

**The Effect of Narrative on Advertising Persuasiveness:
The Moderating Role of Concreteness Language**

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ABSTRACT

Several studies have demonstrated how narrative ads can be effective in persuading consumers' attitudes and behaviours (Adval and Wyler, 1998; Green and Brock, 2000; Escalas, 2004; Shank and Abelson, 1995; Woodside, 2010). While much has been said about the "why" aspects of narrative, less is known about the ways in which narrative ad "tell" stories. Still no research, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, has investigated whether the type of language used in narrative ads influences the persuasiveness of the advertising. The present study wants to address this gap by investigating how the degree of concreteness/abstractness of language in a narrative ad can influence consumer's willingness to recommend the brand featured in the ad. In order to explore this interplay, the research applies the Linguistic Category Model (LCM) framework to narrative ads (Semin and Fiedler, 1988, 1991).

Recommendation is a persuasive form of word of mouth (Peluso, et al. 2017) and the consumers' willingness to recommend represents an influential behavioural intention. Previous studies on financial disclosures have demonstrated that communications written in concrete language facilitate visualization compared to abstract stimuli, resulting in behaviours (Johnson and Kisielius, 1985; Paivio, 1969). Narrative ads too, can be very effective in eliciting attitude and behavioural changes (Deighton et al. 1989; Van Laer *et al.*, 2014). Congruently, we expect that narrative ads might lead consumers to increase their willingness to recommend the brand featured in the story, especially when the ad is written in concrete language.

Two laboratory experiments in the context of hospitality service were conducted. Findings of the two studies revealed a significant main effect of narrative structure on willingness to recommend (Study1: $F(1, 119) = 3.79; p = .05$; Study2: $F(1, 181) = 4.416, p < .05$). The results

of Study 2 showed that for narrative structured advertisement, the consumer's willingness to share positive information is higher when the advertisement is written in concrete language ($F(1,181) = 4.545; p = .03$). No differential effects in type of language were found in argument based advertisements.

Overall the results confirm the role of narrative ads in triggering consumer's behaviours (Chang, 2009); also, they suggest that firms can increase consumers' responses by writing narrative ads in concrete language. From a theoretical perspective, the study extended previous research on narrative features by applying the LCM framework to narrative advertisements, and it sheds light on the role played by the type of language in the persuasiveness of the narrative ads.

References available upon request.