

**STORYTELLING CASES OF STRONG
BRANDS:
GRAMEENPHONE, AARONG AND PRAN-
RFL GROUP**

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AND PRAN-RFL GROUP**

**Submitted To
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Professor, School of Business and Economics (SoBE)**

**Submitted By
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**School of Business and Economics
United International University**

Date of submission: 22nd July, 2025

Letter of Transmittal

22 July 2025

Dr. Khandoker Mahmudur Rahman
Professor, School of Business and Economics
United International University

Subject: Submission of Thesis Report on “Storytelling Cases of Strong Brands: Grameenphone, Aarong, and PRAN-RFL Group”

Dear Sir,

I am pleased to submit my thesis titled “Storytelling Cases of Strong Brands: Grameenphone, Aarong, and PRAN-RFL Group” conducted as part of my undergraduate program at the School of Business and Economics, United International University.

This study explores how leading Bangladeshi brands Grameenphone, Aarong, and PRAN-RFL Group strategically use storytelling to build and reinforce brand identity. It highlights the effectiveness of emotionally engaging, culturally rooted, and people-centric narratives in shaping consumer trust and loyalty.

I am grateful for your guidance and support throughout the research process. I also thank all individuals and organizations who contributed valuable insights and data to enrich this work.

Sincerely,

Md. Galib Talukder
ID: 111181149
School of Business and Economics
United International University

Certification of Similarity Index

**Title of Thesis: Storytelling Cases of Strong Brands:
GRAMEENPHONE AARONG AND PRAN-RFL GROUP**

Certificate of Similarity Index

This is to certify that the above thesis entitled “Storytelling cases of strong brands Grameenphone, Aarong and Pran-RFL Group” was written by Md. Galib Talukder has been examined with regard to similarity and plagiarism. The plagiarism detection tools used to analyse the document adhered to the rules of academic integrity contained in the United International University. The similarity index was learnt to be within the acceptable academic range after careful screening. This proves that the work is original and he properly gives the reference as it should according to academic standards.

Declaration of the Student

This is to certify that I, Md. Galib Talukder, having ID: 111181149, student of the School of Business and Economics at United International University, does declare that this thesis with the title:

“Storytelling Cases of Strong Brands:

GRAMEENPHONE AARONG AND PRAN-RFL GROUP”

Has been completed and presented by me with a view to partial completion of the requirements of the degree of Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA).

This work is the result of my research and has not been submitted previously, wholly or partially, for any degree or diploma at this or any other institution. All the information and references used in the thesis have been acknowledged by academic integrity and citation guidelines.

I further declare that I have conducted this study with honesty, and all opinions and views expressed in this report are solely mine unless otherwise stated.

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to the Almighty for granting me the strength, patience, and determination to complete this thesis successfully.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Khandoker Mahmudur Rahman, Professor, School of Business and Economics (SoBE), United International University, for his invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this research. His insightful feedback and academic expertise have been instrumental in shaping the direction and depth of this thesis.

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And lastly, I owe my family a lot of the support they gave me in boosting my morale, sacrificing, and having faith in me as I made a move through academics.

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Table of contents

Letter of Transmittal	iii
Certificate of Similarity Index	iv
Declaration of the Student	v
Acknowledgement	vi
Table of contents	vii
Executive Summary	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	1-2
Chapter 2: Objectives of the Study	3
2.1 General Objective	3
2.2 Specific Objectives	3
Chapter 3: Methodology	4-5
3.1 Research Approach	4
3.2 Data Collection Methods	4-5
Chapter 4: Case Study – Grameenphone	6-15
4.1 History of Grameenphone	6
4.2 Reputation Factors	7-8
4.3 Current Market State	9-10
4.4 STP of Grameenphone	11-12
4.5 Storytelling Campaigns	13-14
4.6 Takeaway	15
Chapter 5: Case Study – Aarong	16-26
5.1 History of Aarong	16
5.2 Reputation Factors	17-18
5.3 Current Market State	19-20
5.4 STP of Aarong	21-22
5.5 Storytelling Campaigns	23-24
5.6 Takeaway	25-26
Chapter 6: Case Study – PRAN-RFL Group	27-36
6.1 History of PRAN-RFL Group	27
6.2 Reputation Factors	28-29

6.3 Current Market State	30-31
6.4 STP of PRAN-RFL Group	32-33
6.5 Storytelling Campaigns	34-35
6.6 Takeaway	36
Chapter 7: Cross-Brand Analysis	37
Chapter 8: Conclusion and Recommendations	38-39
8.1 Summary of Key Findings	38
8.2 Strategic Recommendations	38
8.3 Final Thoughts	39
Chapter 9: References	40

Executive Summary

This thesis explores how storytelling serves as a powerful branding tool for building strong, authentic identities in Bangladesh's business landscape. By analyzing three local brands—Grameenphone, Aarong, and PRAN-RFL Group—the study highlights how narrative-based marketing enhances emotional engagement, cultural relevance, and long-term customer loyalty.

Grameenphone uses storytelling to promote digital inclusion and empowerment, particularly through emotionally resonant campaigns like *Shopno Jabe Bari*, which reflect real-life challenges and successes of marginalized groups.

Aarong's brand stories center around artisan empowerment, cultural heritage, and ethical consumerism. Initiatives like Threading Dreams and Artisan Diaries showcase rural women's craftsmanship and create deep emotional connections.

PRAN-RFL Group uses storytelling to promote national pride, rural development, and sustainability. Campaigns such as *Eid For All* and their sustainability reports position the brand as a socially responsible change agent.

All three brands use diverse media platforms—social media, video content, and store visuals—to share stories that emphasize community impact, cultural values, emotional depth, and ethical responsibility.

In conclusion, the findings show that storytelling in Bangladesh is not just a marketing tactic but a strategy to build trust and long-lasting brand value. The study recommends brands invest in real, human-centered stories and adopt multi-platform storytelling to strengthen market engagement.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The proverbial modern marketing environment cannot be dealt with using only the traditional mode of advertising to capture consumer attention or create product brand loyalty, given that the environment faced today is hyper-competitive and hyper-mediated in the sense that whatever you say, consumers have already heard elsewhere. Rather, the brands have to develop what is described as a meaningful and memorable engagement with their audience, and storytelling has ended up becoming an effective weapon in this fight. Brand storytelling is not just about a slogan or promotional material; it is about telling emotional stories that will create the way consumers connect with the brand and feel about it in the long term.

This dissertation examines the possibility of using storying as an effective brand identity-building and reinforcement tool regarding the brand Bangladesh. The world of Bangladesh today is seeing very high rates of economic growth and digital adaptation as Bangladesh sets its favourite flavour in the global marketplace and the region. With this, the locally-owned brands are beginning to realise that they should have unique brand voices that show cultural authenticity and contemporary relevance similarly. Storytelling is also a powerful means by which brands can establish feelings of humanity around their name, connect with buyers of all sorts, and develop long-term loyalty.

The 3 brands that will be studied in the research are Grameenphone, AAarong, and PRAN-RFL Group, which are major brands in Bangladesh. Such businesses have managed to adopt the strategy of storytelling and integrate company values with stories that socially touch the hearts of people with concepts such as culture and people orientation, and some other things that matter. By analysing their histories, market strategies, and recent storytelling campaigns, this study aims to uncover the strategic patterns and unique approaches that make storytelling an integral part of a strong brand identity.

Through qualitative analysis, this study aims to highlight how these brands use storytelling not just as a communication tactic but as a foundational element of their brand architecture. The goal is to offer insights into how storytelling contributes to brand differentiation, emotional branding, consumer engagement, and trust-building in the Bangladeshi context.

This introductory chapter sets the stage for the rest of the thesis by establishing the importance of storytelling in branding, presenting the purpose and rationale of the study, and introducing the brands selected for case analysis. The following sections will elaborate on the study's objectives, methodology, and detailed findings from each brand's storytelling practices.

Chapter 2: Objectives of the Study

2.1 General Objective

This study's main goal is to investigate and assess how storytelling, specifically in the context of Bangladeshi businesses, may be used as a strategic branding technique to create a powerful brand identity. The goal of the study is to comprehend how narrative-driven marketing contributes to the development of emotional bonds, consumer trust, and brand differentiation in a crowded and competitive market.

2.2 Specific Objectives

To achieve the general objective, the study outlines the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the role of storytelling in brand identity formation

- Analyse how storytelling influences consumers' perception of a brand's values, purpose, and personality.
- Explore the emotional and psychological impact of narrative elements on brand recall and recognition.

2. To identify the key storytelling elements that contribute to a strong brand identity

- Break down storytelling techniques such as character development, emotional appeal, cultural relevance, and plot structure.
- Evaluate how these elements align with brand values and audience expectations

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Approach Qualitative Research Approach:

The study employs a qualitative research approach, which is suitable for examining complex, contextual, and narrative-based themes. This makes sense because the topic of storytelling has less to do with data or figures and more to do with human emotion, brand perception, and cultural effect.

3.2 Data Collection Methods Secondary Data:

This resource provides genuine, openly accessible information about how companies tell their stories to customers. Additionally, they give access to campaign evaluations and long-term narrative tactics that are frequently recorded in brand literature or the media. For example,

- ❖ **Company Websites:** These sites provide comprehensive details about a company's background, mission, values, products, and services. They often include press releases, blog posts, and information about ongoing or past campaigns, giving a clear idea of how the company wants to be perceived.
- ❖ **Campaign Videos:** These are promotional or awareness videos produced by the company to convey specific messages to their target audience. They help researchers understand the visual and emotional strategies used to build brand image and customer connection.
- ❖ **News Articles:** Articles published by newspapers, magazines, or online news platforms offer third-party insights into a company's activities, public perception, controversies, achievements, or market strategies. They provide a balanced or external perspective beyond what the company shares.

- ❖ **Brand Reports:** These include official documents such as annual reports, sustainability or CSR reports, and market performance summaries. Such reports detail financial performance, strategic goals, and long-term brand positioning, providing rich data for analysis.

- ❖ **Social Media Posts:** Posts on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, or YouTube reveal how companies interact with their audiences in real time. They show branding tactics, customer feedback, promotional strategies, and how companies manage their public image daily.

Chapter 4: Case Study – Grameenphone

4.1 History of Grameenphone Origins & Founding(1996-1997)

Incorporation: Grameenphone Ltd. was registered on 10th October, 1996 and launched service on 26th March, 1997, Bangladesh's Independence Day a symbolic national progress.

Visionaries: Founded by Iqbal Quadir and Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, inspired by Grameen Bank's microfinance model to empower rural communities through connectivity.

Rural Outreach: Village Phone Program: Launched in the late 1990s, this initiative provided microloans for rural women to operate "Village Phone" payphones, enabling entrepreneurship and communication access. By 2005, ~250,000 village phones were active. The model also gained global recognition; even former US president Bill Clinton praised it as a game-changer for rural economies.

From a rural telecom innovator to a national digital powerhouse, Grameenphone's journey reflects its commitment to connectivity, inclusivity, and innovation. Today, it stands as Bangladesh's largest and most influential telecom operator, with over 82 million subscribers by late 2023, pioneering 5G trials across multiple cities, and actively expanding digital services to empower society. The history of Grameenphone indicates its dedication to the digital divide overall and social-economical development with the help of connectivity and innovation. It merged social purpose with technology pioneering and it is one of the leading organizations creating a smart connected country today.

4.2 Reputation Factors

The large number of subscribers, technological leadership, and incessant adherence to customer-focused innovations have all played a role, making Grameenphone presently one of the strongest mobile network providers in Bangladesh. With more than 85 million users as of early 2025, Grameenphone is a disruptive force in the nation's digital ecosystem, reaching 99% of the population and more than 95% of geographic areas. Its reputation among customers, industry stakeholders, and regulators is supported by its wide reach and ongoing enhancements in service quality.

- **Market Leadership and Brand Recognition:** Grameenphone, a trusted telecom provider in the country, serves over 80 million subscribers, with 56-78% using its internet services, making it the clear market leader.
- **Extensive Network Coverage and Quality:**

Rural reach through the Village Phone Programme: Grameenphone and Grameen Telecom have collaborated to develop the Village Phone model, empowering rural entrepreneurs to provide GSM services in remote villages, earning numerous international awards.

4G Expansion & Fibre Backbone: Investments have expanded 4G network coverage to 97% of the population, backed by a nationwide fiber-optic backbone, ensuring reliable indoor and outdoor coverage across 90% of the country.

- **Strong International Backing and Governance:** Grameenphone, a joint venture between Telenor and Grameen Telecom, leverages global technology expertise, local social mandate, and high compliance standards to become one of Bangladesh's highest tax-paying companies.

- **Innovation & Digital Initiatives:** Grameenphone's innovative culture includes IoT and smart solutions, enhancing operational efficiency and service personalisation, and digital inclusion programs to bridge the urban-rural digital divide.
- **Comprehensive Customer Service & Support:** A widespread network of service centres(Grameenphone Centers) and a 24/7 hotline (121) ensure prompt support. The company's empowered employee culture, with low turnover and strong local engagement helps maintain high standards of customer care across all regions.

Taken together, Grameenphone's market dominance, technological leadership, social impact initiatives and solid governance structure are what fuel its enduring reputation as Bangladesh's premier telecom operator.

4.3 Current Market State of 'Grameenphone', including a Hint on Competitive Performance

Grameenphone Ltd. (DSE: GP) is currently trading at approximately BDT 295.70, marking a 29% increase since 2022-2025. With a market capitalisation of around BDT 399 billion, it remains the largest company on the Dhaka Stock Exchange, contributing about 13% to the total market capitalisation. Grameenphone is a prominent player in Bangladesh's telecom industry, both strategically and financially. Its vast infrastructure, cutting-edge digital services, and supportive regulatory framework offer a strong basis for future expansion. Investors should, however, continue to be aware of the changing regulatory environment and any challenges from competitors.

Market Position & Competitive Landscape:

Grameenphone is the leading telecom operator in Bangladesh, serving over 85 million subscribers and holding more than 50% market share. The company has invested over BDT 347 billion in network infrastructure since 2018, establishing the largest cellular network in the country. In terms of technology, Grameenphone was the first to introduce 5G trials in Bangladesh and continues to expand its 4G and 5G coverage. Its digital services portfolio includes Skitto (a digital-first prepaid brand), GPAY (mobile financial services), and Bioscope (a streaming platform). Competitors like Robi and Banglalink are also significant players in the market. Robi, with 56.39 million subscribers (about twice the population of Texas), is the second-largest operator, while Banglalink holds a 38.64 million subscriber base. Despite this, Grameenphone maintains a dominant position through its extensive network and comprehensive service offerings.

Strategic Outlook:

The Bangladesh telecom market is poised for significant expansion, with projections estimating its value to reach USD 5.08 billion by 2025, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.31% through 2030. Against this backdrop of change, Grameenphone is strategically aligning itself to be able to take on this expansion by focusing even more on digital transformation, further reaching the rural areas of the country, and developing its infrastructure nationwide. Such programs will improve access to data and digital services that are in high demand, especially amongst underserved and remote populations. In August 2024, a critical event that affected the strategy of Grameenphone happened: the Nobel Prize-winner Professor Muhammad Yunus, co-founder of Grameenphone, was announced Chief Adviser to the interim government of Bangladesh. His appointment has caused a change in policies that have indirectly favoured Grameenphone. These involve regulatory approvals in terms of a digital wallet licensee, which unlocks new fintech opportunities and tax exemptions given to Grameen Bank, a sister organisation in the Grameen ecosystem. Although the changes have the potential to be more efficient in the operations of Grameenphone and even in the innovation of the services provided by the company, it has nevertheless become a point of discussion and criticism among the people in terms of conflict of interest and ethical governance. However, Grameenphone is not oblivious of these attractive conditions and still retains transparency as it tries to build on its market leadership and digital program.

4.4 STP of Grameenphone

Grameenphone is the leading telecom business organisation in Bangladesh, which operates a comprehensive STP (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning) strategy to capture the diverse requirements of its clients in the urban and rural areas. The following is an improvement of the STP analysis of Grameenphone:

Segmentation (S)

Grameenphone categorises its market based on some factors:

Demographic: It offers two customised products that include Business Solutions that target business customers, Smile that targets students and low-income organisations, and djuice that targets young people.

Geographic: Enables rural women to run mobile payphones through programs like the Village Phone program, which offers coverage across the country, especially in isolated rural locations.

Behavioural: Services are customised according to usage trends; for example, special rates are offered during holidays like Eid, and packages with flat call rates or family and friends (FnF) perks are created.

Psychographic: Focuses on particular ideals and lifestyles; the Djuice brand is an example of this, appealing to young people looking for a fashionable and expressive mobile experience.

Targeting (T)

Grameenphone employs a **differentiated marketing strategy**, developing distinct offerings for various segments:

Youth: Djuice is a prepaid service emphasising music, messaging, and social connectivity.

Mass Market: Smile is a prepaid package offering low call rates and easy recharge options, suitable for students and low-income individuals.

Rural Entrepreneurs: Village Phone enables rural women to operate mobile payphones, fostering entrepreneurship in underserved areas.

Positioning (P)

Grameenphone markets itself as a customer-focused company dedicated to bringing people together throughout Bangladesh. The tagline "Stay Close," which highlights emotional connectedness and dependability, perfectly captures its posture. The business sets itself apart by:

Network Quality: Boasts the largest network with extensive coverage, reaching 98% of the population.

Customer Service: Provides 24/7 support and personalised services, such as the prioritised hotline for business clients.

Brand Identity: Cultivates a strong brand presence through consistent messaging and community engagement.

4.5 Storytelling Campaigns

Grameenphone has also had some impressive storytelling campaigns in the year 2024, where the theme is connection, empowerment, and inclusivity. The following are some of the most outstanding examples:

- **Shopno Jabe Bari- Making Eid Neighbourhood of the Bangladesh People in Malaysia**

Grameenphone extended its popular campaign in Bangladesh called the Shopno Jabe Bari to Malaysians during Eid in April 2024 because it targeted the Bangladeshi community residing locally. To make expatriates feel surprised by visual greetings from their loved ones, the project collected the meaningful quotes of the families in Bangladesh and delivered them to a bus with huge LED screens in Malaysia. This campaign used the objective of reducing the emotional gap and cementing the family ties during the holiday season.

- **Digital Inclusion Project Digital Stories of Change**

In partnership with Telenor and Plan International, Grameenphone held a meeting on November 28, 2024, to promote the revolutionary impact of its Digital Inclusion Project. The event featured personal stories of less-represented individuals, including transgender individuals, the survivors of child marriages, and persons with cancer who had benefited as a result of the program through empowerment and digital literacy. These testimonies focused on how the project has led to internet safety, opening the door, and transforming the lives of people.

- **The day to celebrate International Sign Language**

In celebration of International Sign Language Day on October 1, 2024, the Grameenphone company releases a heartwarming video of Mukta, a young sign language master who serves as an interpreter to her hard-of-hearing and speech brother. The advertisement reinstated the commitment of Grameenphone. To be available and open to all people by promoting the worth of communication and the power of insights..

- **The Lumiere Series- with Shusmita Anis**

Grameenphone aired the latest episode of the inspirational Lumiere series in July 2024, highlighting the life and achievements of Shusmita Anis, one of the most popular singers in Bangladesh. This series is one stage of the larger initiative through which Grameenphone aims to connect with the younger generation of the country by highlighting the tale of some of the cultural icons who have left a memorable impression on society. The episode on Shusmita Anis gave the fans an in-depth look at her musical career as she recounted how she started in music, the way she received some training, and how she flew over all the obstacles that were put in her way to become a singer of repute in this country. The viewers also got a rare insight into her philosophy, on the values that she lives by, her impression of life, and her devotion to her art and the people. The programme also discussed some critical points she made along the way, these are choosing to be a musician in addition to her academic pursuit, managing with what people expect of her, and remaining down-to-earth even when she is so famous.

4.6 Takeaway

One of the top cellular companies in Bangladesh, Grameenphone (GP), employs storytelling to establish a strong, dependable brand identity and emotionally connect with its audience. Grameenphone's storytelling aims to celebrate lives, convey stories of change, and establish the company as a reliable force for advancement rather than only marketing a service.

- **People-Centric Stories:** At the heart of Grameenphone's narratives are real people and their authentic experiences. These stories showcase individuals facing everyday struggles, pursuing their dreams, and achieving meaningful successes. By highlighting such personal and relatable stories, Grameenphone humanises its brand, making it more accessible and emotionally engaging to its audience.
- **Local Relevance:** The brand's storytelling draws heavily from the richness of Bangladeshi culture, traditions, and daily life. By featuring narratives deeply rooted in local contexts, Grameenphone ensures that its stories resonate strongly with its customers, enhancing the brand's credibility and authenticity in the eyes of the public.
- **Consistent Brand Voice:** Grameenphone maintains a consistent tone across its communications, characterised by friendliness, optimism, and a forward-looking spirit. This tone inspires confidence among its users and instills a sense of national pride, reinforcing the perception of Grameenphone as a brand committed to the welfare and advancement of the people it serves.

Chapter 5: Case Study – Aarong

5.1 History of Aarong

Background and Founding:

In the middle of the 1970s, BRAC realised that rural craftsmen and especially women had trouble marketing their handcrafted products and earning a living. To address it, BRAC established Aarong as a retail store in Dhaka in 1978 that initially focused on handmade merchandise such as pottery, handloom cloth, and nakshikantha. The name Aarong means village fair, and it refers to the rural and handmade life.

Legacy and Recognition:

Aarong is particularly renowned for being a proponent of ethical clothing and retaining the traditional art of Bangladesh. It is now the marker of success of a social entrepreneur who balances the interests of business and development goals. Recognised as a sustainable fashion and fair trade business as well as an entity that empowers women, both at home and overseas.

Aarong is one of the best-known lifestyle retailing chains in Bangladesh, which started in 1978 as a social venture of BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee). It was initially aimed at helping the rural craft folk, especially females, become empowered by giving them a place to show and to sell their handmade goods. It is a social enterprise of BRAC, the largest non-governmental development organisation in the world. Besides being a popular brand in Bangladesh nowadays, Aarong stands as a piece of evidence of the way social businesses can integrate inclusive growth, art, and history preservation. It all started with country workshops, now it continues with metropolitan markets, but always with the same purpose to empower craftsmen inspired by the craft performed by it, especially women, and uphold cultural handicraft along with sustaining fair wages and dignity.

5.2 Reputation Factors

Such uniqueness in the combination of social impact, cultural conservation, and ethical corporate practices has propelled Aarong to achieve the much-famous status in Bangladesh. With the revival of traditional crafts, fortification of rural communities and sustainability, and a persistent rejuvenating approach to design, retail, and e-commerce, it has demonstrated a capability of uniting the values of social responsibility with commercial interest. Its reputation is heavily founded on authenticity, trust, and value addition in society, despite the other issues on pricing and quality.

Empowerment of Rural Artisans

Aarong (pronounced Ore) was initially launched in 1978 by BRAC to provide equal market opportunities to rural artisans, especially women. It is already giving just wages and timely payments along with the amenities of legal assistance, health insurance, and microcredit, among others, to over 65,000 craftsmen across Bangladesh.

Areas and Fields of Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Crafts

Aarong is necessary to preserve and promote the unique tradition of crafts in Bangladesh. It has been important in preserving classical arts such as Jamdani and nakshi kantha and amalgamating them in the contemporary design to suit the current consumers.

Sustainability and Ethical Operations

Aarong has good, healthy working conditions because it undergoes audits very regularly, ensuring that all its products are responsibly sourced following the standards of fair trade. The company is also sustainable in its manufacturing process, which involves the use of environmentally friendly dyes and materials.

Leadership and Vision

Aarong has succeeded in remaining a pioneer in social enterprise and ethical trade in Bangladesh by expanding and innovating through the guidance of Tamara Hasan Abed, the Managing Director of BRAC Social Enterprises.

Cultural Storytelling and Brand Communication

- In a bid to assist the consumers associate themselves with every product on an emotional basis, the artisans behind the kantha stitches and nakshi prints are given a story-based marketing treatment.
- The authenticity of the brand is supported with the help of social media and newsletters, as they present festivals, heritage crafts, and behind-the-scenes biographies of the artisans.

5.3 Current Market State of 'Aarong', including a Hint on Competitive Performance

Aarong has established itself as a market leader in Bangladesh's fashion and lifestyle industry by fusing economic savvy with social impact. Its ongoing innovation in digital interaction and product offers guarantees its relevance and appeal to a wide range of customers. As of June 2025, Aarong is one of Bangladesh's top lifestyle retailers, known for fusing modern fashion with traditional Bengali craftsmanship. Since its founding by BRAC in 1978, the organisation has grown into a major social company that empowers more than 75,000 artisans nationwide, 85% of whom are women.

Market Position & Competitive Landscape:

With 31 retail locations spread over nine major Bangladeshi cities, Aarong offers more than 100 product lines that include apparel, accessories, and home décor. The brand's substantial market influence is demonstrated by its \$200 million to \$500 million yearly income. Aarong's e-commerce platform won the "Best E-commerce Platform (B2C)" category at the Bangladesh Retail Awards 2024, proving to be the best in the country. Empowering rural craftsmen, especially women, is at the heart of Aarong's purpose. More than 75,000 craftsmen are supported by the company, which gives them a stage on which to display their products and fair trade prospects. In Bangladesh's fashion and lifestyle industry, Aarong continues to hold a commanding lead. Although Aarong has rivals like Yellow, Kay Kraft, Rang, and Artisan, it stands out thanks to its distinctive fusion of social entrepreneurship principles, wide-ranging artisan network, and varied product line. Yellow's website received about 134 K hits in May 2025, while Cats Eye received about 34 K. Both sites accounted for less than 15% of Aarong's traffic, highlighting Aarong's supremacy in the online retail market.

Strategic Outlook:

To protect and increase its market share in the face of heightened local competition, Aarong is improving experiential retail, adjusting pricing tiers, and narrowing its market targeting (moving from broad to selected sectors). Aarong continues to raise the standard with its unique combination of strong artisan heritage, premium positioning, quick digital adoption, and flagship investments (like the Dhanmondi craft store). Rivals will need strong omnichannel platforms, equally captivating in-store experiences and distinct differentiation, whether through pricing leadership, specialised design aesthetics, or loyalty programs, to threaten Aarong's market dominance. Rivals will need strong omnichannel platforms, equally captivating in-store experiences, and distinct differentiation, whether through pricing leadership, specialised design aesthetics, or loyalty programs, to threaten Aarong's market dominance. Moreover, competing brands must align themselves with evolving consumer values such as ethical sourcing, cultural authenticity, and sustainability to remain relevant. As Aarong strengthens emotional connections through brand storytelling and purpose-driven campaigns, challengers must build deeper engagement strategies that go beyond transactional appeal. Additionally, Aarong's strategic use of influencer collaborations and community-driven marketing further solidifies its cultural relevance, raising the bar for market entrants aiming to make a comparable impact.

5.4 STP of Aarong

Segmentation (S)

Aarong segments its market based on:

❖ **Demographic:**

The brand mainly appeals to adults within the age range of 25 to 45 years old. Its products are designed for individuals who belong to the middle to upper-middle income brackets, allowing them to comfortably afford quality items. While it caters to both men and women, there is a particular emphasis on women's clothing and related products. The typical customers are educated, urban residents who value well-crafted items and place importance on superior quality and design in the things they purchase.

❖ **Geographic:**

Grameenphone primarily focuses its operations within urban regions throughout Bangladesh, targeting densely populated cities where demand for connectivity is high. In addition to strengthening its presence in major metropolitan areas, the company is also broadening its reach by tapping into international markets through robust online platforms, allowing it to connect with customers beyond national borders.

❖ **Behavioral:**

The target consumers are individuals who seek out high-end, luxury lifestyle products that reflect their refined tastes and preferences. Additionally, they tend to be dedicated and repeat purchasers who prioritise environmentally sustainable and ethically sourced goods, showing a strong commitment to supporting fair-trade practices.

❖ **Psychographic:**

This audience deeply appreciates culture, heritage, and tradition, valuing the stories and meanings behind what they choose. They tend to favour products that are handmade, artisanal, and one-of-a-kind, seeking items that stand out for their craftsmanship and uniqueness rather than mass-produced goods.

Targeting (T)

Aarong follows a differentiated targeting strategy, catering to:

Customers in the urban middle and upper middle classes who desire high-end clothing and interior design. Expatriates and professionals are looking for a fusion of modern and traditional styles. Customers with an ethical conscience who wish to support fair trade and regional craftspeople.

Positioning (P)

Aarong positions itself as **“A Premium Lifestyle Brand That Blends Tradition With Modernity, Empowering Artisans Across Bangladesh.”**

Brand identity: Socially responsible, elegant, rooted in Bengali culture

Unique selling proposition (USP): High-quality handcrafted products made by rural artisans under fair trade practices

Emotional appeal: Buying from Aarong means supporting sustainable livelihoods and preserving heritage crafts.

5.5 Storytelling Campaigns

Aarong has launched several impactful **storytelling** campaigns till 2024, focusing on themes of connection, empowerment, and inclusivity. Here are some notable examples:

"Threading Dreams" Campaign (2023 - ongoing)

The "Threading Dreams" campaign, launched in 2023 and continuing to the present, tells heartfelt and inspiring stories about rural artisans, especially women, who have partnered with Aarong. These narratives highlight how these craftswomen have faced and overcome significant challenges in their personal lives, social environments, and economic hardships. Through their collaboration with Aarong, they have found empowerment and a way to transform their dreams into reality despite the obstacles they encountered.

Key Elements:

- Personal interviews with artisans.
- Before-and-after glimpses of their lives.
- Focus on empowerment through craft.

"Eid with Aarong" Stories(2022-2024)

The "Eid with Aarong" campaign, running from 2022 to 2024, highlights heartfelt stories shared by customers and artisans. These narratives emphasise how Aarong's handcrafted products play an integral role in their family's Eid celebrations. Through this seasonal promotion, the campaign showcases the special connection between Aarong's unique items and the joyous moments experienced during the festive season.

Key Themes:

- Emotional moments around gifting, family, and tradition.
- Inclusion of customer-generated content.
- Videos of artisans preparing for Eid and sharing their joys.

“Artisan Diaries” Web Series (Launched 2023)

A documentary-style series on Facebook and YouTube that delves into the journeys of the individual artisans who create Aarong's handcrafted goods.

Example:

One episode featured a nakshi kantha embroiderer from Jamalpur, who supported her children's education through her work.

Aarong Earth Sustainability Storytelling (2023 - Present)

Highlights Aarong's environmentally sensitive "Aarong Earth" brand and its progress towards sustainability.

Highlights:

- Stories of sustainable farming for natural dyes.
- Ethical fashion as a part of identity.
- Minimal packaging and upcycled materials.

5.6 Takeaway

Aarong strategically uses storytelling to express purpose, create an emotional connection, and maintain brand identity as opposed to using it as marketing jargon. The following are the major lessons of Aarong's storytelling strategy:

Arraying the Brand on Heritage & Craftsmanship:

Aarong has tied its brand to the heritage and craft skills within the country of Bangladesh, in which decades-old artisan skills are celebrated. Whether it is finely woven jamdani and nakshi kantha embroidery or carefully made bamboo craft and terra cotta crafts, there is more of a cultural story behind each product. Through continuous promotion of these ancient methods, Aarong not only embraces the enormous skill of domestic artisans, but also helps create an atmosphere towards feeling a sense of pride and genuineness of the country. This intentional attempt at conservation and popularisation of indigenous craftwork makes the brand easier to relate to, making it feel closer to the people and thus making Aarong more of that than a mere retailer, but the custodian of the culture of Bangladesh.

Developing a Social Storyline in Each Story:

Aarong has managed to develop a social storyline in all its stories and has created a social impact on every shopping action, creating a feel-good social action. When the customers buy items in Aarong, they are not merely buying the clothing, the crafts, or the home decor, but are also participating in something bigger. Every product is a tale with a message of empowerment since the sales are used to assist thousands of rural craftsmen in Bangladesh. They are initiatives such as helping to educate the children of craftsmen, providing long-term job opportunities in the poorer populations, and ensuring the financial stability of women. Aarong tells the story of its people through clarity and emotional confusion to enable its customers to connect to the people behind the products, thereby ensuring that, through each purchase transaction, a step toward social change is being taken consciously.

The Tradition of Modernity: Blending the Tradition:

The story of Aarong proves that conventional techniques can be used to come up with contemporary designs. Such positioning can be attractive not only to younger consumers seeking ready access to stylish, non-exploitative products but also to those consumers who see transnational and cultural roots. Aarong has masterfully bridged the gap between heritage and innovation, making traditional crafts relevant in today's fast-paced fashion world. By reinterpreting age-old artistry with modern aesthetics, Aarong connects deeply with a diverse audience—those who value authenticity, ethical sourcing, and a sense of cultural belonging. This fusion not only preserves traditional skills but also redefines them within a modern retail context, proving that cultural legacy can evolve without losing its soul.

Chapter 6: Case Study – PRAN-RFL Group

6.1 History of PRAN-RFL Group

Roots & Founding (1980–1985)

Rangpur Foundry Limited (RFL) was formed in 1981 by Major General Amjad Khan Chowdhury, and it manufactured irrigation pumps and tube wells in order to benefit the farmers. He came to appreciate the agricultural value chain, and having formed an international leadership perspective through food processing and thus PRAN was formed in 1981 with a mixture of food processing. A merger of PRAN and RFL in 1986 created a stable linkage between farmers and processors through the initial practice of contract farming in 1986.

Formation of PRAN-RFL Group

Through the 1980s and 1990s, RFL and PRAN functioned independently, although tighter cooperation was encouraged by Major General Chowdhury's leadership in terms of governance and strategic alignment. By the early 2000s, the PRAN-RFL Group was formally consolidated due to shared infrastructure, management techniques, and cross-divisional synergies. The Group's flagship companies, RFL Plastics & Engineering for consumer durables, light engineering, and packaging materials, and PRAN Foods for agro-processed commodities, are now part of the Group, which has its headquarters in Dhaka.

Recent Developments and Sustainability Initiatives

PRAN-RFL has prioritized environmental stewardship and industrial revitalization in 2024–2025. The Group planned to invest Tk 350 crore to establish Barendra Rajshahi Textile Ltd under a public-private partnership, creating over 2,000 jobs and a green industrial park with solar energy and water recycling systems. In April 2025, the Group started trial production at the long-dormant Rajshahi Textile Mill. In order to align operations with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, PRAN-RFL joined the Bangladesh Sustainability Alliance in December 2024 and made a commitment to fully recycle plastics by 2030, reduce water use by 30%, and source 90% of food ingredients locally.

6.2 Reputation Factors

PRAN-RFL Group, one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh, has earned a strong reputation both locally and internationally due to the following key factors:

- **Quality Products and Innovation:** PRAN-RFL is renowned for manufacturing a broad variety of premium culinary and non-food items, such as snacks, drinks, household goods, and plastic products. Both domestically and abroad, they have gained the trust of consumers via their constant innovation and dedication to quality standards.
- **Extensive Product Range and Market Presence:** With a wide range of product lines, PRAN-RFL provides services to millions of clients. Their products are available everywhere in Bangladesh and more than 145 countries worldwide because of their robust distribution network, which serves both urban and rural areas.
- **Strong Local and International Market Presence:** With exports to more than 145 nations, PRAN products contribute to Bangladesh's global market presence. The organisation earns a lot of foreign exchange annually, and this promotes the export economy of the country.
- **Social Responsibility:** The PRAN-RFL Group has a sound policy towards social responsibility, as they implement a series of influential projects. They are investing in sustainability projects, generating rural jobs and being involved in community development projects. The group not only secures sustainability in its supply chain but also promotes livelihoods and the economy of the farms due to handling raw materials by local farmers. Their attention towards the development of the local population and environmental friendliness also contributes to presenting them as a company with an outstanding social responsibility and ethical stance.

- **Good Leadership and Visionary:** The leadership of PRAN-RFL has had a significant contribution in the growth and the establishment it has in the industry. By proper strategic planning, thinking ahead of time, and constant exposure in terms of highly sophisticated technology, the management has always guided the firm in terms of innovation and relevance in the market. Their vision has so far been clear and long-term as they strive to maintain the trust in their brand, operational efficiency and competitive advantage not only within the country but also in the international markets. Such aggressive and tenacious management has formed the essence of PRAN-RFL in its success.
- **Employee Welfare and Corporate Culture:** PRAN-RFL Group has a strong work culture based on employee welfare, which includes different support facilities, employee benefits and developmental opportunities to make the job satisfying and efficient. The company has a good organisational behaviour with an inclusive and good culture, promoting working together, loyalty and a sense of belonging. Such commitment not only raises the morale of the employees but also helps to achieve operational efficiency over the years and helps to strengthen a positive internal reputation within the organization.

6.3 Current Market State of 'PRAN-RFL Group', including a Hint on Competitive Performance

One of the biggest publicly traded companies in Bangladesh, PRAN-RFL Group, is quoted on the DSE and CSE and has a diverse portfolio that includes fast food (Tasty Treat), plastics, electronics, food and beverage, bicycles, and more. Through industry leadership, sustainable practices, and a variety of exports, PRAN-RFL Group is establishing itself as a major participant on the world stage. But maintaining its competitive edge in the changing market environment would require tackling operational and technological issues. They stand out thanks to their wide range of products, numerous export awards, international retail alliances, and recently implemented ESG guidelines. In order to compete with both domestic behemoths and global brands, they are also carefully putting themselves into new markets like mobile phones, plastics, and synthetic footwear.

Market Position & Competitive Landscape:

One of the leading companies in Bangladesh's consumer products market is PRAN-RFL Group. RFL Plastics has a substantial market share in plastic products, while its flagship company, Pran Foods, is the industry leader in processed foods. Through a number of subsidiaries, such as Tasty Treat, a fast-food chain with more than 360 locations around the country, the group has increased its reach. International markets are being actively pursued by the group. PRAN-RFL exported goods valued at \$532 million to 145 countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, and India, during the fiscal year 2021–2022. By 2025 and 2030, it hopes to raise this to \$1 billion and \$2 billion, respectively. PRAN-RFL faces competition from several local conglomerates:

- **City Group:** City Group is one of the largest and most diversified conglomerates in Bangladesh. Established in 1972, the group has expanded into over 40 sister concerns. Its flagship brand "Teer" is a household name, especially in the food and consumer goods sectors.

- **Meghna Group:** Meghna Group is another major conglomerate known for its wide array of products, particularly in the food and beverage sector. Their key brand, "Fresh," includes edible oils, drinking water, salt, spices, and more.
- **TK Group:** TK Group is a rising player in both consumer goods and industrial sectors. Known for brands like "Pusti" (in edible oils and food products), TK Group has developed a strong foothold in plastics, packaging, and household consumer goods.

Strategic Outlook:

In a bid to go global, PRAN-RFL group is developing itself as an international brand with a sense of sustainability and technological innovation. Its commitment to conservation and recycling energy is consistent with trends of promoting environmental responsibility in the international community. Addressing its internal challenges in the context of leveraging the emerging opportunities in the market, the business dreams of enhancing competitiveness even internationally. To realize this ambition, the company is embracing advanced manufacturing technologies, digital supply chain integration, and data-driven market analysis to optimize performance across borders. Moreover, strategic partnerships with foreign distributors and entry into niche global markets reflect its dedication to brand expansion beyond national boundaries. By continuously upgrading its product quality, adhering to global compliance standards, and promoting eco-friendly operations, PRAN-RFL is not only preparing to compete on the world stage, but to lead with purpose and sustainability.

6.4 STP of PRAN RFL Group

PRAN-RFL Group has been one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh, and it employs an extensive STP (Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning) strategy to address the needs of its diverse products. This is how they come down to it:

Segmentation (S)

PRAN-RFL Group markets its products in the following segments:

- **Demographic Factors:** socioeconomic status, age, gender and occupation. An example is that snacks and fizzy drinks are marketed to the youth, mainly, unlike foods such as juices and snacks that may be consumed by anyone of any age.
- **Geographic Factors:** This is because the availability and distribution strategies of products are also affected by the differences between rural and urban settlements.
- **Psychographic Factors:** behavioural traits, personality, and way of life.
- **Behavioural Factors:** Consumption rates, brand loyalty, benefits sought (e.g., taste, convenience, quality)

Targeting (T)

The group adopts a mass-market approach, focusing on:

- **Urban Consumers:** With aspirations to expand to rural areas, the initial target audience for Internet
- shopping is the people of Dhaka metropolis.
- **Middle to Upper-Income Professionals:** A primary consumer target for their diverse product range.
- **General Consumers:** Providing goods that are affordable and appropriate for all age groups.

Positioning (P)

PRAN-RFL Group markets itself as a supplier of reasonably priced, superior goods that meet the various demands of its customers. Their positioning strategies include:

- **Functional Positioning:** Dependable, superior, regionally made goods with "verified taste" and halal compliance.
- **Differentiation & Value:** Focuses on cost leadership, wide distribution, and product and image differentiation, balancing affordability and quality.
- **Symbolic & Emotional:** By promoting farmers, patriotism, and community development, its brand vision, "Improving Livelihood," emotionally connects with consumers.
- **Experiential:** Taste consistency (a "distinctive experience") and a noticeable presence in shopping centres, the media, and events

6.5 Storytelling Campaigns

Here are some recent storytelling examples from PRAN-RFL Group that highlight how they connect with their audience and build their brand narrative:

“Eid For All” Campaign (March 28, 2025)

With a touching story of impoverished orphans, PRAN-RFL inaugurated their annual "Eid or All" campaign. The narrative emphasises how a percentage of each purchase made by companies like PRAN Frooto, PRAN UHT Milk, Daily Shopping, and others directly contributes to ensuring that orphans can celebrate Eid with joy and dignity through moving video ads, social media posts, and in-store activations.

SME Success Stories: Sky Plus Trading Company (April 11, 2025)

A mini-documentary series showcasing partner companies like Sky Plus Trading Company was launched by PRAN to commemorate 30 years of enabling small and medium-sized businesses. The narrative highlights how PRAN's supply-chain assistance and technical advice have stimulated entrepreneurial growth throughout Bangladesh through founder interviews and behind-the-scenes video.

“Nurturing Lives, Sustaining Tomorrow” Sustainability Report (December 22, 2024)

PRAN-RFL created a narrative that connected every company choice to the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN when it unveiled its first-ever sustainability report. The paper, titled "Nurturing Lives, Sustaining Tomorrow," is backed up by executive testimonies, factory-floor photo essays, and infographics that detail the Group's progress towards 30% water savings and complete plastic recycling by 2030.

Green Factory Award Recognition (June 24, 2025)

On June 24, 2025, PRAN-RFL Group proudly celebrated a significant milestone when two of its sister concerns Habiganj Agro and Chorka Textile were honoured with the prestigious Green Factory Award 2025. In response, the Group shared a powerful visual storytelling campaign across its official website and LinkedIn, showcasing its unwavering commitment to environmental sustainability and corporate responsibility. The narrative was rich with visuals of solar panels glistening on factory rooftops, greenery-filled factory compounds, and workers in safety gear operating in clean, well-ventilated spaces. Through this digital campaign, PRAN-RFL illustrated how its eco-conscious mission is not just a statement but an operational reality.

“Let’s Produce Solar Power” Partnership Story (April 11, 2025)

PRAN-RFL described its partnership with H&M Group and the IFC to provide solar energy for Bangladesh's apparel industry in a number of press release quotations and social media posts. In addition to producing food and plastic, PRAN-RFL is portrayed in this narrative as a sustainability facilitator that connects local producers with international consumers.

6.6 Takeaway

Credible serving as applied in the manner of storytelling of PRAN-RFL, is based on the system of authenticity, cultural relevance, and emotional connection that serves in keeping the group as one of the most popular and trusted men in Bangladesh. PRAN-RFL Group manages to reach its vast array of customers both in urban and rural Bangladesh through humanistic and intentional narrative storytelling. They tell the following stories:

Support of Local Communities: One of the key aspects of the PRAN is empowering local communities and not only as the company but as the driver of national development, especially in the agricultural sector. PRAN procures agricultural raw materials including fruits, vegetables, and dairy products through contract farming, this ensures that the farmers get the direct benefits of the contract farming availed by PRAN. The model helps to provide farmers with a steady and just price, which protects them against the fickle nature of the markets and predatory intermediaries. Moreover, PRAN offers these farmers technical support, training, high quality seeds and inputs, and thus boosts the output of these farmers, and maintains sustainable farming.

National Pride and Identity: National Pride and Identity is another strong and dominant theme of most Bangladesh market and product campaigns. Such campaigns invariably boast of the rich cultural and historical events and milestones and the spirit of the Bangladesh people. Brands use these features, as pointed out by elements like traditional music, art and language as well as folklore to create a high level of belonging and emotional attachment to the consumers.

Multi-Channel Storytelling: PRAN-RFL is an apt use of multi-channel storytelling in that the company uses a variety of media to reach a wide consumer demographic profile. They reach the bulk market in this way by adopting traditional media such as television so that their brand messages hit household remoteness in the urban areas, as well as in remote locations. Their Television advertisements usually include touching contents, which draw human emotions, which reflect on the quality, reliability .

Chapter 7: Cross-Brand Analysis

Here's a visual comparison chart for Chapter 7: Cross-Brand Analysis, comparing Grameenphone, Aarong, and PRAN-RFL Group across key storytelling dimensions:

Dimension	Grameenphone	Aarong	PRAN-RFL Group	Common Factor
Core Storytelling Theme	Digital inclusion, empowerment, and emotional connection	Artisan empowerment, heritage preservation, and social equity	Rural development, sustainability, and national pride	Commitment to local context
Target Subjects	Underserved users, expats, youth, marginalised groups	Rural female artisans, culture lovers, and ethical consumers	Farmers, SMEs, factory workers, and underprivileged children	Target under Privilege
Tone & Emotion	Hopeful, inclusive, empathetic	Cultural, elegant, empowering	Patriotic, inspirational, purpose- driven	Culture Driven
Key Channels Used	TVCs, social media, LED displays abroad, documentaries	Web series, in-store visuals, artisan interviews, newsletters	Facebook, LinkedIn, infographics, video stories, field visits	Multi Chanel
Cultural Relevance	Eid, sign language, national progress	Jamdani, nakshi kantha, local crafts, village life	National holidays, Bengali food identity, rural economy	Highly Relevant
Social Impact Focus	Digital empowerment, accessibility, inclusion	Fair wages, health & education for artisans, women's rights	SME growth, fair farming practices, environmental goals	Highly Relevant
Emotional Hook	Family reunions, identity, overcoming adversity	Artisan struggles, festival joy, heritage preservation	Children's joy, farmer pride, green future	Social Context
Storytelling Strength	Connectivity with purpose	Heritage with humanity	Scale with sincerity	Very Strong

Chapter 8: Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Summary of Key Findings

Storytelling is not just a promotional tool but a strategic pillar for brand identity.

All three brands used emotionally resonant, culturally rooted, and people-centred stories to foster consumer trust, loyalty, and emotional attachment.

Examples:

- **Grameenphone** focuses on **digital inclusion and emotional connection**, like helping expatriates reconnect with family during Eid.
- **Aarong** tells stories about **artisan empowerment and cultural heritage**, highlighting how each product supports a rural craftsman.
- **PRAN-RFL Group** showcases **national pride, rural upliftment, and sustainability**, framing itself as a driver of Bangladesh's progress.

8.2 Strategic Recommendations

Invest in Authentic Narratives

Brands should prioritise real stories from real people, customers, employees, artisans, etc. to build trust and emotional appeal.

Create omnichannel Storytelling Ecosystems

Use a mix of digital platforms, video, in-store experiences, and social media to reinforce the brand story consistently across channels.

Empower Internal Storytellers

Employees and stakeholders should be involved in storytelling. For example, frontline staff and rural partners can be powerful voices in humanising the brand.

8.3 Final Thoughts

Storytelling is a powerful strategic asset, particularly in markets like Bangladesh, where emotion, culture, and community are integral to consumer behaviour. In an era of digital noise and information overload, human stories create a lasting impact, they cut through clutter and build meaningful bonds. The research confirms that purpose-driven storytelling enhances brand longevity, not just short-term marketing success. By weaving narratives that reflect local values, history, and shared experiences, brands foster emotional resonance and cultural relevance. This approach not only differentiates them in a competitive landscape but also cultivates loyalty and trust among consumers. Ultimately, storytelling transforms brands from mere businesses into relatable entities with identities, aspirations, and voices that people can connect with.

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