The Power of Nudge on Storytelling Advertising to Increase Viewer Engagement

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Abstract - In the digital era, marketers struggle with maintaining high viewer engagement. Various new techniques of alluring viewer engagement have emerged, one of them is storytelling. The purpose of this study is to explore "being nudged" as a narrative transportation mechanism in digital video storytelling advertising. This quasi-experimental study examines a model of Nudging and Brand Engagement in digital advertising engagement. Findings specify the strength of emotional storytelling over humor storytelling as a communication tool but also reflect upon increasing viewer's engagement through nudging. The study has valuable insights for corporate professionals, researchers and academicians who are using storytelling techniques in their campaigns or to increase communications. The implications of the study, limitations, and future research possibilities are discussed.

Keywords - emotional storytelling, advertising attitude, word of mouth, Ad shareability

INTRODUCTION

Digital platforms for interactive marketing are evolving and revolutionizing, allowing marketers to utilize participatory culture and connect with consumers (Chen & Chuang, 2021). Consumers can connect with digital advertising in several ways, depending on the branded content.

Digital platforms for interactive marketing are evolving, allowing marketers to leverage participatory culture to connect with consumers (Chen & Chuang, 2021). Consumers interact with digital advertising in various ways, influenced by branded content (Boldosova, 2020; Wilson, 2019). Video content has become the most popular form of branded content for both consumers and marketers online, with consumers preferring video over images, links, and text for promotional content (Animoto, 2018). In 2022, 70% of organizations favored video as their preferred brand content (Social Media Week, 2022).

However, on platforms like Facebook and Twitter, digital video advertising struggles to gain traction (Barger et al., 2016; Miller, 2020). Tools such as YouTube's "Skip" button and paid subscription services like Netflix and Hulu offer consumers control over digital advertising (e.g., YouTube Premium). In environments where consumers can choose their engagement, targeted ads are crucial for fostering involvement (Phillips and McQuarrie, 2010, p. 372). While consumers express dislike for YouTube ads, digital ads are generally more favored (Voorveld et al., 2018). Marketers face challenges with digital video advertising, yet emotional storytelling in videos can enhance engagement and foster a digital connection (Brown et al., 1997). The rise of digital emotional storytelling is linked to interactive marketing platforms (Su et al., 2021). Video narrative ads on social media often trigger more positive emotional and behavioral responses than straightforward ads (Escalas, 2007). Current digital advertising literature offers limited

insights into these processes, with most narrative advertising studies being text-based and focused on traditional media. Existing research emphasizes experiential characteristics, but aspects like interest and attention in digital video emotional storytelling have not been extensively studied (Kim et al., 2016; Taylor, 2013).

This study aims to fill gaps in interactive marketing literature concerning digital emotional storytelling. It examines the most engaging digital video ad types (Emotional storytelling vs. Humor) and explores brand attachment's role in fostering digital advertising addiction. The research considers three types of interactions with digital ads: ad sharing, and word-of-mouth (WOM). Digital consumer engagement is characterized by both active and passive variables (Vander Schee et al., 2020), with social media interactions driven by "Likes," "Follows," and "Comments" (Wang, 2021). Further research into consumer involvement in social media narrative experiences is needed (Kemp et al., 2021).

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 outlines the theoretical framework and hypothesis development. Section 3 details the sample methodology, questionnaire design, and stimulus presentation. Section 4 focuses on data and analysis. Section 5 presents empirical findings, discussions, theoretical insights, and managerial implications. Section 6 addresses limitations and suggests directions for future research.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Narrative transportation theory

Marketers utilize stories to engage customers, who use narrative thinking to understand the world (Escalas, 1998; Woodside et al., 2008). "Emotional storytelling advertising" involves "episodes with actors pursuing goals" (Wilson, 2019) and features a character, a plot, perspectives, and a message (Tanner, 2016). Emotional ads differ from humorous ones by encouraging inference (Wells, 1989). The narrative structure includes chronology and causal relationships, generating narrative processing (Escalas, 2004). Unlike statistical analysis in humor ads, narrative ads enhance holistic processing, reducing counterarguments (Pagan, 2020). Narrative persuasion affects thoughts, feelings, and actions (Zheng, 2014). Emotional narrative advertisements generate narrative processing and conveyance (Brown et al., 1997). The narrative transit theory is a substitute for dual-information processing models like the elaboration likelihood model, which assumes critical argument processing (Green, 2008). This theory differs from the statistical analysis involved in feature-based humor ads (Chang, 2008). Dramatized ads, such as tale ads, improve holistic processing and reduce counterarguments (Pagan, 2020). Transportation coheres cognitive systems to narrative occurrences, fostering consistent thought and moral reasoning (Zwack et al., 2016). Narrative persuasion impacts attitudes, beliefs, and decisions (Zheng, 2014).

2.2 Being nudged: emotional storytelling vs humor advertising emotional

Narrative ads engage consumers more effectively than humor ads, generating more narrative transportation due to their framework. Firm-originated tales foster stronger consumer-brand connections and a higher willingness to pay (Lim & Childs, 2020). Emotional narrative-sponsored blogs receive longer viewing times than humor-sponsored ones (Stubb, 2018). Instagram posts with narrative elements increase transportation (Weischer et al., 2013).

This study explores one facet of the ad-person interface to operationalize narrative transportation: being nudged (Escalas, 2004). Being Nudged and narrative transportation are conceptually related (Wang et al., 2015), with narrative transportation measured by a variety of scales, some of which capture the "being Nudged" construct (Van Laer et al., 2014; van Laer et al., 2019). Since nearly two decades ago, the concept of "being nudged" has been discussed within the field of emotional storytelling (Zheng, 2014). "Being pushed" is defined as "a viewer being tugged or drawn into an advertisement" as a type of experiential

connection with an advertisement (Escalas, 2004). As a "Nudge that grabs clients' attention" (Keller et al., 2019), the idea has also been taken into consideration in the context of marketing, proposing an attention dimension.

The initial use of the construct by Escalas (2004) appears to include aspects of attention, curiosity, and experience. The current study focuses on the interest and attention aspects of being nudged due to their high relevance in the current digital environment, where engagement is optional (Woodside et al., 2008; Esch et al.,2006), implied invasiveness of the ad impacts customer perceptions of videos, and ad approval is difficult for skippable videos. The current study makes the theoretical assumption that being nudged will appear more frequently in digital video emotional storytelling commercials than in humor advertisements. This effect is anticipated because of the narrative form specific to the advertisement's use of emotional storytelling, which primes narrative processing and enables narrative transport that is assessed by being prodded.

H_1: Digital video Emotional storytelling ads Nudge viewers more effectively than Humor ads.

2.3 Being Nudged and Video Emotional Storytelling for Digital Engagement

Interactive marketing research has long explored online customer engagement (Willox et al., 2013; Interactive marketing research has long focused on online customer engagement (Willox et al., 2013; Olsen et al., 1993). Online consumer engagement is defined as "a multidimensional consumer–brand relational construct incorporating emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components of consumer–brand interactions" (Willox et al., 2013). This study examines "digital engagement with advertising" (Zebregs et al., 2015), which involves consumer interactions with brands to enhance their emotional, cognitive, or material investment. Digital engagement includes cognitive and emotive responses to content, as well as transactional and non-transactional behavioral responses (Yoon & Park, 2012). The study investigates ad viewing, sharing intent, and positive word-of-mouth as key engagement types.

Ad viewing is a passive form of engagement, with digital technology allowing consumers to skip ads, potentially lowering ROI (Zheng, 2010). Emotional storytelling ads are more likely to be viewed than straight-sell ads (Coker et al., 2017). The concept of being nudged (Escalas, 2004) may explain this, as ads are more engaging when viewers are nudged. Active online involvement includes endorsement and advocacy, with emotional storytelling ads driving higher engagement (Sefora, 2020; Zheng, 2014). The S-O-R framework (Luwisch, 2001) supports that emotional storytelling fosters both active and passive digital engagement with advertising (Ramezani & Shokouhyar, 2020).

H_2: Being nudged has a favorable impact on people's intentions to view the digital video emotional storytelling Ads (H_2a), Ad Sharing (H_2b), and spread positive word of mouth about the brand in the digital video emotional storytelling ad (H_2c).

Brand attachment is defined as "the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self" (Park et al., 2010). Belk (1998) describes it as using the consumer's identity and the brand's role in that identity to establish a sense of identification. The Connection-Automacy-Attachment (CAA) paradigm views brand attachment as internalizing the brand and eliciting emotional responses. A brand may evoke personal memories or represent significant aspects of the consumer's life (Hayes & Casey, 2002). Emotional attachment correlates with the intensity of the associative relationship, split into the brand's impact on identity and its emotional connotations (Phillips, 2012). Over the past two decades, brand attachment has become crucial in consumer-brand interaction research (Mittal et al., 2001). It is considered more vital than brand attitude or loyalty for long-term success (Hunt et al., 2006). Brand attachment enhances revenue and brand equity, making it a priority for brand managers (Hancox, 2017)

Brand attachment depends on consumers' engagement in brands (Thomson et al., 2005; Malär et al., 2011). Because of their strong feelings for the brands they support, consumers are more inclined to (re)purchase, advocate for the brand, share positive word-of-mouth (WOM) (Buttle et al., 1998), join in brand communities, pay more for the brand, and forgive the company's mistakes. Considering (Green, 2021), this study examines how brand attachment affects ad viewing, sharing, and positive word-of-mouth among customers who have an emotional connection to the brand.

H$_3$: brand attachment will mediate the impact of being nudged on the intention to share the digital video emotional storytelling advertisement (H$_3$a) and spread favorable word of mouth about the brand in the digital video emotional storytelling advertisement (H$_3$b).

It is predicted that Nudged narrative transportation will lead to greater positive feelings about the story's plot (Van Laer et al., 2014; De Bruyn et al., 2008) which can lead to higher brand attachment. Nudging and brand attachment will have a greater impact if the ad is more story-driven in form (Kim et al., 2017). Affective responses to advertisements are often accompanied by behavioural ones. Positive word-of-mouth (WOM) is predicted to be influenced by user sentiments (Taylor, 2013; Buttle et al., 1998). Ad-sharing intentions, such as forwarding, are boosted by positive ad assessments (Moyer et al., 2020). By sharing the advertisement, featuring the business in an advertisement, and praising it, viewers' opinions of an advertisement may affect their desire to participate in multimedia advertising. Thus:

H$_4$: Digital video Emotional storytelling ads Nudge more positively to brand attachment viewers than Humour ads.
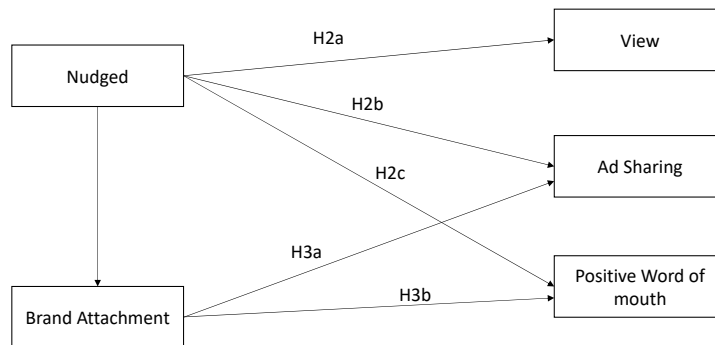

Figure I: Conceptual framework

Next, we will describe the methodology and data collection techniques used in this study. We employed different stimuli incorporating humor and emotional appeals to determine which strategy is more effective in nudging customers, alongside a detailed discussion of the sampling procedure and measures.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample and Procedure

This research was conducted with the participation of 514 first-year college students from B-schools in India. Given their frequent engagement with social media, college students are deemed a suitable sample for this research (Seo et al., 2018). The final sample size resulted from a comprehensive examination that included eliminating data from participants who provided insufficient responses or faced technological issues, such as videos that failed to play. Participants who did not view the advertisement were identified using a reliability assessment through an unrestricted recall test. Respondents were asked to provide their thoughts on the video they had just watched. Responses that were either left blank or did not correctly identify the advertised product were excluded from the final analysis. The final sample comprised 514 individuals, of which 60.8% were female, 77.3% were Caucasian, and 95.2% were aged between 18–25. Participants utilized a variety of social media platforms, with Facebook being the most popular (94.3% of the sample), followed by Instagram (83.1%), Snapchat (91.5%), Twitter (70.5%), LinkedIn (49.2%), and Pinterest (51.5%). Video viewing occurred across multiple platforms, with YouTube being the most popular (69.5%), followed by Facebook (11.2%) and other platforms (19.3%).

3.2 Stimuli

The stimuli consisted of four 1-minute video advertisements produced by actual companies. Two advertisements employed emotional narrative formats, while the other two used humor-based formats. As in Kim & Lee (2018), the ads featured Amazon and Flipkart, two major e-commerce giants. The ads were integrated into an online survey after being downloaded from YouTube, following Taylor (2013). This approach was chosen because social media platforms evolve and may discontinue, and social media convergence might blend elements from different platforms (West, 2013). Isolating the ads from their original contexts allows for broader applicability across digital news sources.

The selected ads adhered to established guidelines for emotional storytelling and humor (Porteous et al., 2010; Brown et al., 1997). Amazon's emotional ad, "Tu Khul Tu Khil Har Pal | #harpalfashionable | Amazon India," depicted a female facing prejudices and embracing future possibilities. Flipkart's humorous ad, "Har budget mein quality | #HarBudgetMeinQuality," showed children in adult roles, emphasizing savings with humor (Chang, 2019). Participants were randomly assigned to view one of the four ads, with 256 viewing emotional storytelling ads and 258 viewing humor-based ads. This quasi-experimental design facilitated direct comparison of advertising format impacts on consumer responses (Sanders, 2021).

3.3. Measures

In this study, all data were collected post-exposure to advertisements. To measure Being Nudged, we utilized three items from Escalas et al. (2004), selected from their original eight-item, seven-point Likert scale, which demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.91). These items specifically assessed attentiveness and engagement with the advertisement. Brand Attachment was evaluated using a modified four-item scale from Mitchell and Olson (1981), adapted from Park et al. (2008), to capture the depth of emotional and cognitive connections to the brand. Sharing Intention was assessed using a three-item, seven-point semantic differential scale adapted from Chen and Godes (2014), reflecting the participants' likelihood of disseminating the advertisement. Positive Word of Mouth was measured using a three-item, seven-point Likert scale, adapted from Alexandrov et al. (2013), which gauged the participants' propensity to recommend the brand. These scales, integral to our analysis, provided nuanced insights into consumer engagement, brand attachment, and promotional impact within the digital advertising context. Next, we will

present the data analysis, focusing on hypothesis testing and the research model. As part of our marketing strategy, we will also examine the effects on word-of-mouth, advertisement sharing, and viewer engagement.

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

4.1 Measurement model analysis

Each measuring scale underwent an exploratory analysis of factors (EFA Varimax rotation using SPSS 24) to confirm its internal integrity and dependability. We performed an analysis of the anti-image matrix diagonals so that we could verify that each item was suitable for factor analysis. All of them were much higher than 0.50. We calculated the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (0.924) measure of sampling adequacy (MSA), which is significantly higher than the qualifying criterion of 0.80. Furthermore, we calculated the results of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which showed a significant level of less than 0.004 (4,625/120 df). In addition, the variance inflation factors (VIF) examination shows that none of the items had a value of 10 or higher. It may be concluded that each construct's final factor solution has adequate internal dependability levels ($\alpha > 0.70$; Nunnally, 1978). Each factor's Cronbach's alpha, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliabilities (CR) are all higher than 0.70, which provides support for this statistic. In conclusion, the factor items have a level of discrimination that is sufficient to ensure that there are no cross-loaded scale items with a value larger than 0.34. All the scale items have loadings that are larger than or equal to 0.70, and each factor loading is strongly associated with its scale item (see Table I).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out with the help of LISREL 8.8 as a crucial part of the measurement model's validation process (see Table I). During the process of validating the model, it is made certain that the scale items that were specified during the EFA are adequate in situations where there are many latent constructs. According to the conventional fit indices, the findings of the canonical factor analysis (CFA) indicate an adequate model fit.

4.2. Hypothesis testing

The first hypothesis asserts that narrative-based digital video commercials will captivate viewers more than argumentative ones. A composite score was developed to produce an overall being-hooked value for each participant to test H1. Then, mean being-hooked values were assessed for each condition. With such a notable difference between these values ($t = 4.01$, p 0.001), the argumentative digital video commercials had a weaker hook ($M = 3.97$) than the storytelling advertising ($M = 4.98$). H1 is therefore supported.

TABLE I: MULTI-ITEM SCALE AND FACTOR LOADING

Construct and items, CR*	EFA	AVA/CFA
Being Nudged	0.8	
α 5 0.92, CR 5 0.85 (Escalas et al., 2004, α 5 0.91)		
(1) Captured my interest	0.77	0.79
(2) Drew me in	0.79	0.89
(3) Was very fascinated	0.81	0.92
Brand Attachment	0.81	
α 5 0.92, CR 5 0.88 (Mitchell and Olson, 1981, α 5 0.87)		
(1) How much do your ideas and emotions about this brand come to you automatically, seemingly out of the blue?	0.88	0.79
2) How much of your thoughts and feelings about a brand come to you naturally and instantly?	0.83	0.91
3) To what extent is your brand a part of who you are?	0.77	0.90
4) How personally connected do you feel to the brand?	0.76	0.85
Sharing Intention	0.83	
α 5 0.91, CR 5 0.89 (Chen and Godes, 2014, α 5 0.90)		
(1) Avoid informing friends about the advertisement/Tell friends about the advertisement	0.79	0.77
(2) Do not forward/forward this advertisement	0.87	0.95

(3) Share this advertisement/Don't share it	0.9	0.96
Positive word of mouth	0.9	
α 5 0.94, CR 5 0.89 (Alexandrov et al., 2013, α 5 0.87)		
(1) I would recommend this brand.	0.88	0.93
(2) I would recommend this brand to others.	0.87	0.91
(3) I would advise someone who is requesting my opinion to buy it.	0.9	0.92
Note(s): *CR 5 composite reliability, **AVE 5 average variance extracted		

TABLE 2. SINGLE-ITEM SCALES

| Construct and item	M(SD)	
Viewing intention	Emotional Storytelling	Humor
1) If you could skip this ad or watch it, please tell us how likely you watch it?	3.22 (2.43)	2.27 (1.72)
• Skip it/View it		

TABLE III. MEASUREMENT SCALE STATISTICS AND INTER- SCALE CORRELATIONS

Table 3: Measurement scale statistics and inter-scale correlations						
Construct (*M*, SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Nudged (4.72, 1.36)	1					
2. Brand Attachment (5.42, 1,01)	0.73	1				
3. word of mouth (4.52, 1.32)	0.6	0.64	1			
4. Ad Shareability (3.55, 1.51)	0.52	0.39	0.5	1		
5. Ad view (2.74, 2.11)	0.53	0.44	0.47	0.74	0.45	1
Note(s): All *p* < 0.001						

Using structural equation modelling using LISREL 8.8, the conceptual model was validated. (see Figure II). The specified structural model has a generally satisfactory fit, as shown by the traditional indices. [citation needed] The RMSEA for the model is 0.05, and its χ2 value is 49.01 (29 df, p 0.01). The model also has a Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI) value of 0.99, a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) value of 0.98, a Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) value of 0.99, and an Incremental Fit Index (IFI) value of 0.98. The findings provide evidence in favor of hypotheses H2a to H2c, which indicate that being nudged influences the level of digital engagement with the advertisement. Being nudged had a direct and significant favorable influence on viewing intention (H2a:0.60, p<0.001), sharing intention (H2b: 0.45, p<0.001), and good word-of-mouth (H2c: 0.38, p 0.001).

We analyzed the overall, direct, and indirect impact estimates generated by LISREL in accordance with Iacobucci's (2008) law to validate Hypothesis H3a and H3b. We note that when the model is completely stated integrate brand attachments as a partial mediator for being nudged and sharing intention, promotional intention, and positive WOM, the direct effect coefficients and the similar coefficients differ from each other. In this part, we draw your attention to this inconsistency. The difference in the coefficient between a nudge to word-of-mouth and a nudge to sharing intention is substantial, whereas the difference in the coefficient between a nudge to promotional intention is considerable (0.32 and 0.39, respectively). While the difference between what is hooked and wanting to share is small (0.08), this shows support of H3a and H3b. The findings provide evidence in favor of hypotheses H4a to H4b, which indicate that in Humor (H4a:0.32, p<0.001), vs Emotional (H4a:0.58, p<0.001), Storytelling being nudged emotionally influences the higher level of digital engagement with the advertisement then humor appeal. Being nudged had a direct and significant favorable effect on brand attachment.

The second test that we did remove the view from the model, which left us with only the direct effects that being nudged had on the two variables (sharing intention, and positive WOM). The betas for each of these variables take on the following values when the view is absent from the model: Sharing intention = 0.10 (t = 0.91) and WOM = 0.38 (t = 3.72). When the view is present, beta stays the same when it comes to the purpose of sharing, but it goes up when it comes to the intention of promoting and increasing good WOM (see Figure II).

FIGURE II: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Note(s): **p <0.05, ***p<0.001, ns – non-significant
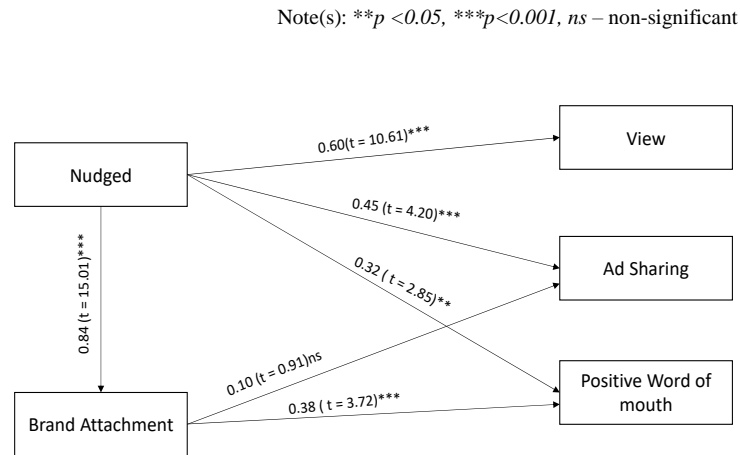
Given that brand attachment is not connected to the concept of sharing intention, there is no reason to anticipate that the being-nudged connection will undergo any kind of shift. Following the lead of Baron and Kenny (1986), we conclude that the presence of brand attachment accounts for some of the shared variances between being nudged outcome variable positive WOM. Because the beta for being nudged continues to be large even when the brand attachment is present, the results support partial mediation rather than full mediation. As a result, the H3b variants are supported but not the H3a. The next section will analyze our data, explore theoretical contributions, and discuss managerial implications, linking our findings to both academic literature and practical industry insights. This aims to showcase the relevance and impact of our research.

FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study on nudging in online video advertising has notable limitations and suggests several areas for future research. Firstly, it uses a college student sample, which may not represent all demographics. Future research should explore narrative transport in emotional storytelling ads with non-student populations and investigate segment-specific responses across various consumer demographics. Secondly, while the study uses established scales to measure digital engagement, emerging digital behaviors could be better captured with additional metrics, such as the volume and sentiment of social media interactions. Thirdly, the research is limited to two product categories. Expanding studies to include diverse categories and services could enhance the findings' generalizability.
Lastly, future research could examine emotional ads featuring brand-representing characters to understand their impact on consumer perceptions and brand outcomes, offering deeper insights into the effectiveness of digital video storytelling.

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