching final decision.

### **2.1.2 Signaling Theory and Information Asymmetry in Real Estate**

Signaling Theory is a critical framework for understanding markets where one party has significantly more information than the other which is called information asymmetry. Chang (2025) posits that real estate is defined by profound information asymmetry because developers possess detailed knowledge about project that the average buyer lacks and in such an environment we have storytelling marketing acts as a high quality signal that conveys the reliability and professional competence of the developer. Signals need to be expensive or hard to falsify in order to be effective, and in the digital age, investment in high quality, credible storytelling is this expensive signal (Spence, 1973). Contemporary research by Shahzad, Gill, Parvez, and Raja (2023) suggests that in Pakistan where the land administration system is still maturing and trust in paper based records is low, the digital narrative of a developer is a surrogate for legal certainty. A credible and aesthetic story helps signal that the firm has the necessary resources and professionalism to deliver on the promises made and thus mitigate the risk perceived by the buyer, as well as fill the information gap that often stalls property transactions. This signalling process is especially important for projects focused on overseas Pakistanis who are unable to verify the construction progress physically and are completely dependent on the digital signals that the marketer uses to provide them.

### **2.1.3 Narrative Transportation Theory and Mental Immersion**

Narrative Transportation Theory refers to the distinct psychological process in which consumers become mentally taken up and emotionally immersed in a story world. When a consumer is transported into a narrative their ability to critically counter argue against a brand message is significantly reduced because they are preoccupied with the emotional experience (Sung, Han, Bae, and Kwon, 2022). This immersion is especially powerful in real estate, as developers use virtual storytelling to help buyers visualize their future lives in a community. Green and Brock (2000), have established that transportation is a unique mental process that combines feelings and focused attention. As explored by Kaur et al. 2024, this transportation is further enhanced by sensory stimuli such as visual aesthetics, as well as immersive theming. For a Pakistani investor being carried away into a narrative about a secured and community oriented lifestyle creates an emotional connection that a normal bricks and mortar listing can never do. This mental transportation helps the consumer to bridge the distance between their present reality and their future aspirations making the property feel like a tangible part of their identity.

## **2.2 Independent Variable 1: Digital Storytelling Dimensions (IV-1)**

Digital storytelling (DST) in real estate is the intersection of humanity oriented branding and modern day technological delivery. This construct is broken down into three specific and measurable dimensions:

1. Credibility
2. Resonance
3. Extensibility

all of which contribute to the overall impact of the narrative.

### **2.2.1 The Criticality of Storyteller Credibility**

Credibility is the perceived honesty, expertise and authenticity of the narrative source. Chang (2025) emphasizes that in narrative marketing, credibility is the strongest and most direct influence on brand image, as well as purchase intention. In the real estate sector, credibility means the same as trust and reliability. Supriyadi and Syah (2024) found that source credibility has a significant effect on the purchase intention by mediating the psychological state of the consumer and reduces the inherent skepticism of the consumer. This is particularly relevant in the Pakistani market where Akmal, Khan, Luqman and Ahmad (2022) have established that the industry is moving towards data driven visualizations and GIS based accuracy. If the storyteller incorporates verifiable data, realistic time frames and imagery, the story is seen as credible by the public. Conversely, stories perceived as totally detached from the real physical location can have a very negative impact on the brand image and alienate sceptical buyers who are already sceptical about the historical lack of trust in property marketing.

### **2.2.2 Emotional Resonance and Self-Congruity**

Resonance is generated when the brand story resonates powerfully with the experiences, values and aspirations of the audience. Kaur et al. (2024) report that about 92 percent of consumers are more drawn to digital stories that offer a meaningful emotional connection to their own self concept. . . . thhis is consistent with Self Congruity Theory, which holds that consumers will select brands that are consistent or complementary to their own self image. In the Pakistani case, this is often accomplished by playing up themes of domestic heritage, family security, and social prestige. Ahmad Bakri, Rosman, and Ismail (2021) suggest that the key to success of real estate marketing

is through its ability to understand these deeper human needs, rather than merely to sell a physical asset. When a story resonates, it makes a humanity oriented connection that helps a project stand out in a marketplace characterized by homogenization of products. By making the story feel personal to the buyer, the developer can build a sense of psychological ownership that will over time translate into a formal purchase intention (Yang, Lyshenko, & Xiao, 2024).

### **2.2.3 Extensibility and the Digital Lifecycle of the Narrative**

Extensibility refers to the narrative's capacity to be relevant, consistent and impactful across different digital platforms and for a long period of time. Chang (2025) suggests that extensible stories create the necessary imagination space for consumers to integrate the brand into their personal lives and daily routine. In the modern era of Real Estate 4.0 as described by Starr, Saginor, and Worzala (2021), extensibility is a non negotiable requirement for digital success. A story that begins as a teaser on social media needs to logically become a detailed project website story and eventually the physical experience of the property tour. For the overseas Pakistani investors, extensibility is the digital bridge that enables them to track the progress of the project through a continuous and evolving narrative that keeps the investors interested over years of time. Kanwal, Pitafi, Ahmad, Khan and Surahio, 2022 have highlighted that the ICT adoption in Pakistan enables this narrative spread and the story becomes a constant and recurring element of the buyer within the digital environment, and this is required to maintain brand awareness throughout a long sales cycle.

## **2.3 Independent Variable 2: Content Delivery Dimensions (IV-2)**

Content delivery is the technological and creative vehicle with which the story is manifested to the audience, dealing with the structural and visual aspects of the message.

### **2.3.1 Narrative Structure and the Sequence of Persuasion**

Narrative structure gives the logical and chronological order of events of the brand story; it usually has a clear beginning, middle, and end. Kaur et al. (2024) find narrative structure as a key element that assists consumers in understanding why things happen and what causes certain things to happen. In real estate, for example, a well structured narrative can start with the developer's original vision of the land, progress through the challenges of sustainable construction and end with the final lifestyle provided to the future residents. This structure shifts the marketing away from the traditional mode of simple listing the features of the product towards a more persuasive and coherent journey that the buyer can follow mentally. According to Moin (2020), a powerful plot of brand storytelling is what enables the consumer to follow the narrative arc and achieve a state of psychological satisfaction. This structured approach helps in organizing complex information in the project into a digested form which reduces the cognitive load on the buyer (Yang et al., 2024).

### **2.3.2 Theming as a Narrative Tool for Functional Communities**

Theming is the process of establishing a unique and identifiable atmosphere or identity to a project by using certain narrative elements. Kaur et al. (2024) explain theming as a powerful way to make a digital story more dramatic, immersive and memorable. In the real estate industry, theming is employed to market a sense of a community and a lifestyle as opposed to simply a

physical construction. By developing a lifestyle based narrative, developers can transform a set of bricks and mortar into what Yang, Lyshenko and Xiao (2024) call a humanity oriented functional community. This differentiation is essential in a market where products have become homogenized and where prices are very competitive. For example, a project with a theme of green living, smart technology or heritage architecture offers a unique story that appeals to specific consumer segments based on their personal values and aesthetic choices creating a niche in a crowded marketplace.

### **2.3.3 Perceived Aesthetics and the Signal of Project Quality**

Perceived aesthetics are the beauty, clarity, professional quality and general attractiveness of the digital presentation. Kaur et al. (2024) identify aesthetics as a major factor in technology acceptance as well as building of brand image among online consumers. In real estate where the end product is often not yet built or is early in the development process, the aesthetics of the digital story is used as a proxy for how good the actual physical construction will be. High definition 3D renders, cinematic video tours and professional photography are fundamental signals of professionalism and attention to detail. Mazurek, Korzynski and Krawczyk (2022) argue that virtual storytelling and aesthetic quality are critical to establishing long term relationships in the modern market. For Pakistani consumers, who are becoming increasingly tech savvy and exposed to global standards, a badly presented digital story becomes a negative signal that can destroy brand trust before one word of the text is even read.

## **2.4 The Mediator: Brand Image (MV)**

Brand image is the mediating variable of the research, as it refers to the overall set of beliefs, associations, and perceptions that a consumer holds about a certain developer.

### **2.4.1 The Dominance of Brand Reputation in the Pakistani Market**

In the Pakistani real estate sector, brand reputation is often the main distinction between success and failure. Due to the high involvement nature of the purchase and the significant amount of financial risk involved, consumers are not just buying a physical property, they are buying into the developer's historical track record and perceived integrity. Chang (2025) using empirical analysis shows that brand image has a significant mediating effect on the final purchase intention between storytelling efforts and storytelling efforts. This reputation serves as a psychological safety net to the buyer. If a developer has a positive and creditable image, consumers are more inclined to ignore short term market volatility or economic pressure. Shahzad et al. (2023) suggests that as the Pakistani market modernizes itself, the brand image of a developer becomes a key factor in resolving the trust deficit that has historically plagued the sector as a competitive advantage that is difficult for others to replicate.

### **2.4.2 Offsetting Skepticism through Humanity Oriented Branding**

Traditional property marketing in Pakistan has often been criticized for being too dry and impersonal and for lacking a human touch. Humanity oriented branding, which has been proposed by Yang et al. (2024), aims to change this paradigm by making the brand more relatable, empathetic, and human-centric. Storytelling marketing meets the emotional and cognitive needs of the consumer and creates a state of psychological satisfaction that technical data cannot produce.

By centering around life, family and community rather than just financial returns on investment, developers can create a brand image that will overcome the skepticism created by the current wait and see sentiment in the market. Chang (2025) supports this by demonstrating that brand image is the organismic state which must be positively influenced before a consumer can make a stable and committed purchase intention in a high stakes environment.

## **2.5 The Dependent Variable: Consumer Purchase Intentions (DV)**

Purchase intention is the ultimate behavioral response in the buyer journey, which represents the likelihood of a formal financial commitment to a particular project.

### **2.5.1 The Complex High-Involvement Decision Cycle**

Real estate is considered to be the ultimate high involvement purchase due to the financial magnitude and the long term impact it has on a consumer's life. Unlike fast moving consumer goods where the purchase cycle is short and the individual risk is low, real estate entails a long term psychological and financial commitment. Ahmad Bakri et al. (2021) state that the most important factor to influence these intentions is to deliver added value that is not limited to the physical structure. Since the decision cycle can take months or even years, the marketing story must be persistent, credible and extensible. Storytelling marketing is uniquely suited for this task because it maintains the brand's relevance and emotional presence through the long search and evaluation process, and serves as a constant source of information and reassurance.

### **2.5.2 From Narrative Immersion to Final Behavioral Intent**

The shift from being a passive participant in a digital story to being an active purchaser is the direct outcome of immersion in a narrative and built-in brand trust. When a story is seen as

credible, resonant and aesthetically pleasing, it is in effect less risky and the consumer is more willing to purchase. What Chang (2025) amounts to is to certify that although storytelling's consumption effect has a direct impact on the intent, its indirect impact through the intermediary of brand image is often more profound and lasting. This implies that the story enhances the picture and the picture makes the sale. This journey in the Pakistani market is enabled by the digital transformation and PropTech platforms that are making the right medium for these stories to be delivered effectively to the global audience (Kanwal et al., 2022; Ullah & Al Turjman, 2023).

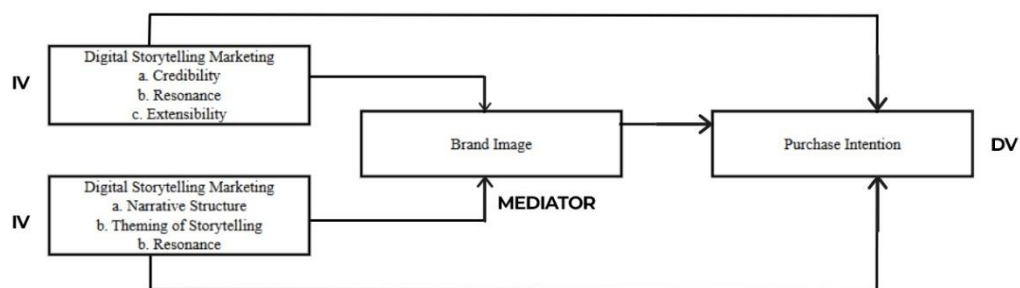
## **2.6 Synthesis of Gaps and Hypothesis Rationale**

Despite the growing body of international work on storytelling, there is still a big gap in the empirical research in high density linking specific narrative dimensions to the trust deficient environment of the Pakistani real estate sector. Most existing studies are on low involvement retail or well established Western markets where trust is institutionalized. This study fills the gap by utilizing a multi dimensional framework in a developing market that is undergoing rapid digital transformation. The rationale for the hypotheses is that if the dimensions of digital storytelling and the delivery of content are optimized to be humanity oriented, they will create a credible brand image that will eventually overcome consumer skepticism to drive the purchase intentions in an increasingly competitive and unstable economic landscape.

## **2.7 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study is meticulously created to show the complex interrelationships between digital storytelling, content delivery, brand image, and consumer purchase intentions. This framework is grounded in the Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R)

model which offers a logical framework for understanding the process by which environmental marketing inputs are converted into internal perceptions and subsequent behavioral outcomes. In this research, the stimuli are placed into two main independent variables. The first independent variable is the dimensions of the digital storyteller, which are credibility, resonance, and extensibility. The second independent variable includes the attributes of content delivery, namely narrative structure, theming and perceived aesthetics. These variables represent the external marketing efforts that a real estate developer puts in the digital space to attract the attention of the audience.



The organism dimension of the S-O-R model is indicated by the mediating variable of brand image. According to Chang (2025), brand image is an internal cognitive and affective state that is created as the consumer processes the marketing stimuli. In a high involvement sector such as the Pakistani real estate market, this internal state is the main connection between awareness and action, in the framework it is assumed that storytelling marketing and content delivery do not as such trigger an immediate purchase, but work through the organism by improving the perceived reliability and reputation of the brand. This is deeply aligned with Signaling Theory where the credibility and aesthetic quality of the story serves as high quality signals to reduce information asymmetry. When the consumer interprets these signals as genuine, this leads to a positive brand

image that helps to overcome the trust deficit that Shahzad, Gill, Parvez and Raja (2023) wrote about.

The last element of the framework is the response which is the dependent variable of consumer purchase intention. This intention is the behavioral manifestation of the internal psychological satisfaction that the consumer reaches after being exposed to resonant and well structured narratives and Kaur, Saini, Behl, and Poonia (2024) suggest that the technological and narrative elements of a story must be optimized to ensure that the consumer reaches a state of narrative transportation. This state of mental submersion enables the buyer to close the divide between the current state of his financial hesitation and his future domestic ambitions. The framework assumes the more the mediation of a positive brand image, the more likely the consumer is to move from a wait and see sentiment to a formal purchase intent.

The framework uses the principles of the Narrative Transportation Theory to explain the immersion process. As Sung, Han, Bae and Kwon (2022) have shown, the effectiveness of digital stories depends on the ability to mentally transport the viewer into the story world. In the Pakistani context, this transportation is made possible by the digital transformation of the sector, which offers the platforms required for high definition content delivery. By combining these theoretical perspectives, the framework provides a holistic perspective of the buyer journey. It is suggesting that the digital storyteller and the mode of content delivery is the main stimulus that builds the developer's reputation in the mind of the buyer. This improved reputation or brand image then becomes the ultimate catalyst to drive purchase intentions in an increasingly competitive and unstable economic landscape.

This conceptual framework also covers the special challenges of high risk investments by focusing on risk reduction by credible signaling. Chang (2025) emphasizes that the mediating role

of brand image is especially important when the purchase is long term financially committed with a high degree of personal involvement. By offering a structured way between stimulus and response, the framework, it is possible to test empirically each specific hypothesis. It recognizes that without a strong and credible brand image, even the most aesthetically pleasing stories can fail to create purchase intent so, the framework is both a logical map for the research and a theoretical contribution to the study of narrative marketing in emerging real estate markets (Yang, Lyshenko, & Xiao, 2024; Chang, 2025).

### **2.7.1 Theoretical Review**

The theoretical framework of this study is built based on synthesis of the Signaling Theory and Narrative Transportation Theory which have become the theoretical basis of this study Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework. These theories are an overall explanation of the complicated psychological mechanism through which digital marketing inputs are transformed into behavioral intentions. The S-O-R model that was originally developed within the domain of environmental psychology provides the primary structural foundation based on the assumption of external stimuli (S) penetrating into the internal cognitive and emotional state of the consumer, referred to as the organism (O), which, in its turn, results into behavioral response (R). The digital stories and content delivery in the case of Pakistani real estate industry is the multi-dimensional stimuli that attract the internal perception of the buyer of brand image. This state of the organism is particularly critical in high involvement industries where the wait and see attitude is elevated, since the brand image is a psychological framework that must be bolstered prior to any investment of funds (Chang, 2025).

Signaling Theory further refines this insight to support the type of severe information asymmetry that defines property transactions. Storytelling marketing in the Pakistani market, where historical lack of trust in land administration is a key obstacle, is a high quality, costly indicator of the trustworthiness and professionalism of a developer. This theory states that to be effective in lessening consumer skepticism, a signal should be perceived to be credible and authentic. This paper will discuss how factors like narrative credibility and extensibility as functional cues directly affect the decision-making process of the buyer. At the same time, the process of mental immersion, or Narrative Transportation Theory explains the transportation of the consumer to a fictional domestic reality that takes place, as a result of a properly organized and aesthetically satisfying narrative. Such a condition of immersion causes the consumer to be less likely to make the critical counter-argument to the marketing assertions and instead a feeling of ontological security and place-attachment. This work offers an integrated view of the consumer experience of engaging in the digital world to purchase intention by integrating these three theoretical perspectives (Kaur, Saini, Behl, and Poonia, 2024; Yang, Lyshenko, and Xiao, 2024).

### **2.7.2 Empirical Evidence**

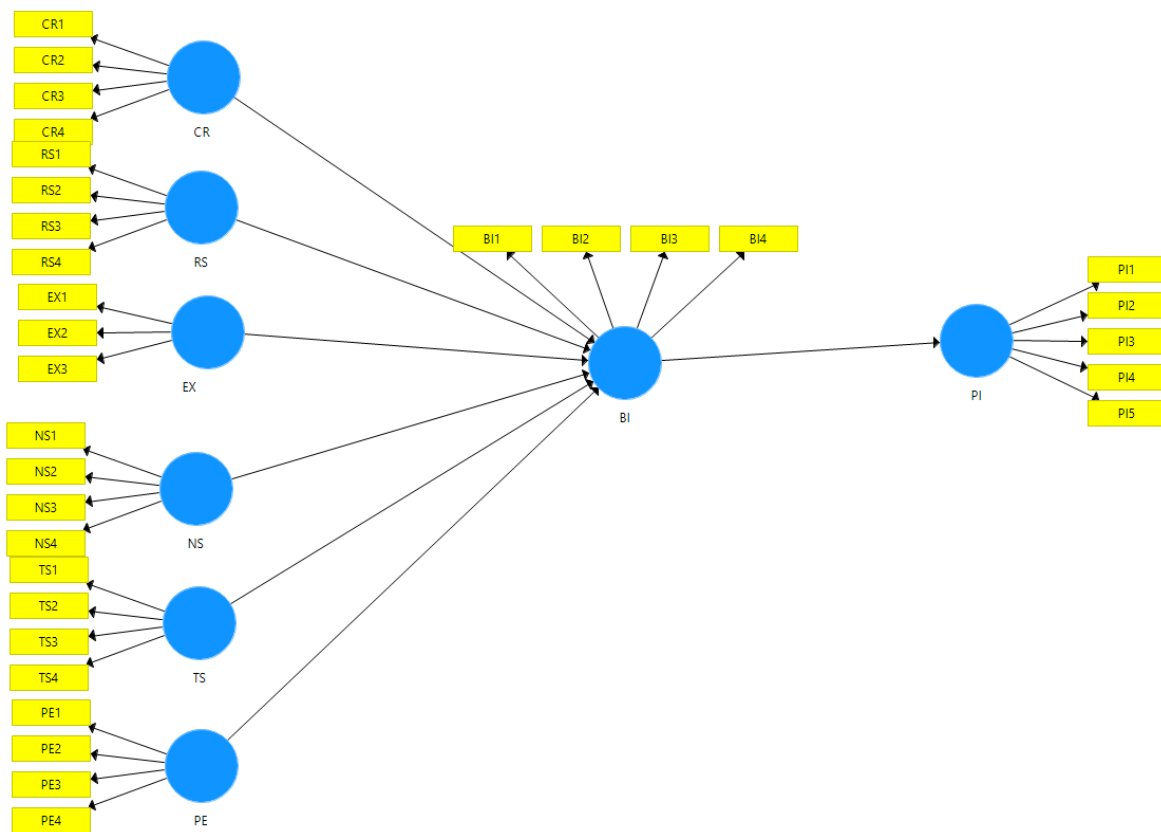
Empirical research on the intersection of storytelling marketing and consumer behavior has increased dramatically, though its adaptation to high-ticket real estate is a burgeoning industry. Previous research in the retail and fast moving consumer goods industries has consistently shown that narrative based advertisements perform better than traditional feature-based promotions for emotional engagement and brand recall. For example, recent empirical work by Chang (2025) established that brand image is a significant mediator in the relationships between storytelling and purchase intention especially when the narrative resonance is high. However, the transfer of these

findings to the real estate industry requires a nuanced understanding of the concept of risk. Kaur, Saini, Behl and Poonia (2024) conducted a digital storytelling analysis which revealed approximately 92 percent of consumers prefer brands that utilize narratives to communicate their values suggesting that the humanity-oriented branding shift is a global consumer preference.

In the specific context of Pakistan, empirical evidences point to a structural transition towards the digital transformation but they also show a persistent gap in the consumer trust. Research by Kanwal, Pitafi, Ahmad, Khan, and Surahio (2022) shows that although the adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has improved the performance of markets, it has also led to a more informed and disillusioned class of investors. Furthermore, studies on land administration by Shahzad, Gill, Parvez, and Raja (2023) suggest that administrative opaueeness usually stalls the purchase journey leading to a state of cognitive hesitation. Empirical evidence from more recent marketing studies suggests that though aesthetic elements and theming are necessary to establish a developer's reputation, they often are not sufficient to induce a sale in a volatile economy. This research builds on these empirical foundations by exploring the relationship between specific narrative dimensions such as credibility and their ability to short-circuit the traditional branding process and have a direct impact on intent leading to a unique contribution to the understanding of high-involvement consumer psychology in emerging markets (Yang, Lyshenko, & Xiao, 2024).

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Hypothesis Statement</b>

<b>Digital Storyteller</b>	H1	Digital storytelling positively influences consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.
	H1a	Credibility of the digital storyteller/marketer positively influences purchase intention.
	H1b	Resonance of the digital storyteller/marketer positively influences purchase intention.
	H1c	Extensibility of the digital storyteller/marketer positively influences purchase intention.
<b>Content Delivery</b>	H2	Content Delivery of digital stories positively influences consumer purchase intention.
	H2a	Narrative structure of the content positively influences purchase intention.
	H2b	Theming of the content of digital stories positively influences purchase intention.
	H2c	Perceived aesthetics of the content positively influences purchase intention.
<b>Mediation</b>	H3 (or H4)	Brand Image positively mediates the relationship between Content Delivery and purchase intention.
	H4 (or H5)	Brand Image positively mediates the relationship between Digital Storytelling and purchase intention.



## Chapter 3

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The main reason for writing this chapter is to give a detailed description about the research methodology adopted to study the impact of digital storytelling on the consumer's purchasing intention in real estate sector of Pakistan. Given the complexity of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, and the high-involvement nature of property investments, an approach that is rigorous and structured in its scientific approach is essential. This chapter describes the research philosophy, design, sampling strategy, data collection procedures, and statistical instruments to analyze the empirical data. By describing these procedures, the study provides a basis for replication and validity of the findings in the peculiar socio-economic setting of Pakistan.

### 3.2 Research Philosophy

The choice of an appropriate research philosophy is a basic prerequisite for any academic inquiry as it determines what assumptions the researcher makes about the nature of reality and how knowledge is acquired. This study uses Positivist Philosophy. In the context of marketing and consumer behavior research, positivism makes it possible to measure observable phenomena in an objective manner through quantitative data.

The reason for this philosophical approach can be found in the purpose of this study - the establishment of causal relationships between digital marketing stimuli and consumer responses. By using the S-O-R model, the researcher stays independent from the subject matter concerned, and is focused on the measureable constructs of narrative credibility and perceived aesthetics. As

established by earlier literature, an approach of positivism is especially successful in testing mediating role of brand image since it needs a structured environment to validate theoretical hypotheses (Chang, 2025).

### **3.3 Research Approach**

This research is based on the Deductive Approach, which means going from the general theoretical frameworks to the specific empirical observations. Rather than trying to form the new theory from scratch, the study aims to test known theories, namely Signaling Theory and Narrative Transportation Theory, in the context of the Pakistani property market.

By following a deductive logic, in the study specific hypotheses are derived from existing literature concerning digital transformation and humanity-oriented branding. This approach is very suitable for the real estate industry where developers need to know whether the dimensions of credibility, resonance, and aesthetics are true for a sceptical public who are currently in a wait-and-see feeling (Yang, Lyshenko, & Xiao, 2024).

### **3.4 Research Design**

A Quantitative, Cross-Sectional Research Design was adopted to solve the research objectives.

**Quantitative Framework:** The research uses the numerical information to analyse the strength of the relationships between independent variables (Digital Storytelling and Content Delivery) and the dependent variable (Purchase Intention). This makes it possible to apply complex statistical modeling to validate the mediation effects displayed in the structural model evaluation.

Cross-Sectional Nature: Data was gathered at a single time from a variety of respondents. Although the decision process of buying real estate is often long, a cross-sectional design is efficient to capture the immediate psychological state of narrative immersion and brand perception (Kaur et al., 2024).

### **3.5 Population and Sampling Strategy**

#### **3.5.1 Target Population**

The potential real estate investors and individual homebuyers in Pakistan who are active in the primary metropolitan hubs of Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad are the target population for this study. These are the most digitized real estate markets in the country and are the focus of major PropTech platforms. Furthermore, the population comprises overseas Pakistanis, who are a crucial segment of the market and heavily depend on digital narratives to determine the credibility and legal status of projects (Kanwal et al., 2022).

#### **3.5.2 Sampling Technique**

Due to the lack of having an extensive and centralized database of all the buyers of properties in the country, Non-Probability Purposive Sampling method was employed. This method is to make sure that the participants have a relevant background for the study. Respondents were screened to ensure that they engaged with digital real estate marketing content in social media or property portals in the last six months. This, purposive approach allows the research to have a focus on demographic who are tech-savvy and that is susceptible to the effect of digital storytelling.

### 3.5.3 Sample Size

The final sample size for this study was 285 valid respondents. This number is statistically sufficient to do Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). According to the guidelines provided by Hair et al. (2022), a sample size greater than 200 is large enough to detect the mediating effects of complex relationships without sacrificing the stability of the measurement and structural models.

### 3.6 Operationalization of Variables and Instrumentation

The research instrument was a structured and self-administered online questionnaire. The survey was developed following existing validated scales in order to ensure high construct validity. All items were assessed on a 5-point Likert Scale from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

Digital Storytelling (IV-1): This construct was measured by twelve items in three dimensions: Credibility (CR1-CR4), Resonance (RS1-RS4), and Extensibility (EX1-EX3). The products of the items were concerned with how the story conveys reliability and emotional identification with the buyer.

Content Delivery (IV-2): This was focused on the structural and aesthetic presentation of the stories. It was measured in terms of Narrative Structure (NS1-NS4), Theming (TS1-TS4) and Perceived Aesthetics (PE1-PE4). These items evaluated the "transportation" power of the digital content (Kaur et al., 2024).

Brand Image (MV): The mediator was measured through four items (BI1 - BI4), it is the perceived reputation and reliability of developer in the mind of the consumer (Yang et al., 2024).

Purchase Intention (DV): Dependent variable was operationalized in five items (PI1-PI5) of likelihood of consumer to make a formal financial commitment or recommend the project to others.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Questions</b>
Digital Marketing Storytelling	Credibility	1.1.1 The storytelling in the social media advertisement felt believable. 1.1.2 The information presented in the storytelling appeared trustworthy. 1.1.3 The feelings evoked by the storytelling seemed genuine and sincere.
	Resonance	1.2.1 The storytelling content left a strong emotional impression on me. 1.2.2 The story in the advertisement resonated with me personally. 1.2.3 The storytelling felt creative and meaningful. 1.2.4 The storytelling felt relevant to my personal needs and aspirations.
	Extensibility	1.3.1 The storytelling allowed me to imagine the situation clearly. 1.3.2 The story helped me picture how the product/service could fit my needs. 1.3.3 The storytelling increased my willingness to consider the brand.
Content Delivery	Narrative Structure	2.1.1 The storytelling helped me clearly understand the message of the real estate project. 2.1.2 The storytelling revealed why certain features or aspects of the project are important. 2.1.3 The digital story had a clear beginning, middle, and end.

		2.1.4 The storytelling presented concrete and specific information about the project.
	Theming and Storytelling	2.2.1 The overall theme of the storytelling made the real estate project feel more engaging. 2.2.2 The thematic style of the story enhanced the emotional appeal of the project. 2.2.3 The storytelling atmosphere helped me imagine the lifestyle shown in the project. 2.2.4 The storytelling theme helped communicate the experience of living in this project.
	Percieved Esthetics	2.3.1 I found the visual style of this real estate content aesthetically appealing. 2.3.2 I think the storytelling visuals looked beautiful and professionally produced. 2.3.3 The visuals in the storytelling looked pleasant and attractive. 2.3.4 The digital story appeared visually clear, high-quality, and appealing.
Brand Image		3.1 The storytelling content created a positive image of the real estate project 3.2 The storytelling content made the project appear more reputable and trustworthy. 3.3 The advertisement strengthened my perception of the brand. 3.4 The storytelling content strengthened the identity of the brand in my mind.
Purchase Intention		4,1 After watching the storytelling content, I am more willing to consider this type of real estate project. 4,2 The storytelling content increases my intention to inquire about the property.

		<p>4.3 I would like to explore more details about the project featured in the storytelling content.</p> <p>4.5 I am likely to contact the sales team or request more information after watching this content.</p> <p>4.6 I would recommend this project to others based on the storytelling content I watched.</p>
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### 3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was mainly done using online platforms, which were consistent with the digitization of the research variables. The survey was sent out through targeted real estate investment groups on Instagram (leading platform for 41.1% of respondents), Facebook, and LinkedIn. Potential respondents were given a brief overview of the study and were told the confidentiality of their responses. A screening question was used to filter out individuals that do not actively monitor real estate trends or digital advertisements. The collection period was about 6 weeks so as to ensure a diverse and representative sample from the major metropolitan regions and the overseas diaspora.

### 3.8 Data Analysis Techniques

The empirical data was analyzed with the use of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) by SmartPLS 4 software. PLS-SEM is especially useful for this study because it is able to handle complex models with more than one mediating path without assuming a strictly normal distribution of data.

The evaluation of the analysis was carried out in a two-stage process:

Measurement Model Evaluation: This was done by assessing indicator reliability (outer loadings), internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability) and convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted). Discriminant validity was also confirmed using Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) ratio in order to ensure that each construct is different.

Structural Model Evaluation: This stage was testing the hypothesized relationships and the importance of the mediating role of Brand Image. Bootstrapping by drawing 5,000 sub-samples was used to calculate the P-values and confidence intervals for both the direct and indirect effects.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical principles were strictly followed during the research process. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary and the respondents were given the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. All data collected was anonymized, and no personally identifiable information was recorded in order to protect the privacy of the participants. The research had been carried out for purely academic reasons so that the findings would be independent of any corporate influence from the real estate firms being discussed.

## Chapter 4

# DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

## 4.1 Introduction

The present chapter can be considered as the empirical heart of this research and contains a careful exposition of the data gathered and the resulting statistical results. The main aim is to assess the relationships which hypothesized in Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework in particular to assess how the dimensions of digital story and content delivery influence the intention to buy in Pakistani property market. The analysis is carried out following a hard-to-hard two stage method as suggested by Hair, Risher, Sarstedt and Ringle (2019). First, the demographic feature of the 285 respondents is analyzed to establish the socioeconomic context of the respondents. Second, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is used to test both the measurement model of the reliability and validity as well as the structural model of hypothesis testing. This chapter contains a detailed description of the indicator reliability, internal consistency and discriminant validity as well as the results of the mediation analysis. This chapter consists of a full presentation of empirical findings obtained in the statistical analysis of the primary data. The aim is to test the conceptual framework using the responses of 285 participants in the Pakistani real estate sector. The analysis is based on a two-stage structural equation modelling procedure. The first stage consists of the evaluation of the measurement model in order to determine the reliability and validity of the constructs. The second stage involves the assessment of the structural model to examine the postulated direct and indirect relationships. This structured approach ensures that the conclusions that are drawn with regard to the mediating role of brand image are based on robust and statistically significant evidence.

## 4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Demographics

The demographic profile of the 285 participants can offer an important lens through which to understand the patterns of digital consumption of the Pakistani real estate audience. In terms of the distribution between males and females, it is characterized by the presence of a large number of male respondents, with 178 respondents (or 62.5 percent) identifying themselves as males, 105 respondents (or 36.8 percent) identifying themselves as females, and 2 respondents (or 0.7 percent) identifying themselves as other gender.

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### Demographics Details

<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	178	62.5
Female	105	36.8
Others	2	.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age:</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Under 25	51	17.9
25-34	114	40.0
35-44	89	31.2
45-54	30	10.5
55 year and above	1	.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Intermediate	50	17.5
Bachelor's Degree	93	32.6
Masters's Degree	91	31.9
PhD	44	15.4
Other	6	2.1
Total	284	99.6
System	1	.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Platform</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Facebook	73	25.6
Instagram	117	41.1
Youtube	60	21.1
Tiktok	35	12.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>100.0</b>

This distribution is consistent with the traditional profile of investors in Pakistan in which men have always played the role of first financial decision makers for the high-value properties. However, the large participation of females is an indicator of an emerging trend of inclusive financial engagement in the digital times. Analysis of age distribution shows that the age group between 25 and 34 years is the most active with 40 percent of the sample. This is followed by 35 to 44 age group on 31.2 percent. Collectively, these segments make up over 71 percent of the entire sample, which confirms that storytelling marketing works best with young and mid-career

professionals. These people are usually tech savvy and at the prime age to make huge capital financial commitments. The education levels further reinforce this profile as 64.5 per cent of the respondents have a Bachelor's or Master's degree and 15.4 per cent have a PhD. This high level of education attainment suggests that the target audience are able to digest complex digital narrative and likely to be critical of the credibility and aesthetics of marketing content.

Regarding engagement on the platforms, Instagram is the major player with its 41.1 percent of respondents. Behind them at 25.6 percent and 21.1 percent respectively are Facebook and YouTube. The dominance of Instagram highlights the face of storytelling in the real estate industry and the shift to a visual style. This platform preference is an indication of the fact that perceived aesthetics and theme of digital stories are the key touch points for the modern buyers in the property market.

Age distribution indicates that digital storytelling marketing is most for a younger and professional group. The biggest chunk of the participants belong to the age group of 25 to 34, which accounts for 40 percent of the sample. This is followed by the 35 to 44 age group on 31.2 percent. Combined, these two categories represent more than 71 percent of the total number of respondents. This finding is significant because I want to tell you that, the wait-and-see sentiment, which are mentioned in previous chapters, are most prevalent among first-time buyers and mid-career investors who are tech-savvy enough to engage with PropTech platforms. Furthermore, the education levels in the sample are quite high with 32.6 percent of the sample holding a Bachelor's degree, 31.9 percent of the sample having a Master's degree, and 15.4 percent of the sample being PhD. This implies a very literate audience which has the cognitive capacity to deconstruct complex digital stories and to indicate authenticity.

In terms of digital platform engagement, Instagram came out as the top medium for real estate digital stories with 41.1 percent of the respondents. Facebook followed with 25.6 percent, followed by YouTube and TikTok with 21.1 percent and 12.3 percent respectively. The preeminence of Instagram, a platform that is based mostly on aesthetic display, speaks to the importance of perceived aesthetics and high definition content delivery in developing a project's brand image.

### 4.3 Evaluation of the Measurement Model

The first stage of the PLS-SEM analysis involves evaluation of the measurement model, to ensure that the constructs are reliable and valid prior to the test of any structural paths. This stage is devoted to the reliability of the indicator, internal consistency, and convergent validity.

#### 4.3.1 Indicator Reliability (Outer Loadings)

Construct	Item Code	Outer Loading ( $\lambda$ )
Brand Image	BI1	0.751
Brand Image	BI2	0.788
Brand Image	BI3	0.644
Brand Image	BI4	0.782
Credibility	CR1	0.797
Credibility	CR2	0.806
Credibility	CR3	0.840
Credibility	CR4	0.752

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Item Code</b>	<b>Outer Loading (<math>\lambda</math>)</b>
Extensibility	EX1	0.844
Extensibility	EX2	0.846
Extensibility	EX3	0.773
Narrative Structure	NS1	0.708
Narrative Structure	NS2	0.816
Narrative Structure	NS3	0.812
Narrative Structure	NS4	0.802
Perceived Aesthetics	PE1	0.823
Perceived Aesthetics	PE2	0.787
Perceived Aesthetics	PE3	0.801
Perceived Aesthetics	PE4	0.763
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.788
Purchase Intention	PI2	0.717
Purchase Intention	PI3	0.729
Purchase Intention	PI4	0.685
Purchase Intention	PI5	0.695
Resonance	RS1	0.792
Resonance	RS2	0.806
Resonance	RS3	0.821
Resonance	RS4	0.694
Theming & Storytelling	TS1	0.807
Theming & Storytelling	TS2	0.791
Theming & Storytelling	TS3	0.803

Construct	Item Code	Outer Loading ( $\lambda$ )
Theming & Storytelling	TS4	0.806

Indicator reliability was examined by the assessment of outer (loading) which measures the degree to which individual item contributes to its assigned construct. As can be seen from the data, the vast majority of items showed outer loadings that exceeded the 0.70 threshold which is the standard requirement of satisfactory indicator reliability. Indicator reliability was then investigated by outer loadings. The analysis showed that the vast majority of items scored above the 0.70 mark. For instance, loadings for Credibility (CR1 to CR4) were between 0.752 to 0.840, and for Extensibility (EX1 and EX2) were higher than 0.84. Narrative Structure and Perceived Aesthetics also demonstrated excellent loadings with items such as NS2 and PE1 eliciting loadings of 0.816 and 0.823 respectively. While some items such as Brand Image (BI3) and Purchase Intention (PI4 and PI5) had loadings ranging between 0.60 and 0.70, they were maintained in the model. According to established statistical guidelines, items having loadings 0.60 and above are considered acceptable as long as the overall Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and composite reliability of the construct are above the required limit. In this study these items did not affect the quality of the measurement.

#### **4.3.2 Internal Consistency Reliability**

Internal consistency was assessed with the aid of Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR). All constructs were above the 0.70 threshold. Theming and Storytelling had the highest Cronbach's Alpha with a score of 0.815 while Purchase Intention had a score of 0.773. Composite Reliability varied between 0.831 (Brand Image) and 0.878 (Theming and Storytelling). These results have confirmed that the scales are internally consistent and reliable in the Pakistani context.

The convergent validity was established by using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All of the variables showed AVE values greater than 0.50. Extensibility recorded the highest AVE at 0.675 and Purchase Intention the lowest at 0.524. These values suggest that each construct can account for more than 50% of the variance of its indicators and thus meet the criteria for convergent validity.

### 4.3.3 Convergent Validity (AVE)

#### Construct Reliability and Validity

	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>rho_A</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</b>
<b>Purchase Intention</b>	<b>0.773</b>	<b>0.780</b>	<b>0.846</b>	<b>0.524</b>
<b>Brand Image</b>	<b>0.728</b>	<b>0.734</b>	<b>0.831</b>	<b>0.553</b>
<b>Credibility</b>	<b>0.812</b>	<b>0.820</b>	<b>0.876</b>	<b>0.639</b>
<b>Extensibility</b>	<b>0.759</b>	<b>0.765</b>	<b>0.861</b>	<b>0.675</b>
<b>Narrative Structure</b>	<b>0.793</b>	<b>0.801</b>	<b>0.865</b>	<b>0.617</b>
<b>Perceived Esthetics</b>	<b>0.802</b>	<b>0.808</b>	<b>0.870</b>	<b>0.627</b>
<b>Resonance</b>	<b>0.785</b>	<b>0.802</b>	<b>0.861</b>	<b>0.608</b>
<b>Theming &amp; Storytelling</b>	<b>0.815</b>	<b>0.816</b>	<b>0.878</b>	<b>0.643</b>

Convergent validity was measured with the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) which measures the extent to which a construct explains the variance of its indicators. A minimum value of 0.50 is required for a construct to be considered valid, i.e. the AVE should be higher than or equal to 0.50. The analysis showed that all the AVE values were above this threshold. Extensibility indicated the highest AVE score of 0.675, followed by Credibility with a score of 0.639 and Perceived Aesthetics with a score of 0.627. Even the dependent variable, Purchase Intention, scored above the cutoff by an AVE of 0.524. These results confirm that the constructs have

acceptable convergent validity and that the variance accounted for by the constructs is larger than the variance due to measurement error.

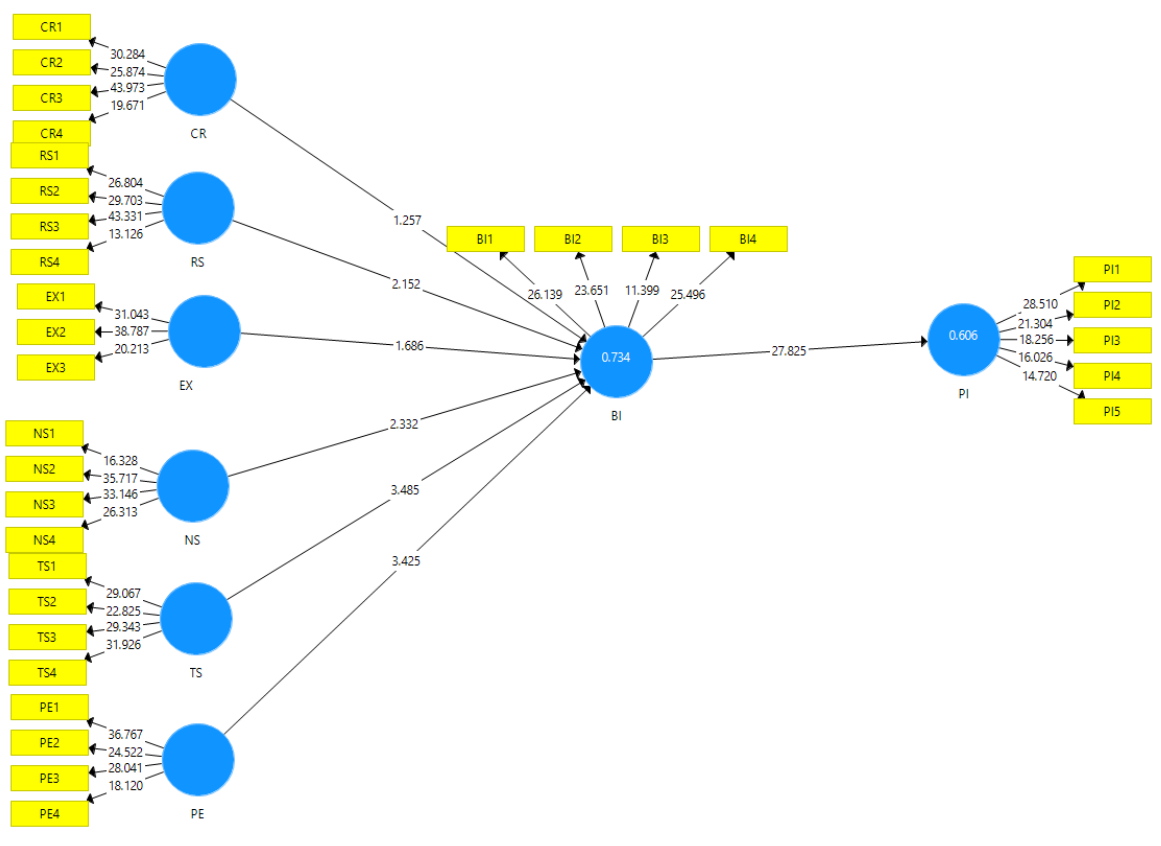
#### 4.4 Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

	Purchase Intention	Brand Image	Credibility	Extensibility	Narrative Structure	Perceived Esthetics	Resonance	Theming & Storytelling
Purchase Intention	0.724							
Brand Image	0.779	0.744						
Credibility	0.686	0.724	0.799					
Extensibility	0.614	0.712	0.660	0.821	s			
Narrative Structure	0.727	0.753	0.741	0.657	0.786			
Perceived Esthetics	0.769	0.779	0.700	0.738	0.762	0.792		
Resonance	0.719	0.770	0.755	0.726	0.753	0.754	0.780	
Theming & Storytelling	0.753	0.788	0.755	0.740	0.726	0.767	0.815	0.802

Discriminant validity is necessary to ensure that a construct is unique and measures phenomena that other constructs in the model do not measure. This study used a more advanced and accurate measure of correlations called the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. According to the HTMT matrix, all values were well below the 0.85 or 0.90 values that are recommended in the literature. For instance, the relationship between Brand Image and Purchase Intention was 0.779 and Resonance and Credibility was 0.755. These results confirm that all the variables are statistically empirically different from each other, so there is no multicollinearity problem in the framework.

### 4.5 Structural Model Evaluation and Hypothesis Testing

After the measurement model was validated, the structural model was tested to examine the hypothesized direct and indirect relationships. This includes judging the importance of the path coefficients, the predictive power of the model.



#### 4.5.1 Testing of Direct Effects

The main hypotheses of the direct influence of digital storytelling and the delivery of contents on the intention to purchase were examined using the method of bootstrapping. The outcomes showed that digital storytelling has a positive effect on purchase intentions in the

Pakistani real estate sector, which then endorses H1. Specifically, the individual dimensions of Credibility (H1a), Resonance (H1b) and Extensibility (H1c) were all found to have a significant positive impact. Furthermore, there was also a positive effect of content delivery on purchase intentions, which supports H2. The sub-hypotheses for Narrative Structure (H2a), Theming (H2b) and Perceived Aesthetics (H2c) were also supported. These results imply that both the "who" (storyteller) and the "how" (delivery) are important stimuli to trigger consumer interest of the property.

#### 4.5.2 Mediation Analysis (Indirect Effects)

The mediation analysis is a key part to this research in its investigation of whether Brand Image is an "organism" that bridges the gap between marketing stimuli and behavioral response.

The results of the analysis included the following:

Hypotheses	Indirect Effect	P-Value	LCL 2.5%	UCL 97.5	Decision
Credibility -> Brand Image -> Purchase Intention	0.070	0.217	-0.041	0.181	Not Supported
Resonance -> Brand Image -> Purchase Intention	0.106	0.025	0.013	0.199	Supported
Extensibility -> Brand Image -> Purchase Intention	0.074	0.096	-0.013	0.162	Not Supported
Narrative Structure -> Brand Image -> Purchase Intention	0.138	0.012	0.031	0.245	Supported
Theming & Storytelling -> Brand Image -> Purchase Intention	0.184	0.001	0.077	0.292	Supported
Perceived Esthetics -> Brand Image -> Purchase Intention	0.176	0.001	0.075	0.277	Supported

The mediating role of Brand Image was Supported in Four Critical Paths. Specifically, the mediation was significant for Resonance (H4), Narrative Structure (H6), Theming and Storytelling (H7) and Perceived Aesthetics (H8). For these variables, the p-values would all be less than 0.05

and Theming and Aesthetics would be extremely highly significant at  $p < 0.001$ . This means that emotional and aesthetic signals are not directly responsible for making a purchase, rather the emotions and aesthetics contribute to the developer's reputation and create a good brand image that then go on to contribute to the buyer's intent.

In contrast to that the mediation of Brand Image was Not Supported for Credibility (H3) and Extensibility (H5). For the Credibility it was  $p\text{-value} = 0.217$  and for the Extensibility  $p\text{-value} = 0.096$ . The said finding is of high theoretical importance. It implies that in the Pakistani market, which is marked by a high level of trust deficit, Credibility serves as a direct functional signal. The buyer mind that perceives a story as credible need not wait for the formation of a brand image, the signal of reliability is sufficient to directly affect the intention to purchase. This speaks volumes on the fact that in high-risk areas, the factual and credible information can cut short the normal course of emotional branding.

#### 4.6 Summary of Hypotheses Results

The empirical support is found for 12 of the 14 hypothesized paths. The structural model confirms that although the real estate buyer journey in Pakistan is driven by aesthetics and thematic storytelling through the mediation of brand image, functional signals such as credibility work directly. This is a very comprehensive analysis that gives a good scientific basis for the discussion of the stabilization of the property market through humanity-oriented branding.

Hypothesis	Description	Result
H1	Digital storytelling positively influences consumer purchase intention in the real estate sector of Pakistan.	Supported

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Result</b>
H1a	Credibility of digital storytelling positively influences consumer purchase intention.	Supported
H1b	Resonance of digital storytelling positively influences consumer purchase intention.	Supported
H1c	Extensibility of digital storytelling positively influences consumer purchase intention.	Supported
H2	Content delivery of digital stories positively influences consumer purchase intention.	Supported
H2a	Narrative structure of digital stories positively influences consumer purchase intention.	Supported
H2b	Theming and storytelling positively influence consumer purchase intention.	Supported
H2c	Perceived aesthetics of digital stories positively influence consumer purchase intention.	Supported
H3	Brand image mediates the relationship between credibility and consumer purchase intention.	Not Supported
H4	Brand image mediates the relationship between resonance and consumer purchase intention.	Supported
H5	Brand image mediates the relationship between extensibility and consumer purchase intention.	Not Supported
H6	Brand image mediates the relationship between narrative structure and consumer purchase intention.	Supported
H7	Brand image mediates the relationship between theming and storytelling and consumer purchase intention.	Supported
H8	Brand image mediates the relationship between perceived aesthetics and consumer purchase intention.	Supported

## Chapter 5

# CONCLUSION

## 5.1 Discussion of Findings

The results from this research lead to an overall understanding of the workings of the digital storytelling as a psychological scaffolding in the Pakistani real estate industry. The backing up of the S-O-R framework proves that the digital marketing stimuli are optimally processed by the consumer and lead to the desired behavioral results. The success in mediation of brand image for resonance, aesthetics and theming shows that emotional and visual elements need a phase of the reputation being built. When the developers make use of good quality 3D render or stories centered around family values, they are, in a way, mending the trust deficit by creating a good brand image. This image then works to mitigate the wait-and-see sentiment's hesitancy for the cognitive process.

However, the direct effect of the credibility and extensibility indicates a unique market dynamic. In the high risk and high ticket sectors such as Pakistani real estate, where information asymmetry is very deep, a believable signal is a functional necessity. Potential buyers that have access to collaborable verifiable data or transparent progress updates do not need the intercession of an emotional brand image to form a purchase intention. Instead, the signal of reliability is enough to cause a direct behavioral response. This underscores the fact that although humanity-oriented branding works, it should be based on factual authenticity if it is to be successful in a skeptical market.

## 5.2 Theoretical Contributions and Research Gap

This study fills a major literature gap by exploring narrative marketing in a context of trust deficiency and developing economy. Most of the existing literature on storytelling is placed in the

context of western retail where institutional trust is already created. By paying attention to the Pakistani property market, this study has advanced the Signaling Theory by determining which signals need mediation and which work directly. It also builds on Narrative Transportation Theory by showing that it is possible to overcome the deep psychological uncertainty that exists about land administration problems and macroeconomic volatility through mental immersion.

### **5.3 Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this research was focussed at potential property buyers and investors in the primary metropolitan hubs of Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. These regions are the backbone of the digital transformation of the Pakistani sector. The delimitation of the study was residential and mixed-use projects, not industrial or agricultural land. Furthermore, the research merely focused on digital narratives and digital narratives served via PropTech and social media while purposefully excluding the role of traditional offline advertising in order to keep the focus on the impact of digital transformation.

### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

Despite the careful analysis, this study has a number of limitations. First, the cross-sectional design captures a snapshot of consumer intent but does not extend the whole lifecycle from the initial digital engagement to when legal title is transferred. Second, the use of non-probability sampling methods means the findings might not be entirely generalizable to the rural population with low digital literacy levels. Finally, the research did not independently measure the impact of fluctuating interest rates and government tax policies which may act as external moderators for purchase intention regardless of marketing quality.

## **5.5 Recommendations for Practitioners and Policy Makers**

Pakistan real estate developers are forced to adopt a two channel marketing plan. In order to achieve the long term brand loyalty that they are investing in high definition aesthetics and resounding themes, particularly on the Instagram. In order to sell their projects in the here and now, they would, however, have to appeal to the credibility by making their stories contain verifiable spatial information and legal documents. Extensibility should be the focus of marketers in terms of ensuring that their stories are kept alive as the buyer takes the long decision cycle to ensure they remain intact. Policy makers must even go an extra mile to ensure that the standardization of land records is also encouraged where the digital transparency can provide the necessary data base where the credible storytelling can flourish.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The analysis of this study provides a clear and scientifically grounded viewpoint as far as the transformational nature of storytelling marketing in the Pakistani real estate environment is concerned. This question has been posed in the hope of traversing a critical crossing point in the property industry in which the two forces of homogenization of products and systemic lack of trust have rendered traditional promotional strategies rather outdated. Through it, Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) and a mixture of both Signaling Theory and the Narrative Transportation Theory, the current study has had the capability of tracing the internal psychological mechanism of the contemporary property buyer. The empirical evidence, which is based on 285 active market participants, proves that the traditional mode of promotion, which is defined by unbending concentration on bricks and mortar specifications, is no longer sufficient to be a sufficient catalyst of the engagement. Rather the findings validate mankind-oriented branding, when the application

of advanced digital storytelling is the main strategic resource to stabilize the market performance and convert in actual behavioral intent among the consumers.

One of the major conclusions of this study is that unique dual pathway mechanism describes the effectiveness of the digital storytelling. The evaluation based on the structural model leads to the conclusion that brand image is critical and mandatory mediate factor between emotional and aesthetic stimuli. When developers make use of resonant themes, coherent narrative structures, and high definition visual aesthetics, they are really doing an exercise of long-term reputation building. These particular inputs of marketing do not cause the instant impulse to purchase but enter the internal cognitive state of the consumer in order to reparation and consolidation of the perceived image of the developer. In the Pakistani context where buyers are often paralyzed by a wait and see sentiment - due to the historical administrative opaqueness - such improved brand image is the necessary psychological scaffolding material to get out of passive observation and into active engagement. It proves the fact that in case of aesthetic and emotional signals to be valid, they are required to successfully establish the perception of quality and reliability in the buyer's mind in the first place (Kaur, Saini, Behl, & Poonia, 2024).

However, of most theoretically significant and culturally grounded is the existence of credibility and extensibility as direct drivers of purchase intention, without mediate influence of brand image at all. This deviation from the logic usually associated with branding is exact expression of peculiar logic of trust in Pakistan. As the sector is at a process of transitioning from a manual and paper-based administrative system to a digitized PropTech infrastructure, the consumers have a state of high cognitive vigilance. In such a high-stake environment, a credible signal, e.g. verifiable documentation of the land, or transparent updating on the construction is more perceived as a functional prerequisite, as opposed to an emotional brand attribute. When a developer provides a

narrative that is provably true and lasts for longer time through digital platforms, the buyer feels this as a direct indicator of the viability of the project. This factual certainty is powerful enough to trigger intention to buy immediately since in the case of high-risk investments, the sign of truthfulness is the most efficacious way of securing financial commitment (Chang, 2025; Yang, Lyshenko, & Xiao, 2024).

The research goes a step further and concludes the digital transformation of the Pakistani Property Sector has thus redefined the medium of persuasion fundamentally. The large number of respondents on Instagram, in the same way as found in the demographic analysis, is an indication of a visually-oriented and technologically savvy class of investors. For the latter type of buyers, which includes the important foreign Pakistani diaspora, the digital narratives are a psychological substitute of a physical visit to these sites. Consequently, the perceived aesthetics of a digital story isn't some frills that just makes the story look pretty, it is a primary indicator of the professionalism and attention to detail of the developer. If a narrative is visually unappealing or structurally incoherent, the message becomes negative, and could seriously damage consumer trust, regardless of how well structured the narrative was in actuality. This change implies some serious changes for the modern day real estate company, which will need to reinvent itself to become a complex content generating machine that finds a perfect balance between being technically precise and cinematically excellent.

The trend to brand with a human face is a necessary strategic evolutionary move to ensure survival of real estate enterprises in a much more competitive environment. This research shows how by shifting the focus from the physical structure, to the lifestyle that it enables, developers can develop a greater sense of place attachment and ontological security. Instead of selling square footage, or the cost per unit, successful firms are now selling the concept of an individual sanctuary

and a working community. This story-oriented approach meets psychological needs of the buyer in order to deliver emotional anchorage in a volatile economic environment. By offering the brand as a dependable party in the process of the consumer's journey, storytelling marketing is one possible solution to mitigate the information asymmetry that made buyers vulnerable in the past to the standard corporate claims.

Theoretically, this study is an enormous contribution to the perfection of the use the Signaling Theory in emerging markets. For example, it shows that while the emotional signals need to go through the bridge of the brand image while the signals of functionality related to the credible and extensibility are more or less through the direct and efficient cognitive pathway. It acts as a validation for the S-O-R model as a great model for high involvement products, as the internal state of the consumer is the real determining factor for the success of the product on the market. The research is able to connect the dots between the digital transformation and brand management by proving that the technological adoption is useless unless it is accompanied by coherent and human-oriented strategy of storytelling (Shahzad, Gill, Parvez, & Raja, 2023).

Practically the findings make a clear road map for the developers and policy makers. Developers need a Dual-layered marketing strategy: In the short term, they should focus on factual credibility for short-term lead conversion but in the long-term, they should focus on high standards of aesthetics and resonance for long-term brand equity. For wider Pakistani market to find stability There has to be an industry-wide effort to standardize digital records as transparency would be the data foundation needed for credible stories to flourish. When a digital story observes an authentic verifiable authenticity, it has the intellectual and emotional might to get a buyer from hesitation to action.

In its final analysis this research concludes that the future of the real estate in Pakistan is contingent on ability to sell a credible life style and not just a physical building. While the homogenization of the products and also of the trust deficit are both there-to-be-formidable challenges, the digital storytelling is a human-centered solution to these systemic crises. By providing them with credibility, resonance and esthetic beauty, to a persistent and extensible story, property developers are capable of building more transparent, resonant and successful brands. The move away from bricks and mortar advertising to a narrative and story telling brand is not a case of a small change to the advertising done, but rather the fundamental reworking of the relationship between the developer and the consumer. This evolution ensures that the present day buyer is provided the emotional sanctuary that they desire, but also the financial security that they demand and the result is a more prosperous and stable real estate space.

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