Advertising and Storytelling: An Examination of Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm and its Impact on the Success and Failure of Brands

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By

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Abstract

In the advertising industry the term "storytelling" has slowly worked its way into the industry limelight. As countless companies vie for the attention of select consumers it is important to understand the means by which consumers are being persuaded and why some campaigns and brands succeed, while others wither and fail. Apple, Android, Nike and even Ronald Reagan are all examples of narrative brands, some failed and some succeeded. In accordance to Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm I examine these four brands and select advertisements from them in order to determine the means by which true "storytelling" in advertising functions and how it can succeed.
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INTRODUCTION

Storytelling and Advertising – The Creation of a Brand

Over the past few decades a new means of advertising has made its way into the branding process. This new revolution is storytelling. Now, working its way into the mainstream process of brand development, storytelling as a means of developing consumer relationships has become a vital skillset throughout the advertising industry. Some of the biggest agencies in the world are focusing on the art of storytelling within branding and the results it yields. Dan Wieden, of Wieden + Kennedy, known primarily for his role in helping Nike grow from Oregon-based startup to global behemoth [Row, 2010], has blatantly stated “we’re a storytelling agency (Quenqua, 2013).” Even smaller agencies, doubtlessly looking for a niche to grow into, have adopted the title of “story telling agency” including BeMore (BeMore 2012), SMXL (SMXL, 2013) and Park&Co (ParkHowell, 2013). Storytelling is so empowered in the agency world that Mike Hughes, President of the Martin Agency, and Randall Rothenberg, President and CEO of the Interactive Advertising Bureau, went so far as to state in a September 2011 edition of Ad Age, “… we also agree that technology innovations are irrelevant to the future in advertising and marketing unless a more fundamental activity is understood, honored and advanced: the craft of storytelling” (Hughes, 2011, para. 6).

The demand for storytelling within branding have grown and grown but in many ways these developments are not a new addition to the advertising business. In an article for The Drinks Business, a 1980’s campaign for Gallo Wines is examined in depth, in which a brand’s ability to connect to emotion through storytelling is
described in three key notions: first, of the most useful definitions of a brand is that it is something consumers buy for its emotional benefits, whereas a product they buy for its functional ones. Second, this fund of emotions has power, as many of our choices appear to be based on emotion rather than reason. Third, to elicit empathy, Gavin Fairburn of Leeds University suggested that: "storytelling is central to most human life. It is also the most startling simple and direct way that I know of encouraging empathy" (The Drinks Business, 2012).

This division between product and brand seems to be a powerful one, entrenched within the minds of consumers. Obviously harnessing this power of storytelling as an application of building a brand is a valuable one that has slowly but surely entrenched itself in the industry over the past three decades and evolved from the works of pioneers like Widen + Kennedy and Nike's efforts starting in 1981 (Row, 2010).

Encased within this work is an observation and study of branding efforts and a consideration of those efforts as "narratives." In this paper it is argued that brands can be viewed as a collection of narratives, and the strength of those narratives can be traced back to Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm—particularly the tenants of narrative probability and fidelity as the means of formulating "good reasons" for brand acceptance. In order to prove this statement the narrative paradigm and its relationship to the branding process is examined and established, as is the need for the branding process. Following that base, four artifacts are examined in order to glean insights into the process that makes some narratives so persuasive and
powerful while others sputter and falter. These artifacts will be considered under the lens of Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm.
Walter Fisher and the Narrative Paradigm - Laying the Framework

Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm, as originally proposed in his 1984 work *Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument*, revolves around five presuppositions:

First, humans are essentially storytellers. Second the paradigmatic mode of human decision-making and communication is "good reasons" which vary in form among communication situations, genres and media. Third, the production and practice of good reasons is ruled by matters of history, biography, culture and character. Fourth, rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings—their inherent awareness of narrative probability, what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing narrative fidelity, whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives. Fifth, the world is a set of stories which must be chosen among... good reasons are the stuff of stories, the means by which humans realize their nature as reasoning-valuing animals (Fisher, 1984, p 7).

Fisher's five presuppositions can be condensed to this definition from his work *The Narrative Paradigm: An Elaboration*:

The narrative paradigm insists that human communication should be viewed as historical as well as situational, as stories competing with other stories constituted by good reasons, as being rational when they
satisfy the demands of narrative probability and fidelity, and as inevitably moral inducements. (Fisher, 1984, p. 5)

It may be easy to tell a story, but the real impact that the paradigm makes is allowing storytellers, scholars and consumers to decipher the good stories from the bad given their levels of narrative fidelity and probability—the establishment of what makes a brand or advertisement's story rational to the extent that it resonates to the point that it establishes the “good reasons.” The strength of these “good reasons” determines whether the new stories overcome other stories and good reasons. Ultimately, strong “good reasons” would result in a purchase decision or other positive action for the brand.

**The Reasoning – Why the Narrative Paradigm and Branding**

Before dwelling into the examination of artifacts, it is important to understand the connection not just between brands and storytelling but Fisher’s paradigm as well. When breaking down the paradigm, we see that our decision making process revolves around “good reasons,” which Fisher declares as varying in nature based on situation. I argue that brands act as our “good reasons” for purchase decisions; the media that we absorb from narratives and the degree of narrative coherence and fidelity within those narratives determine the level the brand resonates with the consumer, in turn forming the “good reasons.” While each advertisement serves as its own narrative, they combine in our consciousness to create the narratives that are brands, our “good reasons.” These “good reasons” may eventually develop to be emotional in nature, as pointed out earlier, but this
development is still based on the resonance of narratives and, despite decisions being emotional in nature, they are still selected against other narratives and thus are accepted as rational decisions, as per Fisher’s paradigm as the establishment of a “good reason” is reliant on the degrees of narrative fidelity and probability within the narrative being presented.

**Branding – Justifying the Need**

One of the best uses of storytelling is within its use in the development of a brand—how it functions and the value it adds to a product and how it has become even more important in current times, through individual narratives or the brand, as a collection of those narratives. Vincent Carucci, in his work *The Aura of the Brand*, does an excellent job of surmising the importance of a brand as a value-added attribute of a product:

> Branding differentiates one product from another in a crowded marketplace. Flour is a commodity just as a diamond ring is. But Pillsbury flour and a Tiffany diamond ring are branded products, distinguished from other, similar commodities. They have more value as a result. The value added by the brand is its aura, a “something more” over and above the value contained in the materials of the product itself or the value derived from the product’s use. (Carducci, 2003)
When one goes back and considering this with the definition of brand given in *The Drinks Business*, "... a brand is something consumers buy for its emotional benefits, whereas a product they buy for its functional ones..." (The Drinks Business, 2012), a more complete picture comes into focus. Brands become the spearhead of decisions that are emotional in nature; that is, the brand becomes the determining factor (the "good reason") in purchase where functional benefits are equal or within a reasonable distance from each other.

Carducci goes on to elaborate on the need for branding in a postmodern world, "The aura of the brand is integral to the process of value creation in a world economy that has been transformed in the last quarter century" (Carducci, 2003). Carducci links this to the change in economy that the US has undergone; he uses Alan Greenspan to make the point:

Alan Greenspan, then Chairman of the president’s Council of Economic Advisors, acknowledged that the capitalist system was in a "crisis," and that the rate of economic growth of postwar America and elsewhere in the industrialized world could no longer be sustained. A new division of labor also emerged in the shift from mass production to smaller "batch" forms of production. (Carducci, 2013)

With consumer demand decreasing, the need for customization and product variation arose, hence the need to differentiate a product through branding. Now, in today's modern world a strong brand is more necessary than ever—a case for this
necessity comes from the nature of the way people interact with the media we receive. Take, for instance, how media is now ingested through televisions. "... families no longer sit around the TV set and thus are not captive audiences. We have entered what some people refer to as TV's 'third age' where control is increasingly in the hands of the viewer, not the sender" (Dahlén, Lange & Smith, 2009). The result of this is the need for "an even greater emphasis on cohesive integrated campaigns, expanded use of other media and the creation of long term brand narratives to sustain audience engagement" (Dahlén, Lange & Smith, 2009). In a sense, people have to be willing to interact with the brands; they have to make the decision to do so and need that "good reason" to engage the brand, even if only acting as receivers.
EXAMINATIONS

Here four cases, four separate brands, are examined on the basis of the narrative paradigm. This examination uses examples from advertisements and other sources in order to properly break down narratives within the brand. Within this examination the four major narratives/brands examined are: Nike, Apple, Ronald Reagan and Android. Nike and Apple were selected due to their well known brand strength, with the hope of better understanding what makes their brands so powerful and embracive. Ronald Reagan was selected as a means of taking the process of branding and narrative out of the zone of simple business and production. By all definitions of a brand, Reagan qualifies. The persistence of his brand of politics is still discussed today and to better understand how and why that brand has persisted his narrative should be examined. This crossover shows how brands are more powerful than just logos thrown on products. Brand can exist completely within an individual or ourselves; they are whatever we contribute the collection of narratives to be. Finally, Android was selected as a weaker brand that is still a massively popular product. This disconnect should be examined and understood as well in the interest of understanding how underwhelming brands struggle and may improve.

These examinations help to display just how important the notions of narrative fidelity and probability are to the construction of a narrative and a brand. The stories constructed by these brands and how they related to Fisher’s paradigm should serve as a means of gaining an understanding that can then be implemented in the construction of other brands.
Nike – The Quintessential

"Just do it." Nike, originally conceived in the 1960's as Blue Ribbon Sports, and their brand were born in haste and necessity. The Nike name was brainstormed by an employee, and the iconic swoosh was purchased from a design student at Portland State University for $35 (Carducci, 2013). In the 1990's, Nike had grown to a $19 billion company whose stock had increased over 50%, while the S&P tumbled down 7.7%, and was the world's 26th most valuable brand (Horovitz, 2009). Jolie Soloman, in a 1998 issue of Newsweek, summarized Nike's charge to glory in the 1990's:

After stumbling badly against archrival Reebok in the 1980's, Nike rose about as high and fast in the '90s as any company can. It took on a new religion of brand consciousness and broke advertising sound barriers with its indelible Swoosh, “Just Do It” slogan and deified sports figures. Nike managed the deftest of marketing tricks: to be both anti-establishment and mass market, to the tune of $9.2 billion dollars in sales in 1997. (Soloman, 1998)

While the “Just Do It” slogan has become a mainstay for the company, Nike benefits from more than just “Just Do It.” Nike is the product of a multitude of narratives that have been formed and developed over the years and have combined into one total narrative, one brand—Nike.

For example, in the recently developed two-minute advertisement, Take it to the Next Level, Nike released in 2008. While the ad features only a small amount of copy,
“take it to the next level,” at the very end it still maintains a powerful narrative that carries both narrative fidelity and coherence for the target audience. The work, directed by Guy Ritchie, follows an original unassuming player throughout his journey playing soccer for club and country while featuring famous players such as Cristiano Ronaldo, Cesc Fabregas, Ronaldinho, Wayne Rooney, Ruud Van Nistelrooy, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Marco Materazzi and Rafael Marquez.

The advertisement begins with the player on his back looking up at the referee who is handing an offending player a yellow card and giving a free kick. The player collects himself and takes the free kick, scoring and winning the game. The tiny stadium where they are playing erupts in celebration, and as the player is escorted off the field he spots Arsenal manager Arsene Wegner watching him. The player is then signed to Arsenal and quickly put into his first match against Manchester United where he promptly faces Wayne Rooney and Cristiano Ronaldo, who easily go by the player and score. The viewer then watches the player train, and train hard—running steps and doing drills. As a result, in the next game the player scores and celebrates with Cesc Fabregas and is shortly greeted by screaming fans. In the next game the player is scored on again, and in the one after that commits a mistake that allows Ronaldinho to make a fool of him. The ad cuts again to a long and strenuous training session. Finally, the player walks onto the field representing his country, Holland, where he actually defends against Ronaldo and is then fouled while running towards goal, giving a free kick—the exact same scenario as when the film began. As the player goes to take the free kick the ad cuts to black and the copy “Take it to the next level” is shown (Nike).

Nike described their work in this way:
The story lives in authenticity – the skill, creativity and tenacity we are talking about is real. We haven’t cast the players to act the part. We worked with the best players in the world to help bring this story to life. It is their authenticity, drive and desire that will inspire and engage footballers around the world to ‘Take it to the next level.’ (Nike takes footballers, 2008)

What is clear is that Nike is quick to embrace that humans are in fact storytellers, reinforcing Fisher’s paradigm, but the real power in the advertisement lies with the ability of the story to display itself rationally. The ad flows the way a career would, starting with the player playing at the very bottom of European club football and ends with him playing for his country against Portugal as a member of the select best, a situation which is coherent and fulfills the tenant of narrative probability. As Nike developed this advertisement with the targeted audience of football fans and footballers (Nike takes footballers, 2008) who have preexisting knowledge of how a player progresses through European football, it can assumed that by replicating the process by which a player progresses in a true manner the story The narrative fidelity is then helped by the additional narratives the audience already knows to be true from Cristiano Ronaldo, Arsene Wegner and other famous individuals featured in the advertisement—who the audience also have prior knowledge of. The new story they are experiencing coincides with the others they have already experienced in regards to European soccer. The story is rational and, if fully accepted by the viewer, helps constitute good reasons they can act
on, by purchasing Nike, the brand that showed, told and helped the viewer witness how to “take it to the next level.”

Another iconic ad for Nike was the 1997 advertisement known as the *Failure*. The work featured Michael Jordan walking into a stadium before a game and was voiced over by Jordan himself. The narration reads: “I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost three hundred games. Twenty-six times I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed” (Nike, 1997). The ad then fades to Nike’s Jumpman logo, used on all Jordan merchandise.

It is an interesting approach for Nike. It’s not describing features of a product or even showing Jordan playing the sport for which he is renowned. It is embracing failure, something that goes against the desire of sport—the notion of winning. Just like the previous ad from Nike, *Take it to the next level*, *Failure* borrows a large portion of its fidelity from the narrative surrounding Michael Jordan—once again garnering a large amount of power from a celebrity in a means that is not filling the role of endorser, but the storyteller in this situation. His prolonged involvement in basketball makes it convincible that he, while being considered a great player, has failed multiple times throughout his career, helping bridge the gap between greatness and failure to assure narrative probability. Members of Nike’s audience, being basketball players or sports fans, would recognize Jordan and know of his prior accomplishments and stories.

The notion of celebrity appeal within Nike not only helps build their brand narrative, it helps share narrative fidelity and probability within individual narratives in order to form the “good reasons” consumers use as a purchase decision. It is also not
implausible to consider that a celebrity endorsement or feature is not only a pure injection of narrative fidelity but also the addition of another brand, another narrative to the company’s within the mind of the consumer. Michael Jordan’s addition of his own narrative to the narrative of the advertisement contributes to Nike’s own narrative within the consumer’s decision-making process, the cumulative “good reasons,” and eventually helps the purchaser fulfill his reason valuing nature.

**Apple – The Anti-Authority Powerhouse.**

“Think different.” To many, Apple is far more than just a product— it’s a lifestyle. Members of the brand are more than just consumers, they’re part of a movement. While the Apple of current day can certainly be considered dominant, it was not always so. Their narrative of being “different” and somewhat anti-authority began with a single advertisement during the 1984 Super Bowl. Eric Martin and Thomas Sexton layout the beginning of Apple:

Presenting itself as the anti-IBM, Apple is the computer for those who shun the domineering image of “Big Blue.” This approach can be traced from the historic “1984” television ad that depicted Macintosh computers as a tool to fight Orwellian oppression caused by widespread PC use (aired just once, during the 1984 Super Bowl, but still considered one of the most successful ads ever) to its recent showcasing of computer owners who have made the switch from PCs and the Windows operating system. Apple presents itself as unique. It invites users to think of
themselves as revolutionary—even though, by buying and supporting Apple, they’re really just responding to another marketer’s push. (Martin & Sexton, 2003)

The anti-authority narrative began in that original 1984 commercial. Created by Chiat/Day and directed by Ridley Scott, the commercial was cast in an Orwellian setting where a woman runs towards a gathering place where a dictator-like figure is giving a televised speech to a cast of uni-sex, gray-garbed individuals. The speech reads:

Today, we celebrate the first glorious anniversary of the Information Purification Directives. We have created, for the first time in all history, a garden of pure ideology—where each worker may bloom, secure from the pests purveying contradictory truths. Our Unification of Thoughts is more powerful a weapon than any fleet or army on earth. We are one people, with one will, one resolve, one cause. Our enemies shall talk themselves to death, and we will bury them with their own confusion. We shall prevail. (Apple, 1984)

Just as the dictator announces, “we shall prevail,” the heroine hurls a hammer at the screen, shattering it and startling the spectators. A narrator then reads “On January 24th, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you’ll see why 1984 won’t be like 1984” (Apple, 1984).
To begin, the narrative of Apple’s 1984, had a strong cultural backing from the very start. George Orwell’s 1984, originally published in 1949, was already well known—giving the audience a solid background on which to place the context of the narrative and a head start on the narrative probability of the story. It only makes sense that people are more receptive to a story after hearing a similar one first. Then, look to the narrative coherence of the story, how it “rings true.” Apple pushes their anti-authority mindset, the need for individualism—the exact opposite of the script read by the dictator in the narrative, and a value that is revered by Americans, the target audience of the advertisement. “One of the most pervasive values in U.S. American culture is individualism. In American culture, in order to succeed and achieve your personal best, one must be strong and independent” (Yale University). Pushing individualism and rejecting collectivism is quintessentially American; and when used in a narrative like this, it instantly helps garner the narrative fidelity that is truly needed for positive reception and resonance within the audience’s own lives.

With 1984, Apple created a strong narrative that still rings true to this day, despite their newfound standing as the second most valuable brand in the world, worth $76.6 billion as of 2012 (Kelley, Stampler & Lubin), interestingly enough one ranking higher than IBM (Kelley, Stampler & Lubin), the original target of the 1984 advertisement, who no longer are in the personal computer industry.

Another key narrative in forming Apple’s image was the “think different” campaign, particularly the Crazy Ones, a television advertisement that ran in the late 1990’s. In respect to the campaign and Crazy Ones, Sander Janssen put it this way,
We are not only talking about an original idea or a beautiful ad, the campaign actually worked .... During the 90’s Apple was in crisis, and with only one campaign they have managed to climb out of this slump. Steve Jobs once said: “It only took 15...30... maybe 60 seconds to re-establish Apple’s counter-culture image that it had lost during the 90’s.” (Janssen)

The narration in *Crazy Ones* was read by Richard Dreyfuss over black and white footage of (in order) Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Martin Luther King, Jr., Richard Branson, John Lennon, R. Buckminster Fuller, Thomas Edison, Muhammad Ali, Ted Turner, Maria Callas, Mahatma Gandhi, Amelia Earhart, Alfred Hitchcock, Martha Graham, Jim Henson, Frank Lloyd Wright and Pablo Picasso (Apple, 1997). The actual copy for the ad was as follows:

Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They’re not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the one thing you can’t do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones. We see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do. (Apple, 1997)
The ad then faded to black and the words “Think Different” with the multicolored Apple logo. This television ad was also assisted by a multitude of print ads, each also representing an icon of the 20th century, the “Think Different” tagline and the Apple logo. See Appendices A and B for examples.

These ads not only gave Apple back their anti-authority perception but also gained instant narrative fidelity with the audience through their direct association with the “crazy ones,” individuals who had already created separate narratives, which the audience already knew to be true and had witnessed. The “crazy ones” were accepted as having changed things, creating the narrative probability, the coherent story. The simple act of witnessing these individual do what they had already done created the narrative fidelity to “ring true” with the “true” experiences of their lives. The words themselves also contributed to the fidelity of the advertisement; they established a definition of the “crazy ones,” stating they cannot be ignored and then say why. Apple seemingly produced this piece with the presupposition that the audience’s members would have that distinct desire to change the world, to emulate the crazy ones, and saw themselves as members of a counterculture to the mainstream of thought, as seen in 1984 (a continuation of the brand’s narrative). The process is a logical buildup, an actual argument ended with a war cry to “think different,” to move Apple up the list of “good reasons” and to be like the crazy ones and change the world—all while fulfilling a need to act rationally.

To this day, the strong narratives of Apple’s Crazy Ones and “Think Different” have created “good reasons” through sound use of narrative probability and fidelity, and are accepted as a narrative that individuals relate to and see themselves as a part of. That
emotional and rational connection is strong enough to serve as the “good reasons” used in consumer’s purchase decisions resulting in acceptance and integration of the Apple narrative and brand into their own.

**Reagan - As American as Apple Pie**

“It’s morning again in America.” This iconic line still resonates to this day just as it did during the reelection campaign of President Ronald Reagan, when a brand was created. To this day many Republican candidates for president are stuck in the shadow of Ronald Reagan (Tumulty, 2011). This brand emergence can be traced back to the presidential election of 1984, where Reagan easily defeated Walter Mondale, carrying 525 electoral votes to Mondale’s 13 (Encyclopedia Britannica) and 54,455,075 popular votes to 37,577,185 (Encyclopedia Britannica). However, it was not the margin of the election that so greatly contributed to the creation of the Reagan brand, but rather the way the campaign was managed and branded, thanks to Hal Riney.

Riney’s work, specifically his positive and poetic (Raine, 2004) ads *Prouder, Stronger, Better* and *Bear* set a different tone in the world of political advertisement. Not only was the title of Riney’s work lifted for the title of Reagan’s campaign (Raine, 2004), but the powerful narratives within Riney’s two and a half hours of work (Raine, 2004) powered the Reagan brand to new heights. Republican strategist Dan Schnur described Riney’s style as so, “Riney has the ability to cloak a strong message inside a softer approach. Most political advertising hits viewers over the head, while his work makes just as strong a point but in a less confrontational and more soothing manner (Raine, 2004).”
The first work, *Prouder, Stronger, Better*, has often been emulated and is ranked as the number three campaign ad of all time by *Time Magazine* ("Morning in america"). The copy is read over corresponding images and a variety of American-themed images—flags, national monuments and city skylines to name a few. The copy reads:

It's morning again in America. Today more men and women will go to work than ever before in our country's history. With interest rates at about half the record highs of 1980, nearly 2,000 families today will buy new homes, more than at any time in the past four years. This afternoon 6,500 young men and women will be married, and with inflation at less than half of what it was just four years ago, they can look forward with confidence to the future. It's morning again in America, and under the leadership of President Reagan, our country is prouder and stronger and better. Why would we ever want to return to where we were less than four short years ago. (Reagan Bush 1984, 1984)

While Riney himself contributed, the success of the advertisement was due to it being fundamentally true (the statistics used within the work) (Raine, 2004); that truth contributes to the power of this work as a narrative. What Riney provides is a narrative that begins with a statement of facts, “interest rates at about half the record highs of 1980 . . . 2,000 families today will buy new homes . . . inflation at less than half of what it was four years ago . . .” providing a strong foundation for the assertion that “under the leadership of President Reagan, our country is prouder and stronger. . . .” and the final
suggestion "why would we ever want to go back to where we were less than four years ago?" Riney develops a perfect example of narrative probability, "a coherent story" and argument that is logical and sensible due to the facts listed are desirable for individuals and families—things that make up a strong and vibrant economy. Also incorporated is a strong appeal to the sense of patriotism by providing a strong base of American values and the pitch of a "prouder, stronger and better" America. This story "rings true," having narrative fidelity, due to those factors being appealing and the experiences that the receiver of the message had before the first term of Ronald Reagan and the stated changes they witnessed during Reagan's first term. That fidelity is also reinforced by the attributes that also contributed to the probability of the story, showing the overlap that both narrative probability and fidelity can have within a story.

The second artifact from Reagan's 1984 re-election engineered by Hal Riney was Bear, a piece that "made a case for Reagan's extraordinary military buildup (Raine 2004.)" The full narration runs:

There is a bear in the woods. For some people, the bear is easy to see. Others don't see it at all. Some people say the bear is tame. Others say it's vicious and dangerous. Since no one can really be sure who's right, isn't it smart to be as strong as the bear? If there is a bear. (Reagan Bush 1984, 1984)

Within this narrative, Riney alluded to Russia as a bear, a symbol frequently associated with Russia. He then provided a straightforward narrative to address the situation and justify Reagan's military efforts in a logical argument that developed a sense of narrative probability without going out and saying one person is right and the other is wrong or
truly taking a side in an argument, careful not to challenge any political values of the audience making any appeals to fidelity neutral and non-disruptive.

What Riney did in Bear and Prouder, Stronger, Better was establish a means of presenting a narrative on the behalf of Ronald Reagan that did several key things. First, the build up of narrative probability within the advertisements was careful and thoughtful, the story was told in a way that made sense—foundations were made and then built upon. Second, Riney’s narratives did not attack the experiences or narratives of others, keeping the individual’s narrative fidelity at minimum opposition with Reagan’s, in turn increasing the amount the narratives, or decreasing the chance of them not, “ringing true” with the audience. This positive approach may have helped Reagan establish the margin he needed to handily win the election while stepping on as few toes as possible, resulting in fewer detractors from his brand/narrative allowing Reagan to persevere.

Android. Diluted.

52.3% of Americans use smart phones with an Android operating system as opposed to 37.8% who use an Apple product (McCracken, 2013). If you look at market share on a global scale, Android holds 70.1% of all smartphones to iOS’s 21%. Google’s operating system, Android, and its associated products are everywhere, but as a brand it suffers. Now, more people no longer call the operating system Android phones, but Galaxy phones, named after a product from Samsung that runs the operating system (Carslon, 2013). Android, as a product of Google, is available for a multitude of hardware producers who can customize and develop it to fit their product. This division
across multiple companies, brands and narratives results in a dilution of a central narrative.

While companies like Samsung, LG and Motorola all have their own narratives and brands, Android has a complete lack of a "coherent brand image" (Moore, 2011). Unlike Apple's iOS, which is directly tied into a singular product, the iPhone, and a singular company with a singular narrative, Apple, Android is spread across a multitude of products and companies, while their parent company, Google, only stands as a developer, with little narrative connection. The problem that arises is that Android has been spread and connected with too many products, too many companies and too many narratives. Each product may have an advertisement, but so does the other; they have two competing narratives and both of them use Android and, while strong narratives may be presented, this dilutes narrative probability and fidelity for Android, hurting the story and the quality of the "good reasons," and fragmenting the story that consumers perceive and formulate.

While products that use Android sell well and have a large market share, their success is not due to the Android brand. In this instance, the narrative is not strong enough; and, therefore, the "good reasons" are not compelling enough to offset the "good reasons" narratives of others. Instead, Android products sell because they are cheap (Biddle, n.d.). This is a case where "all else" is not equal. There is not a chance for a narrative to over power another; this is an instance where the price point is higher on the list of "good reasons" than the narrative. Thus, this is an example where the power of the product comes into play, Android is offered as freeware for companies to develop and modify for use in their products—hence the 23 different models of smartphone currently
offered using the Android operating system (Moore, 2011). Using the Android operating system is the path of least resistance, in time and cost, for developers. While the result has made Android the most popular operating system in the world, it is quite evident that this is not a case of narrative creating a brand that wins over the hearts and minds of consumers. Instead, this is where a versatile product has been made available on a mass scale.
CONCLUSION

Nike, Apple and Ronald Reagan all have powerful narratives that follow the formulation of Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm. However, the true power within storytelling and advertising is not so much simply telling a story. In truth, everything can be perceived and processed as a form of narrative—the power of a successful narrative, a successful story, a successful brand lies within the strength of narrative fidelity and narrative probability. These two aspects and the degree to which they resonate within a narrative advertisement with the target audience are the true tests of a powerful narrative and advertisement.

Over time these narratives and advertisements compile into larger narratives and brands, the “good reasons” for purchases. It is nonsensical to simply say that one advertisement, one narrative, could constitute a purchase decision and overcome the other narratives that have already been taken in and processed—thus the reason that brands, as a collection of smaller narratives, are overwhelmingly more involved in the formulation of “good reasons” than singular advertisements. These brands and their “good reasons” then compete amongst each other in the consumer’s purchase decision, sometimes overpowering price point, sometimes not, but impact it in a manner that cannot be ignored.

In today’s ultracompetitive marketplace, the skill of crafting narratives that have logical build ups, strong narrative probability, and match up to the experiences and prior narratives of their target audience, narrative fidelity, is essential—these narratives then need to be built upon to shape the brands, the “good reasons” to motivate a purchase. In turn, the people purchasing and accepting the brand are adding it to their own narrative,
incorporating its fidelity into their own, just as Nike did with Michael Jordan. That is the power of a brand with a strong narrative, the willingness of an individual to add the brand’s narrative to their own, helping forge the narrative they want to show to the world around them and the narratives they want to call their own.

Through this process the narrative paradigm can be seen as a means of better understanding why some brands work and some fail. It helps one understand how people decipher the narratives placed in front of them and what makes some standout from the other hundreds they face everyday. Walter Fisher was correct, humans are essentially storytellers and that is as evident within branding as anywhere else in the human world. Every brand, no matter how large or how small, begins with a story. The tenants of narrative probability and fidelity then dictate the potential consumer’s perception, and acceptance, of that brand—the “good reasons.” Storytelling may be a stunningly simple and instinctive human process, but by better understanding that process and why it works and why it fails a power can be garnered. With that power companies can succeed beyond their wildest dreams, an man can be elected president and at the same time their competitors can fail to the same extent—all because of the power of a good story.
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Appendix B

Think different.