The Role of Narrative Transportation in Web Series as Branded Entertainment*

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Abstract

The dynamics of communications powered by the Internet, specifically from the increased use of social media, has led marketers to find creative channels to engage with the customers. One of the recent channels, "branded entertainment", is becoming familiar as an advertising strategy in which the content presented is a marketing tool for the advertising of certain brands. The current study examined the case of a branded-entertainment channel and the mechanism of the advertising instrument that leads to purchase intention. The specific purpose of this research is to investigate whether there is evidence of the role of narrative transportation and the fantasy proneness leading towards purchase of the brand advertised. To arrive at the conclusion, the study using web series sponsored by an artificial sweetener brand and employs a quantitative survey to question the audience. The findings contribute toward the understanding of how consumers respond to branded entertainment via video-sharing platforms. It is indicated that the stories presented in the web series can stimulate the audience to fantasize. Thus, the advertising message conveyed through narrative persuasion can form a favorable attitude toward the brand, which leads to intention to purchase. Practical elements are identified along with limitations and future research suggestions.

Keywords: Advertising, Need for Fantasy, Narrative Transportation, Branded Entertainment, Web Series

JEL Classification Code: M31, M37, D91, L82

1. Introduction

The Internet has brought changes to the landscape of advertising in the past two decades (Mortimer et al., 2018). The dynamics result specifically from the increase used of social media, the ways consumers can respond to advertisers, and the extended effect of advertising (Dahlen & Rosen, 2016). These changes pose challenges for brands in terms of communicating and engaging with their consumers. Brands also use social media as a staple channel to project specific image to its customers (Lee and Kwag, 2016). In spite of the exponential growth of social media (Arli, 2017), marketers are still struggling to understand online consumer behavior on online social networks (Yadav et al.). In today's world, it is important to keep up with alternative formats and channels of advertising, while at the same time understanding the impact of brand-initiated communication intent on consumers.

One of the shifts in advertising practice is related to the commercial advertising approach to product placement in television and film content. The term "branded entertainment" is becoming familiar as an advertising strategy in which the content presented is a marketing tool for the advertising of certain brands. Branded entertainment has been defined by Hudson and Hudson (2006) as the convergence both of advertising and entertainment. Wise (2008), cited in Chen (2015), describe branded entertainment as a way of combining integrated marketing communication into content so that consumers view the content for enjoyment/ entertainment purposes.

A new approach in advertising practice is branded entertainment. Branded entertainment has been defined

by Hudson and Hudson (2006) as convergence of both advertising and entertainment. Wise (2008) in Chen (2015) described branded entertainment as a way of involving Integrated Marketing Communication into content, so that consumers see the content for the purpose of enjoying entertainment. "Entertainment" itself is one of the six basic factors that influence the reaction especially for younger consumers (Ao & Nguyen, 2020).

A popular form of branded entertainment is short or mini advertising films known as mini-films (Lehu, 2007; Chen, 2015), net film (Kiley, 2004) or web dramas (Kang, 2017). Mini-film was first introduced by BMW in 2001. The mini-film series entitled "The Hire" is an 8-minute video that highlighted the key features of BMW cars (Chen, 2015). Since then, this format has gained popularity and distributed via various channels. Due to vast development of web-based video sharing, brands are utilizing it as the main media for distributing their mini-films, hence the term "web series" was introduced.

Web series is the latest development of digital content, which refers to a drama that is professionally produced and released through online platforms. It usually lasts 5 to 15 minutes for one episode, making it easy and convenient to access via mobile devices. Due to its increasing popularity, brands are using the web series as an advertising medium to introduce their products (Kang, 2017). A study by Pixability (2018) stated that 100 top brands that published their videos on YouTube, a social media video sharing platform, experienced 39% increase in average subscribers and 42% increase in average likes. Brands are also active in producing videos and increasing their presence in this channel. IBM increased their video publishing activities to 1,338 videos in the 2nd quarter of 2017. Disney ranked first with 50 million subscribers and 39 billion views in the same year.

The increasing activity of brands and favorable response of the audience has resulted in the heightened importance of web series as an important area to focus on research in the branded entertainment area. It is crucial for advertisers to understand more about how consumers respond to this format in order to develop an effective web series. However, the study examining this particular channel of branded entertainment from the customer's point of view is still limited. Especially the ones that study the cognitive process that the customers get due to the exposure of advertisement to ultimately leads to purchase intention (Choi & Wang, 2019). Thus, more studies are encouraged to investigate web series and how consumer react to product or brand placement via this media (Hudson & Hudson, 2006).

To understand the nature on how consumer response to a web-series format of branded entertainment, the current study borrows a concept from psychology area, namely, narrative transportation. It is posited that the underlying success of the web series as a form of branded entertainment might lay deep in psychological state of the audience. Previous study

suggested that the effectiveness of mini-films can be derived from narrative persuasion or narrative transportation (Green & Brock, 2000). Advertisement that allow the audience to fantasize and immerse into the storyline will be more persuasive thus influence the person's attitude toward the brand (Byrne, 2016).

The use of stories, whether created by firms and or customers, might have an important role to improve customers engagement and their intention to purchase the firms' products (Arora & Sanni, 2018). It was found that entertainment aspect of the web series is the dominant aspect that impacted consumer's attitude toward the utilizing brands (Arli, 2017). Thus, another objective of this study is to investigate whether narrative transportation from branded entertainment leads to positive attitude and, eventually, purchase intention toward the brand. Evidence from previous research such as Raney et al. (2003) suggested this relationship.

The urgency of this study is to understand how a brand uses narrative or narrative factors to invite target consumers and engage them in the brand's marketing activities, especially through web series using the YouTube Video Ads platform. The general objective is translated into two objectives, which centered in Narrative Transportation. First, this study aims to investigate the role of Need for Fantasy as the antecedent Narrative Transportation. The research tries to understand the extent that stories presented through the web series can stimulate the audience to fantasize (Need For Fantasy) through the point of view of character/actors.

The second objective is investigating the consequences of narrative transportation. It focuses on how an advertising message conveyed through communication of persuasive narrative creates certain attitude toward the web series and how it influences the purchase decision of the advertised products. Research on this topic is crucial because this study looks to gain understanding of a fairly new, yet increasingly popular web-series instrument of branded entertainment. The study contribution might lead to branded entertainment via social media as an important instrument for future advertising practice.

2. Literature Review

The use of narrative transportation in persuasion has been studied in different industry contexts and media channels. Evidence of its effectiveness was found in entertainment education studies (e.g., Moyer-Gusé, 2008; Slater & Rouner, 2002), luxury-brand advertising (Kim et al., 2016), the luxury-hotel industry (Huang, 2018), product and service advertising (Chang, 2013; McFerran et al., 2010), health communication (Tseng & Huang, 2016), fictional stories (Appel & Maleckar, 2012), fashion advertising (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2010), and tourism-destination marketing (Rozier-Rich & Santos, 2011). The practice of narrative transportation has also been found in traditional media such as printed media, radio, and

television (Appel & Mara, 2013; Appel & Maleckar, 2012; Bezdek & Gerrig, 2017; Escalas, 2004, 2007; Scolari, 2009). It has also been found in Internet/web channels, e.g., online advertising (Ching et al., 2013). Recently, studies have shifted toward the use of this concept in social-media channels, such as Instagram (Seyfi & Soydas, 2017) and Facebook (Cuesta et al., 2017).

Empirical evidence has shown that fantasy associates with "absorption" (Merckelbach et al., 2001), which is a concept that is closely related to "transportation" (Slater & Rouner, 2002). In addition, mental stimulation, better known as fantasizing, is one of the previous narrative transportation elements studies by Green and Brock (2000), with subsequent research suggesting that mental stimulation can lead to narrative transportation (Escalas, 2004). Am empirical study conducted by Byrne (2016) found that more intense need for fantasy leads to higher likelihood of narrative transportation. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *Need for fantasy has a positive influence on narrative transportation.*

Drama viewers who have experienced "transportation," both cognitively and affectively, will feel carried along by the story, so that the world of fiction portrayed by the drama will be accepted as a "real" situation and the message sent will be received, be it the expected message or an unexpected message (Slater & Rouner, 2002). Escalas's (2004) research, which studied persuasiveness through mental stimuli in advertising, explained that mental stimulation obtained via narrative transportation through affective responses and low levels of critical thinking will produce more positive effects on attitudes toward advertisement and brand evaluation. In support of this, Huang (2018) found that narrative transportation has a positive effect to brand attitude and visit intention in the context of luxury hotel industry. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: *Narrative transportation has a positive influence on attitude toward web series.*

Several studies have investigated attitude toward the brand as a direct cause for the effect on consumer attitudes such as brand choice and product choice or service consumption (MacKenzie et al., 1986; Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999). In simple terms, persuasion can be defined as a positive result of a brand (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2010). Based on the explanation of the results of the above studies, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: *Narrative transportation has a positive influence on attitude toward the brand.*
H4: *Attitude toward the web series has a positive influence on attitude toward the brand.*

Schiffman and Kanuk (2003) stated that attitude toward the advertisement is a tendency to respond to advertising stimuli with an attitude of liking or disliking within a specific period of time. Feelings that arise when consumers see advertisements can influence attitudes toward the product itself. Attitudes toward advertising affect attitudes toward products, which are also related to the desire to buy the product in question (Tsai et al., 2007). As a consequence of the desire to buy a product, consumer will go through stages of purchase decision. The results of the evaluation stages of other brands allow consumers to make purchase intentions, influencing the tendency to buy an item (Belch & Belch, 2012). Purchase interest represents the possibility that consumers plan or want to buy a product or service in the future. Increased purchase interest means an increase in the likelihood of purchasing (Dodds et al., 1991; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). Researchers can also use purchase interest as an important indicator in estimating consumer behavior. When consumers have a positive purchase intention, this will form a positive brand commitment, which can encourage consumers to take a purchase action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: *Attitude toward brand has a positive influence on purchase intention.*

3. Methodology

The current study employed quantitative methods by means of a survey questionnaire. The study sample comprised the target audience of the web series, defined as people who had watched the specific web series, sponsored by an artificial sweetener brand, in the last three months. The brand's product targets the millennial segment by promoting a healthy lifestyle by using an artificial sweetener in their beverages. The series chosen has won award as branded context of the year in 2018 and its first episode reaching 2.65 million views in 2019.

The storyline begins with the main character meeting a mysterious woman who claims that she is his wife from the future. The drama begins when the character develops a relationship with the "wife from the future" as she tries to persuade him to pursue a healthier lifestyle. The genre of the series is romantic comedy. The series runs for nine episodes, with approximately 12 minutes of video per episode, and is only distributed via YouTube. The sample was not limited to any specific regions, given that YouTube can be accessed anywhere with internet connection and is a viral medium. The sampling method used was non-probability sampling, utilizing the snowballing technique. The results of the primary data obtained through the questionnaire were processed using version 3.0 of the SmartPLS (partial least squares) software and subsequently analyzed.

The survey instrument was based on various previous research articles. The main point of reference was Chen's (2015) article on mini-films. Other sources and definitions of need for fantasy (NFF) included the level to which someone views product placement through entertainment media as an interesting thing to do to escape the routine reality and facing loneliness or unwanted social situations (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999). Narrative transportation (NTP) is defined as the mental processes experienced by the audience when they become involved in, or integrated into, the storyline and transported to the world of fiction, such as moving from one place to another, and experience the story cognitively and affectively (Chen, 2015; Shrum et al., 2011). Attitude towards web series is defined as the response, in terms of likes or dislikes, of the consumer toward the advertising communication stimulus following exposure (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989, cited in Dias et al., 2017). Attitude towards brands refers to the tendency of individuals to respond to (like or dislike) a brand in response to watching certain advertisements (Biehall et al., 1992; Ching et al., 2013; Gardner; 1985; Kusuma, 2012; Mithell, 1986). Finally, purchase intention reflects a person's tendency to buy certain products (Belch & Belch, 2012a; Chen, 2015; Cui & Yang, 2009).

4. Results

From a total of 100 respondents, 77% of the respondents were female. Regarding age range, 61% of respondents were aged 21 to 25 years old. Most of the respondents had an undergraduate education level (39%). Regarding their consumption of media, 82% watched web series on YouTube and 59 % watched at least one web series one to three times a week. A total of 43% of respondents admitted that they were fans of a web series.

Regarding the particular web series being investigated, 92% had watched the case web series until the last episode. Finally, 95% of respondents said that they knew that the web series was actually a branded entertainment sponsored by an artificial sweetener brand.

A test of the outer model was conducted by assessing the value of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability. The validity and reliability tests conducted revealed that the test of the measurement model met the requirements of validity and reliability, allowing subsequent testing of the structural model (inner model). The test of the inner model resulted in the evaluation of loading coefficients and t-values (Figure 1), from which the hypotheses could be tested (Table 1).
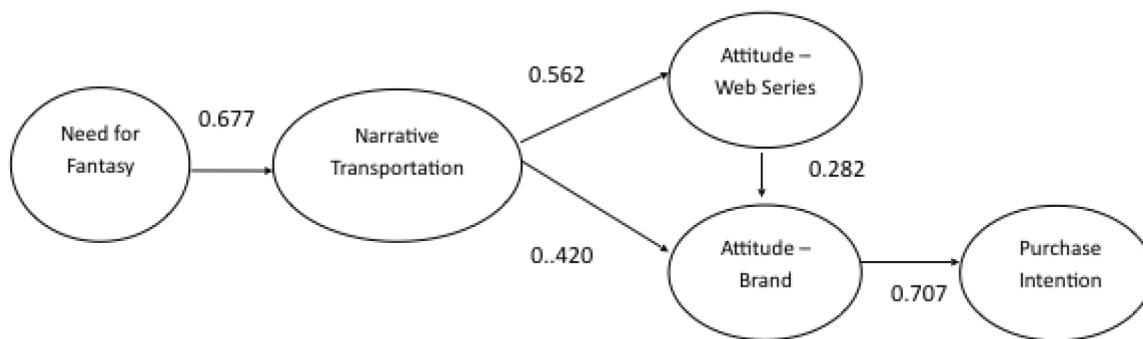

Figure 1: Structural Model – Loadings Coefficient

Table 1: Hypotheses Test

Hypo theses	Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (D)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistics ≥ 1,96	p-value ≤ 0,05	Result of Hypothesis
H1	NFF → NTP	0,677	0,686	0,058	11,767	0,000	Supported
H2	NTP → ATW	0,562	0,570	0,078	7,169	0,001	Supported
H3	NTP → ATB	0,420	0,419	0,107	3,920	0,000	Supported
H4	ATW → ATB	0,282	0,284	0,086	3,277	0,000	Supported
H5	ATB → PCI	0,707	0,707	0,052	13,537	0,000	Supported

The results showed that all the relationships were significant; therefore, all hypotheses were supported. A detailed discussion of the findings follows in the following subsections.

4.1. Relationship between Need for Fantasy and Narrative Transportation

The study found that the need for fantasy had a positive influence on narrative transportation. A person can be immersed in a fantasy world through narrative advertising. Individuals process information and attitudes about other individuals through story formats that can be referred to as narratives (Chang, 2009). Therefore, the process of the narrative advertisement is also believed to be understood in the same way. This understanding tends to be facilitated by mental stimulation, namely, the process of imagining oneself in the same scenario as described by the narrative (Rodgers & Thorson, 2012). In addition, mental stimulation, better known as fantasizing, is one of the previous narrative transportation elements studied by Green and Brock (2000). As previously stated, empirical evidence has also shown that fantasy is associated with "absorption" (Merckelbach et al., 2001), which is a concept that is closely related to "transportation" (Slater & Rouner, 2002).

The results of the study found that the indicators having the highest loading factor values for the need-for-fantasy variable were indicators that stated that the reason of respondents watched the web series because it aroused their emotions and feelings. This result is in accordance with previous research that states that emotional bonding is essential for obtaining narrative impact (Mazzocco et al., 2010). In the case of narrative advertising, viewers can feel connected with advertising through empathy that can be created using fantasy. Boller and Olson (1991) described empathy as a dynamic process in which the audience seems to experience for themselves how to consume the product through the experience of the actor's character displayed in the ad. Just like fantasy, high empathy is obtained through experience from consuming products, where products advertised can be perceived personally relevant by the audience (Boller & Olson, 1991).

The case study web series studied managed to offer fantasy to the audience through the fictional character of the main character, J, who is vulnerable to unhealthy lifestyles such as smoking, consuming alcohol, staying up late, rarely exercising, and consuming unhealthy foods, one of which is excessive sugar, which eventually causes J to disappoint his wife, in the future. J's character is a character with a very relatable lifestyle to the target consumers of the brand. In making the web-series content, the brand was able to apply the theory proposed by Regis (2013) that a fantasy is created not as a solution to a seemingly impossible problem, but to bring awareness of its relationship to an object, person, situation, or hidden idea that a brand wants to convey by portraying the psychological conflict.

Based on Oettingen's (1996) fantasy realization theory, individuals use fantasy to stimulate their own reality. Oettingen's (1996) research indicated that individuals who like to use fantasy to stimulate their reality in daily life and use fantasy as a way to distance themselves from their daily activities will experience narrative transportation more easily. Through narrative transportation, the audience experiences enjoyment, feels very involved, is cognitively bound, reacts emotionally, and has clear thoughts about the message being conveyed (Shrum et al., 2011).

4.2. Relationship between Narrative Transportation and Attitude Toward the Web Series

This study successfully demonstrated that narrative transportation had a positive and significant influence on attitude toward the web series. In this study, it is important to underline that the context for measuring the attitudes of respondents towards the web series did not assess the overall quality of the web series. However, assessing the respondents' attitude toward product placement was performed on the case web series or, more specifically, their attitude toward the inserted ads. The positive results obtained in this study are consistent with those of Burke and Edell (1989), who explained that consumers who are carried into the narrative world through the experience of a film will experience positive emotions and positive attitudes, both toward the mini-film and the advertised brand. Narrative advertising describes how the content and structure of stories can convey a positive message regarding the benefits of consuming a product (Byrne, 2016; Rodgers & Thorson, 2012). Story-based advertisements produced by brands have proven effective.

Roner (2009), cited in Byrne (2016), mentioned that survey-based marketing research has shown results that the success of brand storytelling is based on the ability to create interesting narratives. Transportation can pave the way to explore and experiment through others, in this case the fictional character of the narrative whose situation is made so that viewers imagine things happening in the scene and potentially narrative plots that happen to themselves. These fictional characters can be imagined as individuals who will surely experience this, individuals who are expected to experience it, or individuals who are afraid to experience it. The narrative world has a unique advantage in facilitating simulations as an alternative to feeling certain personalities, realities, and actions without having to pay the real costs that must be incurred by someone who wants to be transported to "a way of experiencing our world without necessarily seeing ourselves implicated in it" (Tellotte, 2001 p.146). In

the context of this research, the audience of the brand web series audience does not need to suffer the consequences of unhealthy lifestyles and the bad experiences that J directly experiences. However, by transporting them to J's character, viewers of the brand web series viewers can, however, feel the adverse effects they have the potential to experience in the future if they continue to live a lifestyle like J, adverse effects they can avoid by using the brand's product.

In some cases, product placement and advertising messages delivered through web series that are inserted into scenes or storylines are too obtrusive, thus interrupting the narrative transportation process that is being experienced by the audience or prospective consumers, which results in unpleasant experiences and even negative attitudes towards the web series. This negative experience will adversely affect the advertiser. Given that the online circulation of mini-films is a form of viral advertising (Chen, 2015), it would be very unfortunate if the audience were negative about web series advertisements as this could minimize the potential of the audience sharing or inviting people in their network to watch the web series. The interesting thing about the web series in this study is that the product placement is very subtle, only one time in the last episode, although it does include information that there is a brand behind the series.

Based on the measurement tools used and the results of data processing, it can be inferred that the narrative transportation process and product reinforcement insertions that occur in the web series studied actually have a positive impact on the audience's attitude toward the advertisements delivered. The results of data processing also showed that narrative transportation had a positive and significant influence on attitude toward the brand. In terms of narrative-transportation theory, the study suggests that, when processing narrative online advertisements that are highly entertaining, consumers will find it easier to experience transportation when giving full attention or concentration, feeling emotionally attracted, and imagine feelings of comfort (Batat & Wohlfeil, 2009; Byrne, 2016). Ads that provide high entertainment also encourage consumers to feel the narrative story as a fun activity. Entertaining advertisements arouse affective consumer affinity with the emergence of positive feelings such as the response of fun, cool, entertaining as well as does not feel time-consuming (Wang & Calder, 2006). Therefore, advertising in the form of entertainment that stimulates affective responses and creates satisfaction and pleasure can create a positive attitude toward a product or brand.

4.3. Relationship between Narrative Transportation and Attitude Toward Brand

The relationship between narrative transportation and attitude toward the brand was also supported by the research of Bhatnagar and Wan (2008), which stated that transportation immersion in brand evaluation or stories is moderated by self-character similarity (similarities to certain characters). When

viewers or prospective consumers imagine or simulate of an event in the story, they also think about their own original attitude in real life and how they would behave if they were to become these fictional characters. The effect of narrative transportation is easier to achieve in consumers who have high self-referencing (Escalas, 2007).

The indicator for the narrative transportation variable, which relates also to how the respondents imagine becoming the main character, obtained the highest factor-loading value, which is in line with previous studies. As Escalas (2004) explained, the mental stimulation created through empathy experienced by audiences and the narrative transportation processes created through the audience's self-identification with the characters, both main characters, create a positive impact by narrowing the focus of the audience to thinking critically from the point of view of the character, resulting in a more positive audience attitude toward the assessment of the product or brand itself. In the end, the interaction between the fictional characters and the advertised products or brands is able to provide clues to the audience about the personality and lifestyle of the characters they watch (Russell et al., 2006).

4.4. Relationship between Attitude Toward the Web Series and Attitude Toward the Brand

The results of the study were able to show that the attitude toward the web series had a positive influence on attitude toward the brand. Respondents who watched the web series had a positive attitude about how the product sponsor and how the advertising messages were delivered. The introduction of the brand's products through the web series was considered pleasant, making respondents' assessment of the brand's product as worth buying. Product placement is considered beneficial from the point of view of audio-visual production because it incorporates a real brand in fiction or fictional figures, helps identify when and how the audience should consume the products that are inserted, and contributes to explaining the role of fictional characters in stories (Balasubramania et al., 2006; Byrne, 2016). This method can also show consumers how a product or brand can be used in their daily lives (DeLorme & Reid, 1999), which will increase the audience's attachment to the program, in this case a web series (Balasubramanian et al., 2014). In fact, it has been recognized that attitudes toward advertising in general are important antecedents that influence consumer attitudes toward advertised products or brands, especially in the product-placement advertising method (Balasubramanian et al., 2006).

4.5. Relationship between Attitude Toward the Brand and Purchase Intention

The results of the analysis show that attitude toward the brand had a positive influence on purchase intention. Viewers

who had a positive assessment of the brand had a desire to consume the products that appeared in the web series after receiving messages regarding achieving a healthy lifestyle by consuming the product, which were implicitly and subtly delivered. These results are consistent with prior research in which attitude towards the brand has been seen as a factor that determines responses in terms of consumer behavior, such as brand choice and product or service consumption (Chen, 2015; MacKenzie et al. 1986).

Although the results of this study are in line with some of the results of previous studies, this study revealed a discrepancy with the majority of the work referred to, which stated that there was no relationship between narrative transportation and attitude toward the brand (Chen, 2015). The results of the present showed that attitude toward the mini film actually became a full mediating variable that connected narrative transportation and attitude toward the brand.

The reason for this difference may be due to the dual characteristic of branded entertainment, which only makes the audience interested in enjoying entertainment without being aware of the advertising message the sponsor wants to deliver. Factors regarding how products are exposed also have the potential to influence viewers' attitude towards the brand. In the current research, the web series inserted product placement only in the last episode and delivered the advertising message implicitly so that it produced a positive response from the audience. Sales or advertising messages that are delivered obtrusively by sponsor's brand can deter the audience. Therefore, subtle placements, such as those used in the web series case are more effective in the production of mini-films (Chen, 2015; Lehu, 2007). The positive assessment of a brand will occur when program involvement and persuasion knowledge can be controlled (Matthes et al., 2007; Chen, 2015).

5. Conclusion

The study has met its objectives and has made important theoretical contributions as well as practical implications. The first objective was to investigate the role of need for fantasy as an antecedent to narrative transportation in the context of branded entertainment in web series. The study found evidence that need for fantasy was a driver for narrative transportation. The second objective was to investigate whether narrative transportation led to a favorable attitude toward the web series and the brand, which then led to purchase intention. This second objective was achieved by validating a significant and positive relationship between the constructs. These findings imply that narrative transportation has an impact in the context of branded entertainment in web series. The theoretical contribution lies in adding empirical evidence to the literature on narrative transportation, which is still a limited topic of study, especially within the context

of branded entertainment. The findings will, it is hoped, assist marketing managers in designing and selecting web series as their instrument for branded entertainment. It also emphasizes the importance of need for fantasy as the driver for narrative transportation in designing the storyline for the web series.

There are limitations to this study, however, that provide avenues for future research. First, as the topic of narrative transportation has rarely been investigated, there is an opportunity to develop tools to measure this. For example, the measurement used in the need for fantasy variable needs to convey more depth in the understanding of the concept. Initially, the current study intended to measure need for fantasy as a form of escape from reality in the sense of watching the web series via YouTube as a diversion from routines; however, the results of data processing showed that respondents measured need for fantasy as part of emotional needs through empathy. In theory, narrative transportation can indeed be obtained through empathy and mental imagery (Phusapan, 2013). Future study is suggested to find measurement models and tools related to the measurement of empathy to complement the current measurement.

Second, the current research was not able to reach Generation Z respondents. The fact that Generation Z is a generation that plays an important role in determining purchasing decisions in a family and will become the major generation in the next few years. Generation Z tends to prefer to spend time watching TV or movies, which means that it has the potential to experience higher persuasion.

The third suggestion involves considering the movie genre. The web series investigated was a romantic comedy film. The results of research on different film genres will undoubtedly provide different research results. The genre is an important stimulus that can determine the level of transportation.

Fourth, current study also suggests conducting further research by comparing two types of product involvement, e.g., high vs. low involvement. The brand in this study was a type of low-involvement product. The results of such studies would likely be different if using high-involvement products. Types of products with low prices or high prices would also likely greatly affect consumer purchase intention. Finally, the addition of social-variable variables can also be considered to assess the level of impact of the phenomenon of social media influencers in providing persuasive messages through viral advertising.

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