

Public Abstract

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Title:THE WHY AND HOW OF NARRATIVE ADVERTISING: AN INTEGRATED PROCESSING FRAMEWORK

Prior literature on narrative advertising has mainly focused on demonstrating that narrative ads are usually more persuasive than non-narrative ads. Further, researchers have offered a variety of different causal mechanisms to explain this phenomenon. My dissertation proposes a comprehensive, integrative framework for understanding narrative persuasion. It includes four explanatory variables, namely, emotive response, ad hedonic value, ad credibility, and perceived goal facilitation, and provides for a mediating role for Aad in explaining brand attitudes. I propose hypotheses for (1) why and how narrative ads, in general, are more effective than non-narrative ads and (2) the factors that make some narrative ads more effective than others.

The empirical part of my dissertation involved two studies. Study 1 tested the hypotheses regarding the relative effectiveness of narrative (vs. non-narrative) ads, while Study 2 examined the factors associated with the superiority of some narrative ads relative to other narrative ads. A feature of both studies is that they were conducted with a large sample of actual TV commercials.

Study 1 used a random sample of 25 narrative and 25 non-narrative recent TV commercials and involved 484 research participants. Data were collected using Qualtrics online software and participants were recruited from an online panel. The data yielded support for the prediction that narrative (vs. non-narrative) commercials will result in more emotive response, more ad hedonic value, more ad credibility, more perceived goal facilitation, more positive Aad, and more positive brand attitudes. The results also supported the mediating role of ad hedonic value and ad credibility in terms of the effects of narrative (vs. non-narrative) ads on Aad. However, the mediating role of emotive response in the effects of narrative (vs. non-narrative) ads on Aad was not supported in the simultaneous mediation test. Further, the results also supported the hypotheses that the effects of emotive response, ad hedonic value, and ad credibility on brand attitudes would be mediated by Aad. Finally, the results confirmed that the effects of narrative (vs. non-narrative) ads on brand attitudes were mediated by perceived goal facilitation.

Study 2 used a random sample of 50 narrative TV commercials and involved 515 research participants. As in Study 1, data were collected using Qualtrics online software and participants were recruited from an online panel. Study 2 provided support for all of the hypotheses regarding the factors that make some narrative ads superior. Specifically, narrative ads that produced more emotive response, more ad hedonic value, and more ad credibility resulted in more positive Aad, which in turn enhanced brand attitudes. The results of the SEM analysis also indicated that among these three independent variables, ad hedonic value had the largest effect on Aad, followed by ad credibility. Note that the results further supported the hypothesis that Aad will fully mediate the effects of these three independent variables on brand attitudes. Also, as predicted, narrative ads that produced more perceived goal facilitation were conducive to more positive brand attitudes.

My dissertation thus makes a significant contribution to the literature on narrative advertising. I believe my contribution not only enhances our theoretical understanding of the phenomenon, but also provides specific guidance for advertising practitioners about how to create good narrative ads.