STORIES IN PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS

HOW ADVERTISING CREATIVITY IN NARRATIVE ADVERTISING AFFECTS CONSUMER RESPONSES.

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Stories in product descriptions: How advertising creativity in narrative advertising affects consumer responses.

Abstract:

Narrative advertising, ads that contain events, characters, and a plot (Boller & Olson, 1991a) has become widely popular among marketers. Simultaneously, advertising creativity, known as how original or relevant an ad is (Rosengren, Eisend, Koslow, & Dahlen, 2020), has been said to be the most important tool in a marketer's arsenal (Reid, King, & Delorme, 1998). Yet, the two subjects have not been studied together. This study connects the two areas of research and conducts an experiment about what role advertising creativity plays in narratives, using three versions of an FMCG product description. It was empirically found that stories presented in product descriptions resulted in more favorable consumer responses as higher product attitude and purchase intention than the absence of a story. Additionally, creative product stories were found to produce more narrative transportation, positive affect, and empathy than a less creative product story. A further analysis using participants' perceived originality of a product story, resulted in higher transportation, empathy, positive affect, processing, and less critical thoughts. These findings also showed that higher perceived originality in a product story resulted in more favorable customer outcome responses such as higher product attitude and purchase intention.

Keywords:

Advertising creativity, Narrative advertising, Transportation theory, Product descriptions, Product stories.

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Contents

1. Introduction

This thesis is about the role advertising creativity plays in narratives and its contribution to customer responses such as purchase intention and product attitude. So, before we start, allow us to tell you a story. Just a short one.

It was an early morning in the autumn of 1963 in Stockholm, Sweden. The clock had just passed 04.58 and the fog was thick in the sleeping capital. A car was driving down the street of Kungsgatan. Suddenly and without warning, the car switched to the opposite lane. The fact that a truck was coming in the opposite direction 300 meters down the road, didn't seem to bother the driver in the slightest. The truck came closer and closer but the driver in the car was steady on his course. The truck had now only 50 meters left. At that very moment, the bells from Hedvig Eleonora church rang its loudest sound and the truck switched lanes. The clock had turned 05.00 and Sweden had officially switched from left-hand traffic to right hand-traffic.

Now, try to get yourself back from Stockholm. Could you see the fog or hear the church bells ring? Did you imagine the car and what would have happened if the truck hadn't switched lanes? In that case, you've experienced what Green and Brock (2000) call transportation. A phenomenon that arises when humans get immersed in a story.

1.1. Stories in marketing and research

The story above could have been an extract from an ordinary book chapter. However, storytelling has also become a popular format for conveying messages among marketers in their attempt to influence and persuade their audience. The story format appears constantly in TV advertising. For instance, the Swedish grocery retailer ICA's award-winning commercial series has embraced this format by starring fictitious employees in a humorous setting. These commercials qualify as narrative advertising (ads that contain events, characters, and a plot (Boller & Olson, 1991a)). Additionally, stories used in advertising are also beginning to proliferate into unconventional media, for example, the usage of brand stories displayed on FMCG packaging (Solja, Liljander, & Söderlund, 2018).

Marketers' eagerness to deploy stories is due to several reasons. Most prominent is that humans like stories and that our species have told them since the beginning of time. A common argument in this field is that humans process social information (abstract knowledge) much like stories (Bruner, 1986). Social information is about experiences and communicating one's experiences has been vital through the evolution of human interaction. In turn, this makes humans especially susceptible to the story format and the processing of narratives. It can also explain why humans get lost in stories so easily and can be influenced by them (Green & Brock, 2000).

Secondly, it so happens that the way information is presented to humans will affect how the information is being processed, ultimately influencing evaluations and beliefs (Adaval & Wyer, 1998; Cacioppo, Petty, Chuan, & Rodriguez, 1986). For example, the information presented in narratives has been found to affect evaluations more favorably than information presented in a simple list of features (Adaval & Wyer, 1998).

Furthermore, research in this area has gotten its fair share of attention. For a long time, the phenomenon of narrative transportation has been the focal point in the research of narrative advertising (Chang, 2009; Escalas, 2004; Glaser & Reisinger, 2021; Solja et al., 2018). Consequently, customer responses due to narratives in advertising such as purchase intention and brand attitude have largely been attributed to transportation theory (Chang, 2009; Escalas, 2004; Glaser & Reisinger, 2021; Solja et al., 2018). For example, short brand stories on packaging within FMCG have been documented to increase both purchase intention and brand attitude caused by the effects of narrative transportation (Solja et al., 2018).

However, despite the large body of research devoted to narrative advertising, we argue that transportation is not the only thing that happens when humans are exposed to the story format. Consumer outcome responses from narrative advertising such as purchase intention and product attitude might be explained by additional mechanisms as well. Mechanisms that arise from concepts such as advertising creativity (Rosengren et al., 2020).

1.2. What is advertising creativity?

Advertising creativity is the measure of how creative an ad is. Generally, people like creative ads and they enjoy processing them (Modig & Rosengren, 2013). The concept of advertising creativity is defined by a bipartite definition including originality and relevance (Rosengren et al., 2020). That is, consumers judge creativity in ads based on a two-dimensional basis, simultaneously. Originality can be described as how novel or divergent the advertising is, while relevance represents how appropriate or meaningful it is to the beholder (Rosengren et al., 2020). When referring to advertising creativity and creativity in this study, this is the notion we are going to use.

Like transportation, advertising creativity has been found to boost brand liking (Rosengren et al., 2020). How this consumer response is created is explained by a model called the "affect transferring model", which includes three main mechanisms: affect transfer, processing and signaling (Rosengren et al., 2020). In this paper, we argue that the concept of advertising creativity should be applicable to stories as well.

1.3. Contribution to existing theory and purpose

Both advertising creativity and narrative advertising have, as previously mentioned, been subject to a vast array of research (Escalas, 2004; Glaser & Reisinger, 2021; Rosengren et al., 2020; Solja et al., 2018). Advertising creativity has for example been mentioned as arguably the most important marketing tool used by marketers (Reid et al., 1998). Despite the well-documented effects of both advertising creativity and narrative advertising on consumers, there is little to no research on what role advertising creativity plays in the stories used in marketing.

However, that such endeavors are missing in the literature is not a surprising finding. Over the years, scholars have been diverted in their definition of what advertising creativity is, making it difficult to generalize their findings. The meta-analysis by Rosengren et al. (2020) has provided an important definition of creativity that enables further study of this concept in adjacent areas.

Therefore, a curiosity about examining this rather unexplored interplay between advertising creativity and narrative advertising has arisen. For example, we question to what extent purchase intention and product attitude depends on the story format itself, and how much depends on the creativity effects of that story. As previously mentioned, Solja et al. (2018) applied the concept of narrative advertising in short brand stories on FMCG packages and proved that these indeed increase purchase intention. However, it is not common to study whether these brand stories are creative or not. In this report, we argue that both advertising creativity and narrative advertising work in conjunction and that advertising creativity can strengthen narrative transportation. If proven, this would be an important contribution to the existing theory in narrative advertising.

Even though the usage of stories via new media such as FMCG packaging Solja et al. (2018) has been documented, there is still a wide range of new media left unexplored. E-commerce is growing rapidly, constantly attracting new actors, and online channels have become increasingly important. Simultaneously, a space not yet researched is the use of product stories within product descriptions. That is, using a story within a product description to provide the consumer with information as opposed to using an ordinary product description. Thus, in this study, the purpose is to investigate if the creativity of a product story within a product description can affect consumer outcomes such as purchase intention and product attitude compared to a) a less creative story and b) the absence of a story.

The above reasoning has led to the following research problem:

> **RP:** What role does advertising creativity play in narrative advertising and how does it affect consumer outcome responses such as purchase intention and product attitude in B2C settings?

Exploring this link would yield important insights for both marketers and scholars. By adding the dimension of advertising creativity in narratives we hope to provide insight into how marketers can improve stories and boost customer outcome responses. This result should also be interesting for scholars. The role of creativity in narrative advertising is yet an unexplored area that has the potential of having a substantial impact on transportation effects. Because, if creativity is proven to increase narrative transportation

effects, this will add an important dimension that ought to be included in future narrative research.

In the next section, we will present the concept of product stories and what makes a product story creative, along with what consumer outcomes to expect of them. If these hypotheses are found to be supported empirically, they can serve as the first proof of the existence of advertising creativity within narrative advertising.

2. Conceptual framework and hypotheses development

Before introducing the concept of a product story, we will first establish what stories usually contain within the advertising context.

2.1. What is a story within advertising?

According to Boller and Olson (1991), advertising can either take an argumentative or narrative form. We are focusing on the latter, which refers to ads that tell a story. Within the narrative type of ads there are several subthemes that have been identified in previous research. One subtheme of narrative advertising is story or drama advertising (Deighton, Romer, & McQueen, 1989). Story advertising involves characters, plot and a narrator (Deighton et al., 1989). The story written in the introduction was based on this notion. This is also the departure we will take in defining what a product story is.

2.2. What is a product story?

Since there is no common definition of what a product story is, we begin by defining it as stories within product descriptions. To develop this definition further we will borrow concepts from both ad stories and brand stories. Firstly, we argue that product stories, just like stories within advertising, should contain a narrator, characters, and a plot (Deighton et al., 1989). Secondly, in addition to the elements of an ad story, the content and structure of a product story will be developed based on the definition of a brand story. According to Solja et al. (2018): “a brand story conveys information about the brand through a plot consisting of events that are carried out by actors and arranged based on theme, causality and temporality”. However, instead of focusing on founders or other common elements found in brand stories (Solja et al., 2018), product stories ought to focus on the product. Besides that, brand stories and product stories carry similar content and structure.

2.3. What is a creative product story?

If a product story should contain a narrator, plot, and characters along with connections to the product itself, what elements make such a story creative? Firstly, creativity is judged by the beholder (Dahlen & Modig, 2020). What this means is that creativity is

rather subjective. However, and based on the two dimensions that creativity is being judged on (originality and relevance), one could presumably argue that including certain elements in a story would increase its likelihood of being perceived as creative. For instance, such elements could be a twisted plot, an eccentric character, or the setting of the story: like displaying it in the context of product descriptions.

However, originality alone does not make an ad creative; it must be relevant too (Rosengren et al., 2020). Otherwise, the ad risks being judged as "bizarre or weird" (Rosengren et al., 2020). Thus, if a product story contained a weird plot unrelated to the product features or the consumer, it would certainly be seen as irrelevant and alien to the beholder. This could for example be mitigated by connecting the product to the ads. In fact, displaying the product use and consumption of the product in stories has proven to be advantageous in print ads (Escalas, 2004). Additionally, the product link in a story is also essential for longer transportation and to give meaning to consumers (Glaser & Reisinger, 2021). Therefore, it's important that a product story is connected to the product itself, otherwise it risks losing its relevance to the consumer.

For this research to be applicable to the current study, we must establish that a product description is an ad. In the Cambridge Dictionary (2022) an ad defined as "a picture, short film, song, etc. that tries to persuade people to buy a product or service, or a piece of text that tells people about a job, etc.:". Thus, under this definition a product description should qualify as an advertisement and therefore previous research in both advertising creativity and narrative advertising could be applicable to product descriptions. To understand the realism of using a product story within a product description we will now give a contextual background.

2.3.1. Product descriptions

In e-commerce, product descriptions play a central role in displaying products function and other information to the customer. Consequently, a bad product description might fail to convert a prospect into a customer. However, currently product descriptions usually follow a rather unilateral form within FMCG. To gain an understanding of the usage of product descriptions, we conducted a content analysis of 20 different toothpaste product

descriptions from a variety of websites (see method section 3.2.1). Toothpaste was chosen because presumably it is a product that everyone uses.

Furthermore, the analysis showed that brand stories or storytelling in toothpaste advertising is not apparent at all. These questions the realistic applications of using a product story in a product description within FMCG. However, we argue that the concept rather than realism should be of focus here.

2.4. Immediate consumer responses to product stories

Below, the presumed consumer responses to using product stories within product descriptions will be presented alongside our hypotheses.

2.4.1. How humans process information

When humans are exposed to a stimulus the brain decides how to process the information. If the stimulus is an ad, the processing will mainly depend on two things: the level of involvement and the argument strength. Involvement represents the importance of the product to the customer while argument strength represents how well the product features are argued for (Cacioppo et al., 1986). Based on that, there are two distinct routes that information can take, the central and the peripheral route. Both lead to attitude change (Cacioppo et al., 1986). However, the central route is likely to be chosen when there is argument strength and high involvement whereas the peripheral route is chosen when involvement and argument strength is low. Thus, information presented in a list or argumentative way is most likely processed by the central route. In contrast, when information is presented as a narrative, it's presumed that the brain acknowledges this as "low argument strength" information and therefore processes the information through the peripheral route (Cacioppo et al., 1986). Consequently, this enables transportation to occur which is our first presumed consumer response to product stories.

Narrative transportation

Once the decision has been made to process the information as a narrative there are several consequences. In the field of persuasion research and social psychology, Green and Brock (2000) have conceptualized the phenomenon of a reader becoming absorbed or immersed in a story. Building on Gerrig´s (1993) simile of the reader being a traveler

when he or she encounters a text, Green and Brock (2000) developed the concept of transportation. This could be explained as a convergent mental process into a narrative world, involving attention, imagery, and feelings. Thus, when a reader becomes transported and immersed by a narrative, they lose connection to the surrounding environment and experience emotions and vivid mental images (Green, 2021).

Green and Brock (2000) conducted four studies where different public narratives (novels and editorials) were presented to readers. They found that readers were equally transported into a story whether it was fictional or non-fictional. This suggests that a product story can also be fictional without losing the effects of transportation. Further, Solja et al. (2018) proved that brand stories elicited higher narrative transportation than a list with the same information. This result was rather expected since information is being processed (Cacioppo et al., 1986) and evaluated (Adaval & Wyer, 1998) differently, due to the way information is presented.

Additionally, the amount of processing for an ad depends on how relevant the beholder finds it to be (Rosengren, Eisend, Koslow, & Dahlen, 2020). As a result of this, consumers enjoy processing creative ads to a greater extent than non-creative ads (Modig & Rosengren, 2013). Therefore, a product story that contains both original and relevant elements, would result in longer exposure and elicit the reader's attention (Rosengren et al. 2020). Consequently, if a consumer pays more attention to the story and is exposed to it for a longer time, it seems reasonable to assume that this increases the likelihood of the reader getting transported. Meaning that the transportation would, to some extent, be dependent on the level of processing. We argue that a creative story will be processed more than a less creative story and increase the level of transportation. This might generate higher absorption than a story found less creative and presumably also more than the absence of a story.

Thus, we hypothesize the following:

> H1: A creative product story in a product description produces a higher level of narrative transportation than a) a less creative story and b) the absence of a story.

Critical thoughts

When narrative processing has occurred, and the reader has become transported there are other effects stemming from this. For example, Green and Brock (2000) found that readers who got highly transported had difficulties finding "false notes" in the story. In addition to that, it was shown that readers who got transported developed beliefs consistent with the story and the protagonists featured in the story. Escalas et al. (2004) could also prove that this phenomenon existed, albeit in a different context. For example, mental simulation (e.g., imagine yourself using the product) in printed ads could lead to transportation and more consistent beliefs with the story compared to a non-story ad.

Thus, a common belief in the field of persuasion research and transportation theory, is that when readers get immersed in a story, they become disconnected to real-world facts. Further, Chang (2009) found that when readers were exposed to narrative magazine articles, they failed to take argument strength into account when evaluating a subsequent ad. This was consistent with Green and Brock (2000) findings. In addition, when measuring critical thoughts, defined as counter arguments or disagreements with certain claims made in the brand story on FMCG packages, Solja et al. (2018) also found these effects to hold true empirically.

As previously hypothesized, a creative product story should elicit transportation. Consequently, increased transportation ought to disconnect the reader from "real world facts" which leads to beliefs consistent with the story and less critical thoughts. Thus, certain claims made about the product in a creative product story might be viewed less critically. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

> H2: A creative product story in a product description produces a lower level of critical thoughts than a) a less creative story and b) the absence of a story.

As previously mentioned, a transported reader is prone to develop beliefs consistent with the protagonists featured in the story. This might also imply that H2 also builds on the notion that the reader is developing empathy towards the characters in the story. This reasoning leads to the next consumer response.

Empathy

According to Boller and Olson (1991b), empathy is the process in which consumers experience the meanings of ads. Because, "to effectively grasp the meanings portrayed in a story, audience members must, in a sense, partially assume the experiential identity of a character" (Katz 1963). This is particularly important when studying the effects of narrative advertising.

Further, Boller and Olson (1991a) reason that empathy will make the meaning of the ad relevant since the consumer builds empathetic bonds with the ad characters. The characters are central as they can "convey a multiplicity of brand meaning from the varying perspectives of consumer characters" (Boller & Olson, 1991b). This opens the window for experiential meaning. For instance, by letting characters in the story use the product or brand, the feelings characters experience can then be transferred to the reader through empathy (Boller & Olson, 1991b). This is also an example of including a product link in the story, which has been proved to be essential for longer transportation and to give meaning to consumers (Glaser & Reisinger, 2021). Thus, consumers that develop empathy with characters might find that the information is more relevant to them. As familiar, relevance is the second dimension of advertising creativity (Rosengren et al., 2020). This suggests that a creative product story should have characters that consumers can latch on to and develop empathic bonds with. Therefore, including such elements ought to make the creative product story more meaningful to the customer as opposed to a story with fewer of these elements. Further, empathy is built between humans and not lists (Boller & Olson, 1991), or in this case a standardized product description without a story. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

> H3: A creative product story in a product description produces a higher level of empathy than a) a less creative story and b) the absence of a story.

The creativity of a story has already been touched upon in H1-H3. However, these hypotheses captured the presumed elicited narrative transportation effects of including creativity dimensions in a product story. The next section of hypotheses H4-H6 will focus on effects directly connected to advertising creativity. We argue that these effects happen simultaneously as narrative transportation, critical thoughts and empathy.

2.4.2. The role of advertising creativity in narratives

Affect transfer

When humans are exposed to advertising, the immediate response is an emotional reaction toward the stimulus called affect. The strength of this reaction depends on how original the communication is for the beholder (Rosengren et al., 2020). As previously mentioned, originality represents the "extent to which an ad contains brand or execution elements that are different, novel, unusual, original, unique, etc." (Smith, MacKenzie, Yang, Buchholz, & Darley, 2007). That is, an original ad catches the beholder's attention causing an emotional reaction.

Furthermore, it has been established that creative ads are generally more liked. Therefore, the initial emotional reaction to a creative ad is most likely positive (Rosengren et al., 2020). Consequently, the evoked feeling will then transfer to the evaluation of targets that can be both related and unrelated to the creativity itself, such as the product and the brand. This is called affect transfer and in turn, it leads to more favorable evaluations, i.e., a better attitude (Rosengren et al., 2020). Since the originality dimension of creativity is the main cause of affect transfer, this highlights the importance of being original (Rosengren et al., 2020).

A similar process is existent in narrative advertising. For instance, Solja et al. (2018) found that a brand story generated more positive affect than the absence of a story. Although referred to as affect infusion (Forgas, 1994) in narrative advertising, it represents the same process as affect transfer in advertising creativity. Thus, we expect to find this phenomenon in product stories placed in product description as well.

In addition to the story itself, we argue that the usage of a product story in a product description is alone an original endeavor and should presumably also evoke a positive initial affect. However, the affect might increase or decrease during the story being read depending on how interested the consumer gets. If unexpected elements such as plot twist or an eccentric character are included in the product story, this ought to increase the positive affect.

In summary, we argue that a creative product story will facilitate a stronger positive affect for three main reasons; (1) consumers generally like creative ads, (2) using a story

generates more positive affect and, (3) a creative story keeps the reader interested longer which generates a stronger positive affect. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

> H4: A creative product story in a product description produces a higher level of positive affect than a) a less creative story and b) the absence of a story.

Nevertheless, when marketers consider creativity synonymous with originality, they fail to utilize the full potential of advertising (Rosengren et al., 2020). Thus, it is important to understand that originality is only one of two dimensions of advertising creativity (Rosengren et al., 2020). The second dimension, relevance, plays an important role in the sense that it determines whether the brain will keep processing the stimulus or not. Therefore, after the initial affect, the next presumed response to a product story is processing.

Depth of processing

Processing is dependent on the second dimension of advertising creativity, relevance. Relevance is the ability to "be meaningful, appropriate or valuable to the audience" (Smith & Yang, 2004). These elements decide whether the information is important to the customer or not and if it's worth their attention and energy. If an ad were to exclude the relevance dimension the ad will not be processed any further, and consumer outcome responses such as brand liking and ad liking will not be as strong (Rosengren et al., 2020). Additionally, originality is also important for processing to occur. Thus if a product story contains both originality and relevance it has a higher likelihood of resulting in a longer customer processing time (Rosengren et al., 2020), ultimately increasing the exposure to the beholder. Processing is thus a key mediator in the process of judging the creativity of ads (Rosengren et al., 2020).

Furthermore, there are four dimensions of processing; pre-attentive processing, motivation to process, attention/capacity, and depth of processing. However, like Smith, Chen, and Yang (2008), we have chosen to focus on the depth of processing which represents the ability to understand the ad's information. The argument for focusing on depth of processing is that depth of processing cannot be achieved without the other forms of processing occurring as well. That is, a consumer will not be able to process a stimulus

in depth and understand it, unless they first undergo pre-attentive processing where they direct attention to the ad (Yang & Smith, 2009).

Building on the notion that a product story ought to be considered as an ad, we expect these principles to apply here as well. Thus, a creative product story that contains both original and relevant elements is expected to have a higher likelihood to result in longer depth of processing, as opposed to a less creative product story. Similarly, a standardized product description without a story is argued to be processed less. Because, although it presumably includes relevant information, the lack of originality will lower the probability of processing. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

> H5: A creative product story in a product description produces a higher level of depth processing than a) a less creative story and b) the absence of a story.

Signaling

An ad that contains both original and relevant elements can, as previously established, lead to both affect transfer and processing. Ultimately, it can also result in the effect of signaling (Rosengren et al., 2020). Signaling explains how creativity can signal brand effort, which in turn influences the perceived brand ability and consequently also the perceived brand quality (Rosengren et al., 2020). This means that the beholder acknowledges the effort (time and cost) that the brand has put into the advertising (Dahlén, Rosengren, & Törn, 2008). Consequently, the perceived effort influences how smart the customer perceives the brand to be, known as brand ability. This in turn has been proved to influence customers' product quality perceptions and their brand attitude (Dahlén, Rosengren & Karlsberg, 2018).

Further, Rosengren et al. (2020) found that relevance is primarily causing the signaling response in the affect transfer model. In this study, we expect the same to hold true. Therefore, by displaying a creative product story in a product description this might signal effort. Thus, we hypothesize the following.

> H6: A creative product story in a product description produces a higher level of effort than a) a less creative story and b) the absence of a story.

2.5. Consumer outcome responses to product stories

Product attitude

As previously mentioned, advertising creativity increases ad and brand attitude due to affect transfer and signaling effects (Rosengren et al., 2020). Furthermore, using brand stories has also been shown to increase brand attitude due to affect infusion and coherent beliefs the reader has developed along with the story (Solja et al., 2018; Escalas 2004). In this study, a brand will not be included in the stimulus and therefore product attitude will be measured instead.

Product attitude represents the consumers overall evaluation of the product. Although little focus has been devoted to product attitude in these research areas, (Ching, Tong, Chen, & Chen, 2013) found that narrative advertising in an online setting can increase product attitude. Most likely this finding can be attributed to the same effects that influence brand attitude. We argue that the combination of creativity and the narrative advertising effects ought to result in more favorable attitudes towards the product for two main reasons.

First, and as previously hypothesized, including creative elements in a product story is assumed to signal higher effort from the sender, which in turn affects the consumers perception of the brand's ability and quality positively. The higher brand quality stemming from the signaling effect consequently affect the evaluation of the product, i.e., the product attitude, positively. Additionally, the positive affect caused by including a creative product story in a product description will presumably transfer to the evaluation of the product.

Thus, we hypothesize the following:

> H7: A creative product story in a product description produces a higher level of product attitude than a) a less creative story and b) the absence of a story.

Purchase intention

According to (Ajzen, 1991), attitude is a determinant of intention, meaning that a more positive product attitude should affect purchase intention positively. Therefore, building upon the arguments for the previous hypothesis, purchase intention should also be indirectly affected by the effects of signaling and affect transfer.

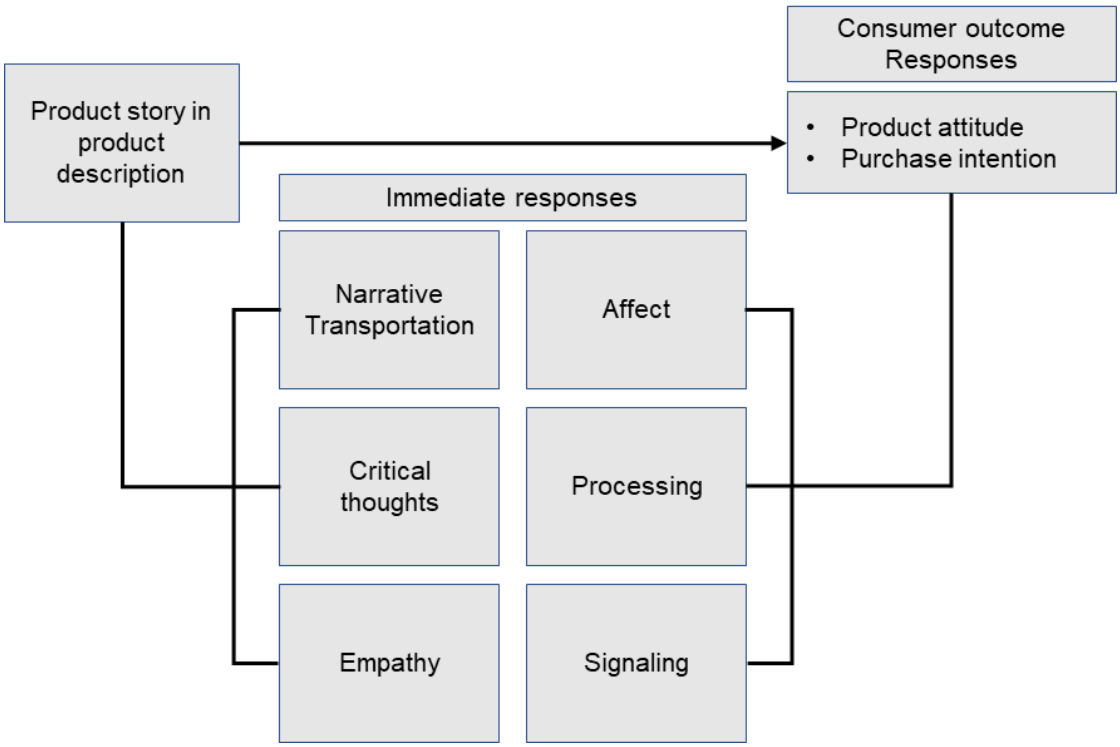
Furthermore, as aforementioned, narrative transportation has been shown to increase purchase intention (Solja et al., 2018). This outcome has been attributed to critical thinking, because, when lowered, this has been found to have significant effects on brand evaluations and ad attitudes (Escalas, 2004). We expect the same to hold true here. Moreover, (Reinartz & Saffert, 2013) have proven that advertising creativity leads to increased sales. Reasonably, this should imply that advertising creativity should also result in a higher purchase intention.

Thus, we hypothesize that using a creative product story in a product description should result in the following:

H8: A creative product story in a product description produces a higher level of purchase intention than a) a less creative story and b) the absence of a story.

All expected consumer responses (H1-H8) are summarized in the model below.

Figure 2. The creative narrative transportation model.



Note: The model is based on the narrative transportation model (Escalas 2004) and the affect transfer model (Rosengren 2020).

3. Method

3.1. Research approach

In this study we have taken an objective ontological approach, meaning that we view the reality of our studied phenomena to exist independently and without social actors (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). From this, knowledge was gained by following a positivistic epistemological viewpoint, implying that we measured reality quantitatively. Consequently, a deductive method has been chosen and theories were tested with data collected in a survey (Bell et al., 2019). Prior research in this area (Escalas, 2004; Glaser & Reisinger, 2021; Solja, Liljander, & Söderlund, 2018) has also chosen this approach. Moreover, since the independent variables already have been identified in previous research a deductive method has been enabled.

Further, the research design chosen to collect data will be a classic experimental design (Bell et al., 2019). To test our hypotheses, a between-subject experiment was conducted. Participants were randomly allocated to one of three stimuli: ordinary product description, ordinary product description followed by a story and a product description with a product story (see appendix 1).

The product featured in the product descriptions was a toothpaste from a generic brand. We argue, using generic brands, allows for excluding prior advertising and neglecting brand attitudes already established in consumers' minds that could have an indirect effect on consumer outcome responses. Thus, this phenomenon could be studied in relative isolation making the results robust.

3.2. Stimulus development:

3.2.1. Background

To gain an understanding of retailers' usage of product descriptions for toothpastes, we conducted a content analysis of 20 different product descriptions. In most cases (15), the product description is placed to the right of the product and occasionally (4) a more thorough description follows beneath with tabs including ingredients and usage. In the vast majority of product descriptions (15), benefits about the toothpaste were presented.

Such benefits were for example: strengthening teeth, preventing caries, preventing bad breath, gentle enamel, stops bleeding gums, whiter teeth, removing plaque, and relieves irritation. In some cases, these benefits were also summarized in a list of bullet points. However, it was just one product description that contained only bullet points.

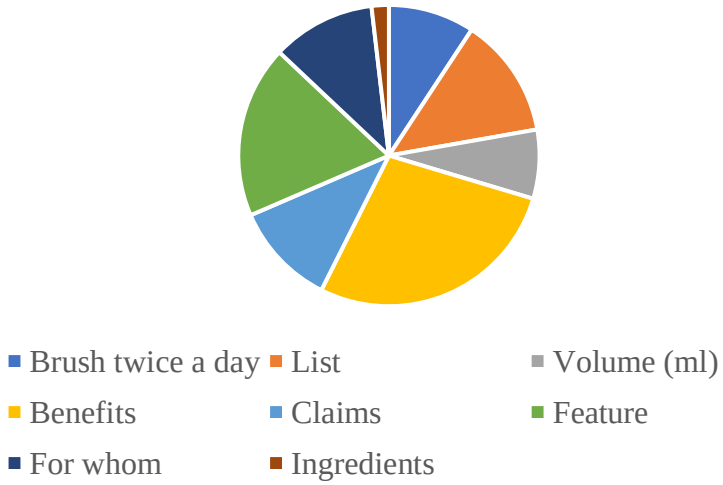
The most common product feature was flour, which was apparent in half of the observed product descriptions (10). Further, in some product descriptions (6) there were different claims made from the toothpaste company, such as: “recommended from dentist organization”, “most popular”, “first nordic eco labeled”, “you will see results after a couple of uses”, “makes your smile whiter in just 2 weeks”, “visible results in two weeks, clinical study conducted on 76 persons”, “better resistance than other flour toothpastes”. Further, 25 % of the product descriptions (5) also included for whom the toothpaste was for, adults for example.

Figure 1. Summary product description content analysis toothpaste in e commerce

Note: Some content themes were included in several of the 20 product descriptions analyzed.

3.2.2. Stimulus 1: Ordinary product description

From the previous toothpaste analysis, we found that to resemble an ordinary product description for the average toothpaste on the market it should contain the following elements. Firstly, since the text in most product descriptions were placed to the right, that is the layout we will mimic. Secondly, benefits about the toothpaste should be included.



Of the benefits presented in the analysis above, we included the following: strengthening

teeth, preventing caries, gentle enamel, whiter teeth, and relieving irritation. Furthermore, product characteristics like amount of fluoride was also included. Evidently, and shown in the analysis, claims regarding the product's effectiveness were often apparent in the product description. We chose to include claims such as “recommended from dentist organization”, “visible results in two weeks, clinical study conducted”, and “better resistance than other flour toothpastes”. (see appendix 1).

3.2.3. Stimulus 2: Ordinary product description and story

The second stimulus contained the ordinary product description (stimulus 1) developed in the previous section. In addition, the ordinary product description was followed by a product story. The product story included all elements of a narrative ad and a brand story: a plot, characters, a narrator (Deighton et al., 1989) as well as causality and temporality (Solja et al., 2018). The story was developed based on the two creativity dimensions i.e., originality and relevance (Rosengren et al., 2020). Since all the information about the product was disclosed in the ordinary product description, the story was designed to be disconnected to the product without a clear product link. With this design, we aimed to make the story less relevant. Regarding emphasizing originality, an unexpected theme was chosen for the product story. The toothpaste was described through a love letter addressed from the teeth to the toothpaste (see appendix 1). Additionally, as can be seen in the toothpaste analysis, the usage of a story in a product description is not apparent. Therefore, we argue that having a product story in the product description will add originality in addition to the chosen theme.

3.2.4. Stimulus 3: Creative product story

In contrast to the other stimuli, the third stimulus only contained a product story. Here the product link was established, and all the product information was presented in the story itself. The theme of the story was the same as developed in stimulus 2. Thus, the story of a love letter to a toothpaste from the teeth was now injected with information about the toothpaste (see appendix 1). This product description aimed to be more creative than the second stimulus by increasing both the originality and the relevance. Since only displaying a story in a product description is not prevalent, this endeavor should result in higher originality than the second stimulus that, in conjunction with a story displayed an

ordinary product description. Additionally, the story itself, should be more relevant to the reader as the information is included.

3.3. Pre-study

Establishing stimulus as a story

To empirically establish that our stimuli had the effect intended to, a pre-test was conducted. Pretest participants (n=27) were randomly allocated to one of the three stimuli, followed by a questionnaire. Respondents were asked to answer to what extent they perceived the product description to be a story, measured on a 1 to 7 scale ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The respondents (n=7) assigned to stimulus 1 (ordinary product description) didn't perceive the product description as a story, considering that the mean score was low (M=1.57, SD=0.79). On the other hand, the respondents (n=7) assigned to stimulus 2 (ordinary product description and product story) did perceive the product description as more of a story since the mean score was higher (M=5.43, SD=0.98). The respondents (n=14) assigned to stimulus 3 (product story) perceived the product description as a story as the mean score is close to 7 (M=6.92, SD=0.28). Despite that the distribution of stimuli among participants was skewed we could establish that our product story included in stimulus 2 and 3 was perceived as a story.

Establishing the advertising creativity of the product descriptions

Since consumers ought to be the judge of creativity (Modig & Dahlen, 2020) participants got to determine the creativity of the different product descriptions. Pretest participants (n=27) were assigned to a product description and judged it based on their perceived originality and relevance. Participants (n=7) assigned to stimulus 1 (ordinary product description) judged the creativity rather low (originality $\alpha = 0.91$, M=2.10, SD= 1.06; (relevance $\alpha = 0.84$, M=4.04, SD=1.29). Pretest participants (n=7) assigned to stimulus 2 (ordinary product description followed by story) viewed the creativity somewhat higher (originality, M=4.74, SD=0.76; (relevance, M=4.43, SD=0.8). Finally, pretest participants (n=13) assigned to stimulus 3 (product story) viewed the creativity even higher (originality, M=5.3, SD=0.91; (relevance, M=4.56, SD=1.53). The means and standard deviations from the pre-study are summarized in table 1.

A non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to check whether the observed differences were significant. It can be concluded that originality was significant ($H(2)=15.83$, $p<.001$), while relevance was not ($H(2)=2.06$, $p=.356$). The lack of significant differences for relevance, can be explained by the fact that the same information was presented in all stimuli. However, the way information was presented differed, which evidently only affected originality. Based on this insight we did not chose to modify the stimuli. Because, in our design we argue that it is crucial to keep all variables except the treatment constant and adding information in one stimulus would result in hardship determining cause and effect relationships. Thus, creativity differences in the proceeding study will most likely arise from the originality dimension.

Furthermore, to test the differences between the groups, a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was performed, and it can be concluded that the difference in originality was significant between stimulus 1 and stimulus 2 ($p=.002$) as well as between stimulus 1 and 3 ($p=.001$). However, the difference in originality between stimulus 2 and 3 was not significant ($p=.08$), but since the p-value was so close to 0.05 we will not modify the stimulus, as the significance level will most likely decrease with a larger sample.

Survey experience

Pretest participants (n=27) were also asked how they experienced the survey using a four-item scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (1-7). The results indicated that the participants perceived the questions and the answers to be clear, as well as the survey to be meaningful ($\alpha = 0.75$, $M=5.73$, $SD=1.10$). Additionally, they did not perceive that the questions influenced them to answer a certain way ($M=2.70$, $SD=1.56$). Thus, the survey design was kept for the main study.

Table 1. Pretest summary

	Stimulus 1 n=7		Stimulus 2 n=7		Stimulus 3 n=13		Total n=27
Perceptions of product description	μ	σ	μ	σ	μ	σ	α
Originality	2.10	1.06	4.74	0.76	5.3	0.91	0.91
Relevance	4.04	1.29	4.43	0.80	4.56	1.53	0.84
Story perception of product description	1.47	0.62	1.64	0.87	1.53	0.73	-

3.4. Procedure and participants

The study was conducted in an online setting. Participants (n=145; Male= 67; 78 female) were recruited in two ways. Firstly, invitations to participate in the study were sent out via social media using convenience sampling (Bell et al., 2019). Secondly, invitations to participate in the study were made at a business school by directly approaching students. Participants scanned a QR code which enabled them to take the survey online just like the participations invited via social media.

On the first page, participants were informed about the aim of the survey which was to investigate how consumers respond to how information is presented in product descriptions along with GDPR information. On the next page, participants were instructed to read the following product description carefully. To ensure that participants paid attention to the instructions this page was followed by an instructional manipulation check (IMC) including a question adopted from Oppenheimer, Meyvis and Davidenko (2009) "blue dot task". This question was designed to rule out random clicking and participants that failed this question five times were removed from the study.

Participants were then randomly assigned to either an ordinary product description, an ordinary product description followed by a story, and a product description only containing a product story. Afterwards, a questionnaire followed (see appendix 2). Furthermore, a Pearson Chi-square test showed that there were no systematic differences in effect between gender ((2, N = 145) = 2.86, p = .24), or age ((44, N = 147) = 45.89, p = .39) in the three different groups.

3.5. Measures

The measures are presented in full in appendix 2.

3.5.1. Narrative transportation

Most studies measuring transportation (Chang, 2009; Escalas, 2004; Solja et al., 2018), developed scales based on Green and Brock's (2000) validated transportation scale. Based on this scale, alternative scales have been developed to measure transportation in brand stories on for example FMCG packaging (Solja et al., 2018). Since brand stories and product stories are similar, transportation was measured using four items ranging on a

seven-point scale (1-7), from not at all to very much, adapted from Solja et al. (2018). Participants were asked to grade to what extent they agreed on statements such as “I could picture myself shown in the product description” and “I wanted to learn how the product description ended” (α=.824).

3.5.2. Critical thoughts

Critical thinking is based on the concept of beliefs and is sometimes measured qualitatively (see Solja et al., 2018). However, in this study, critical thoughts are measured quantitatively to make the results from all measures coherent for analysis. The critical thoughts were therefore captured by asking participants to what extent they believed certain claims made about the toothpaste in the product description were true. This was measured on a seven-point scale (1-7) ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Such statements were “my teeth will get whiter with this toothpaste”, “my teeth will get whiter after two weeks of usage”, “my teeth will get stronger using this toothpaste” (α=.856). Higher beliefs in these statements ought to be regarded as less critical thoughts and vice versa.

3.5.3. Empathy

In order to measure emotional responses from consumers watching commercials, Escalas and Stern (2003) developed a separate measurement scale for empathy called Ad Response Empathy (ARE). Empathy in this study is measured based on this five-item scale. Participants were asked to rate how descriptive statements were of how they personally reacted to the product description. Such statements were for example: “While reading the product description I experienced feeling as if the events were really happening to me" and “I felt as if the characters’ feelings were my own” (α=.967). Although the original measure included a five-point scale we chose to have a seven-point scale (1-7) ranging from not at all descriptive to very descriptive. This was chosen so that the answers would be comparable with the other measures.

3.5.4. Affect

Affect was measured based on the validated PANAS scale developed by (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). This scale has been popular among scholars measuring affect within

advertising research (Yang & Smith, 2009). The scale included four items and participants were asked to grade how interested, inspired, attentive and excited they were about the product description. This was measured on a seven-point scale (1-7) anchored from not at all/very much (α=.855).

3.5.5. Processing (depth)

Processing is made up of different dimensions (Yang & Smith, 2009) and we have focused on one of them, depth of processing. Depth of processing was measured with three items (Yang & Smith, 2009) on a seven-point scale (1-7) anchored by strongly disagree/strongly agree. To capture participants' responses, questions such as “I related parts of the product description to my own life” or “I was able to imagine using the product in the product description” were used (α=.828).

3.5.6. Signaling

Signaling was measured by the six items developed by Rosengren, Dahlen and Törn (2008) capturing perceived effort, brand ability and brand quality. First, the perceived effort was measured by two items. Responses of perceived effort were captured by questions like “how much do you think the development of the product description cost?” (1=very cheap/7=very expensive) and “How much time do you think has been devoted to the development of the advertisement?” (1=very little/7=very much), (α=.723).

Secondly, perceived brand-ability was measured by three items (Dahlén et al., 2008). Since our product wasn’t branded, participants were asked to imagine that the product was a toothpaste from a real brand. Participants were then asked to what extent they agreed with the following statements: “brand is smart”, “brand is likely to develop valuable products in the future” and “brand is good at solving consumers’ problems” on a seven-point scale (1-7) anchored by do not agree/agree completely (α=.882).

Finally, perceived brand quality was measured by a single item. Participants were again asked to imagine that the toothpaste was from a real brand and to answer the following question: “what do you think is the general quality level of the brand?”. Responses were captured on a seven-point scale (1-7) anchored by very low quality/very high quality.

3.5.7. Advertising creativity

Originality was measured on a five-item list based on the scale developed by Yang and Smith (2009), which is a condensed version of earlier scales on originality. This measure contains an aggregated measure of all dimensions there is to originality (Yang & Smith, 2009) and is suitable for our study. Participants were asked to what extent they agreed to statements such as: “The product description broke away from habit-bound and stereotypical thinking” and “the product description was artistically produced”. Answers were measured on a seven-point scale (1-7) anchored from strongly disagree to strongly agree (α=.895).

Relevance was measured on a five items list developed by Yang and Smith (2009) which is also a condensed version of all dimensions existing about relevance. Participants were asked to answer on a seven-point scale (1-7) ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to what extent they agreed to statements such as: “the product description was relevant to me”, “the described product fits my needs well” and “I related parts of the product description to my own life” (α=.838).

3.5.8. Product attitude

(Dahlén et al., 2008) used the following items to measure brand attitude: "What is your opinion of (brand)?” on a scale from 1 (very bad) to 7 (very good). In this study, an overall evaluation like this will be used but measuring attitude towards the product (toothpaste) rather than the brand since we display a generic toothpaste. Then, to measure product attitude a three-item list was used (Smith et al., 2007). Participants were asked to answer, “what is your overall evaluation of the product?” on a semantic differential scale (-3 to +3) with three adjective pairs; bad/good, unpleasant/pleasant, and unfavorable/favorable (α=.924).

3.5.9. Purchase intentions

Purchase intentions were measured on a three items list adapted from (Yang & Smith, 2009). Participants were asked to respond on a seven-point scale (1-7) about how likely they were to engage in certain behaviors such as: “try out the product in the product description” or “purchase the product in the product description” (α=.886).

3.6. Validity and reliability

Validity is defined as "whether the measure in fact measures what it is supposed to measure" (Söderlund, 2018). We conducted a subjective review to ensure content validity. This was done on all measures. For instance, product attitude aims to capture the participants' overall evaluation of the product. Thus, asking the participants "what is your overall evaluation of the product?" should cover this concept.

Additionally, all scales used to measure the variables have been adopted from previous research in both advertising creativity and narrative advertising. I.e., they have been developed and tested within our chosen theories which strengthen our study's validity further.

To complement this, nomological validity was checked for the consumer outcome responses. Attitude has been proved to predict intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, we did a Pearson correlation test measuring the correlation between purchase intention and product attitude [$r = .711$, $n = 146$, $p < .001$]. The relatively strong and positive relationship found indicated that both the measure of purchase intention and product attitude was correctly captured.

Finally, reliability is "the extent to which several measurements of a particular variable provide similar results" (Söderlund, 2018). Reliability in our study was ensured by using several items to measure the variables. The only variable that was not measured with multiple items was brand quality, which is a part of the signaling effect. We adopted this item from Rosengren et al. (2008) to ensure its validity. Even though it would have been desirable to have several questions measuring this, changing a validated scale lowers the trustworthiness of the results. Besides brand quality, the remaining measures reached an acceptable level of reliability as their Cronbach's alpha was above 0.7 (Söderlund, 2018).

4. Results

In this section of the report, the results of the main study will be presented. Following the convention, all results will be considered significant if the p-values are below .05. The sample consisted of 145 valid answers, with 78 females and 67 males.

4.1. Manipulation checks

The manipulation was checked to see that the stimulus was perceived in the way intended. A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the extent participants perceived the product description as a story in all treatments (no story, a less creative product story and a creative product story). The results indicated that there was a significant effect on the extent to which participants perceived the product description as a story [$F(2, 142) = 174.60$, $p < .001$] among the treatment groups. A post hoc comparison using the Scheffe test revealed that the differences in mean score for the creative product story was significantly more perceived as a story (stimulus 3: $M = 6.37$, $SD = 1.11$) than a less creative product story (stimulus 2; ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.129$) and the no story condition (stimulus 1; $M = 1.98$, $SD = 1.368$). Thus, it was established that the two product stories (stimulus 2 and 3) were perceived as stories and the ordinary product description (stimulus 1) was not.

Further, the levels of creativity were established for each treatment. The effects were found to be significant among the treatment groups for originality [$F(2, 142) = 69.14$, $p < .001$], but not for relevance [$F(2, 142) = .53$, $p = .59$]. Participants perceived the creative product story (stimulus 3; $M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.07$) to have significantly higher originality compared to the no story condition (stimulus 1; $M = 2.43$, $SD = 1.13$). Additionally, the product description containing a less creative product story (stimulus 2; $M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.13$) was perceived to be significantly more original than the standardized product description without a story. However, and unexpectedly, there was no significant difference in perceived originality between the creative and the less creative product story. Thus, the manipulation for a creative and a less creative product story did not work as intended.

This result is surprising because in the pre-study, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there was a significant effect on the originality variable ($H(2)=15.83$, $p<.001$). Additionally, the mean for stimulus 2 and stimulus 3 had a larger difference (4.74 and 5.3 respectively). Based on this insight a decision to use the treatments in the main study was made and the hypothesis will be tested as planned. However, such an important shortcoming diminishes the substance of the forthcoming analysis. Thus, caution must be taken when interpreting these results. Furthermore, a complimentary analysis will be made to address this deficiency. This will be done using the participants perceived originality regardless of what story they were exposed to.

4.2. Hypothesis testing

A one-way between subject's ANOVA was conducted to compare the effects of advertising creativity and narrative advertising in a no story, a less creative story and creative product story condition. The mean scores are summarized in table 2 below.

First, the results showed that there was a significant effect for transportation [$F(2, 143) = 10.19$, $p <.001$]. Post hoc comparisons using the Scheffe test indicated that the transportation was significantly higher for a creative product story (stimulus 3; $M = 4.28$, $SD = 644$), than for a less creative product story (stimulus 2; $M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.27$) and the absence of a story (stimulus 1; $M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.12$). However, the transportation for the less creative product story was not significantly different from the absence of a story. Yet, the hypothesis only assumed that a creative product story would result in more transportation compared to the less creative product story and the absence of a story. **Thus, H1 a) and b) are empirically supported**.

Furthermore, there was no significant effect for differences in critical thoughts among the three treatment groups [$F(2, 143) = .51$, $p = .60$]. **Thus, H2 a) and b) are rejected.**

In regards to empathy, the effect was found to be significant [$F(2, 143) = 14.72$, $p <.001$]. Participants exposed to the creative product story developed more empathy (stimulus 3; $M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.33$) as opposed to participants exposed to the less creative product story (stimulus 2; $M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.19$) and the absence of a story (stimulus 1; $M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.50$). **Thus, H3 a) and b) are empirically supported.** However, just like in H1 there

was not a significant difference in empathy between the absence of a story and a less creative product story.

Further, positive affect had a significant effect [$F(2, 143) = 10.83$, $p < .001$] among the treatment groups. The creative product story yielded significantly more positive affect (stimulus 3; $M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.47$) among participants than a less creative product story (stimulus 2; $M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.28$) and the absence of a story (stimulus 1; $M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.11$). Again, the difference in positive affect between the absence of a story and a less creative product story was not significant. **However, both H4 a) and H4 b) are empirically supported.**

There was no significant effect found for depth of processing among the three groups [$F(2, 142) = 2.16$, $p = 0.08$], thus, **H5 was rejected.**

Additionally, perceived effort was found to have a significant effect [$F(2, 142) = 16.09$, $p = 0.03$] among the treatment groups. Participants' perceived effort for the creative product story (stimulus 3; $M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.30$) was not significantly different from the less creative product story (stimulus 2; $M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.31$). However, participants allocated to the creative product story had a significantly higher perceived effort than the absence of a story (stimulus 1; $M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.20$). Moreover, the perceived effort was significantly higher for the less creative product story as opposed to the absence of a story. **Thus, H6 a) is rejected, while H6 b) is empirically supported.**

Regarding customer outcome responses, product attitude had a significant effect [$F(2, 143) = 3.46$, $p = .034$] in differences between the treatments. There was no significant difference in participants' product attitude between the creative product story (stimulus 3; $M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.23$) and the less creative story (stimulus 2; $M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.15$). However, participants allocated to the creative product story gained a significantly higher product attitude than participants allocated to the product description without a story (stimulus 1; $M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.28$). Yet again, there is not a significant difference in product attitude for the less creative product story and the absence of a story. **H7 a) is therefore rejected, while H7 b) is empirically supported.**

Purchase intention had a significant effect [$F(2, 143) = 3.57$, $p = .031$] among the groups. There was no significant difference in purchase intention between participants allocated

to the creative product story (stimulus 3; M = 4.18, SD = 1.48) and the less creative story (stimulus 2; M = 3.89, SD = 1.40). Nonetheless, a creative product story resulted in significantly higher purchase intention than the absence of a story (stimulus 1; M = 3.37, SD = 1.65). Following the same pattern as product attitude, there was no difference in purchase intention between participants exposed to a less creative story and the absence of a story. **Therefore, H8 a) is rejected while H8 b) is empirically supported.**

Table 2. Summary of mean scores.

Variable	Stimulus 1	Stimulus 2	Stimulus 3	p-value	Hypothesis
Transportation	3.01	3.65	4.28	<.001	H1 a) and b) supported
Critical Thoughts	4.36	4.39	4.59	.88	H2 not supported
Empathy	2.16	2.68	3.75	<.001	H3 a) and b) supported
Positive Affect	3.36	3.91	4.59	<.001	H4 a) and b) supported
Processing	3.67	3.72	4.28	.09	H5 not supported
Effort	2.73	4.13	4.02	<.001	H6 a) rejected, b) supported
Product Attitude	4.53	4.81	5.17	.03	H7 a) rejected, b) supported
Purchase Intentions	3.37	3.89	4.18	.03	H8 a) rejected, b) supported

4.3. Complementary analysis using perceived creativity

As previously stated, the manipulation of treatments was deficient in terms of establishing significant differences in creativity between a creative product story and a less creative product story (stimulus 2 and 3). This questioned the substance of the results presented above. Thus, an additional test to complement this shortcoming was done.

Participants that received treatments containing a story (stimulus 2 and stimulus 3) were grouped together (n=107) while participants exposed to the standardized product description (stimulus 1) were excluded. Since consumers ought to be the judge of creativity (Modig & Dahlen, 2020), participants were divided based on their perceived originality, regardless of received treatment. Three almost equally large groups were created, based on how original participants perceived the story to be. The following cut off points were then generated. Participants (≈ 33%) that perceived the story to be the least creative were allocated to group 1 (originality index: $M \leq 4.6$), participants (≈ 33%) that did not have a strong opinion about the originality ($4.6 < M < 5.8$) were assigned to group 2. Remaining participants (≈ 33%) that perceived the story to be the most creative (originality index: $M \geq 5.8$) were assigned to group 3.

Based on this distribution of perceived originality, an independent sample T-test was conducted to compare how consumers' immediate responses such as transportation, critical thoughts, empathy, positive affect, effort and processing differed between group 3, that perceived a high originality and group 1 that perceived low creativity.

Looking at the narrative advertising effects it was found that participants perceiving a high originality (M=4.93, SD=1.27) was experiencing significantly more transportation compared to participants perceiving low originality (M=3.05, SD=1.36), $t(72) = 6.13$, $p < .001$. This result was also in line with the original hypothesis (H1) and strengthens the result found in the primary analysis. Further, participants perceiving the product story as more original developed significantly less critical thoughts (M=4.90, SD=1.27) than participants perceiving low originality (M=4.23, SD=1.44), conditions; $t(72) = 2.11$, $p = 0.04$. Again, note that participants' beliefs regarding the product claims were measured (high beliefs equal less critical thoughts and vice versa). This result confirmed the original hypothesis (H2), which did not find support in the primary analysis. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the level of critical thoughts depends on perceived creativity. Similarly, for participants perceiving the story as more original empathy was significantly higher (M=4.14, SD=1.63) as opposed to participants perceiving low originality (M=2.48, SD=1.34), $t(72) = 4.78$, $p < .001$. This confirms the findings in the primary analysis and H3 was thus strengthen.

For the advertising creativity effects, participants in the high originality group experienced a significantly higher positive affect (M=5.034, SD=1.343) than participants in the low originality group (M=3.48, SD=1.35), t (72)=4.96, p<.001. This result is coherent with the initial hypothesis (H4) and strengthens previous findings. The same could be observed for processing, were participants experienced processing to a significantly higher extent in the high originality group (M=4.71, SD=1.55) compared to participants in the low originality group (M=3.27, SD=1.65), t (72)=3.87, p<.001. This result provide support for H5 which was initially rejected in the previous analysis. Thus, perceived creativity determines the level of processing. Additionally, participants in the high originality group responded that they experienced significantly higher perceived effort (M=4.43, SD=1.55), as opposed to participants that perceived low originality (M=3.49, SD=1.36), t (72)=3.28, p<.001. This finding supports the initial hypothesis H6 a), which originally was rejected. Thus, perceived creativity determines the level of effort participants experienced.

Finally, product attitude was significantly higher by participants perceiving high originality (M=5.60, SD=.83) as opposed to participants perceiving low originality (M=4.30, SD=1.40), t (58.38)=4.84, p<.001. This supports the original hypothesis H7 a), which was rejected in previous analysis. Thus, perceived creativity determines the level of product attitude among participants. Likewise, participants perceiving a high originality developed a significantly higher purchase intention (M=4.76, SD=1.11), compared to the low originality group (M=3.37, SD=1.59), t (64.39)=4.36, p<.001. Again, this finding supports the original hypothesis H8 a) which previously was rejected. Thus, perceived creativity determines the level of purchase intention.

4.4. Signaling and affect transfer

Since signaling and affect transfer are both multi-step variables there is a need to test the correlation between the steps of the variable to see whether the effect occurs or not. Thus, Pearson correlation tests were performed. Starting with signaling, it can be observed that the link between the first steps in the model; perceived effort and brand ability is positive and significant, but weak [r =.42, n =145, p <.001]. On the other hand, the relationship between brand ability and brand quality was stronger and significant [r =.77, n =145, p <.001]. Thus, it could be established that signaling did occur, albeit vague.

Figure 3. Signaling effect.

Note: Signaling was established by (Dahlén et al., 2008).

For affect transfer the relationship between positive affect and product attitude was tested and found to be fairly strong and significant [r =.65, n =146, p <.001]. Thus, affect transfer indeed did exist.

Figure 4. Affect transfer effect.

Note: Affect transfer was established by Rosengren et al. (2020).

4.5. The relative importance of narrative transportation and creativity

To understand what effects from narrative advertising and advertising creativity have the highest predictability on customer outcome responses, a linear regression analysis was performed. The first regression model was constructed to predict product attitude based on positive affect, critical thoughts, transportation, effort, processing, and product attitude. Empathy had to be excluded as it was too correlated to several other variables. The model was significant ($F(5, 139) = 35.99$, $p < .001$, $R2 = .55$), however, there might be a multicollinearity issue (condition index = 19.95) so the results should be used with caution. The most important predictor found for product attitude is positive affect ($\beta = .31$, p-value =<.001), followed by critical thoughts ($\beta = .27$, p-value =<.001), effort ($\beta = .23$, p-value =<.001) and then processing ($\beta = .22$, p-value =.01). Transportation did not have a significant predictability of product attitude ($\beta = .01$, p-value =.929). Thus, it could be established that advertising creativity effects does have predictive power of product attitude in the context of a narrative.

Table 3. Product attitude and purchase intention regression.

	Product attitude			Purchase intention		
Variable	**β**	**t**	**p-value**	**β**	**t**	**p-value**
Affect	.31	3.48	<.001	.42	3.99	<.001
Critical thoughts	.27	4.04	<.001	.25	3.21	.002
Transportation	.01	.09	.93	.11	.92	.36
Processing	.22	2.83	.01	.07	.64	.39
Effort	.23	3.77	<.001	.10	1.44	.15

Note: Empathy was excluded.

Furthermore, a second linear regression model was created to predict purchase intention based on the same variables used in the product attitude regression model. Again, empathy was excluded. The model was significant ($F(5, 99) = 27.57$, $p < .001$, $R2 = .56$) however, there is a potential multicollinearity issue prevalent (condition index = 21.15). By far the most important predictor of purchase intention turned out to be positive affect ($\beta = .42$, p-value <.001) followed by critical thoughts ($\beta = .25$, p-value =.002). Neither transportation ($\beta = .11$, p-value =.36), processing ($\beta = .07$, p-value =.39) or effort ($\beta = .10$, p-value =.15) did have a significant prediction power for purchase intention. Thus, advertising creativity effects can predict purchase intention in a narrative setting.

5. Discussion

The main finding of the study is that perceived creativity in terms of originality in a product story, does have a positive significant effect on all the tested immediate consumer responses, including narrative transportation, critical thoughts, empathy, processing, signaling and affect transfer. Similarly, the consumer outcome responses product attitude and purchase intention, increased with more perceived creativity. When determining both of these outcomes, positive affect and critical thoughts were shown to be the most important predictors.

Transportation

The study showed that a creative product story in a product description as opposed to a less creative story, and the absence of a story, resulted in increased immediate customer response for transportation. This effect was expected to increase because it has been shown that an original stimulus catches the viewers' attention and motivates them to process (Rosengren et al., 2020). If they are more motivated to understand and pay attention to the story due to the added originality, they should also get more immersed in the story and, thus, get more transported.

Critical thoughts

Neither critical thoughts or processing had any significant differences between the treatment groups and, thus, H3 and H4 could be rejected. Since critical thoughts is an outcome of narrative transportation and narrative transportation did increase with added originality it is interesting that critical thoughts did not follow the same pattern. This might be connected to the context of the story and the nature of the critical thoughts. Perhaps the originality of having a story structured as a love letter between the toothpaste and the teeth for a utilitarian product makes the (fictional) brand/seller seem unserious and cancel out the decrease in critical thoughts gained from transportation. On the other hand, the complementary analysis showed that critical thoughts did significantly decrease when the participants perceived the story to have a high originality. This indicates that the lack of differences would not be a result from the originality but rather attributed to the fact that customers judge creativity differently.

Empathy

Furthermore, as hypothesized, empathy also increased with the creativity of the product description. However, the effect was quite low which could be explained by the lack of human characters. Human characters have been shown to be more relatable to the reader, resulting in stronger empathetic bonds with protagonists or other characters displayed in the story (Boller and Olson 1998). Thus, displaying such elements might have increased the empathy effect. In addition, the differences found among the participants in terms of empathy may have been attributed to the fact that the less creative product story was missing the product link, instead the product link was embedded in the ordinary product description displayed above (see appendix 1). As previously mentioned, including the product link has been vital for more transportation to occur since it makes the readers increasingly interested in the story. Thus, the product link might have facilitated empathy to occur in the creative product story.

Positive affect

The results confirmed that a creative product story resulted in significantly more positive affect than both a less creative story and the absence of a story. As aforementioned, affect has mainly been considered in advertising creativity research, but it also exists in narrative research. It has been established both that a story produces a higher level of positive affect as opposed to a non-story (Solja et al., 2018), and that advertising creativity leads to more positive affect (Rosengren et al., 2020). The results also confirmed that affect transfer occurred, as there was a positive relationship between the positive affect and the positive evaluation of the product.

Depth of processing

Against our hypothesis, depth of processing did not differ significantly between the treatment groups and is most likely explained by the artificial setting that this survey implied. Regardless of assigned treatment, all participants were asked to look at the product description and read through it carefully. Subsequently, participants were asked several questions about the product description, forcing them to think about and process the stimuli. This might have distorted participants' natural response to processing,

diminishing the true effects that presumably would have been achieved in a less forced setting.

Still, participants that perceived high originality had significantly more depth of processing, implying that just as in previous advertising creativity research increased advertising creativity leads to increased depth of processing (Rosengren et al., 2020).

Signaling

The perceived effort was higher for the creative product story than for the absence of a story. However, there was no significant difference between the less creative product story and the creative product story. This might be due to the shortcoming identified in the manipulation of the originality dimension. Consequently, this means that the difference in originality was negligible and in turn, participants did not note the difference in effort between the less creative product story and the creative product story. Another reason could be that the text in the second stimulus was longer than the text in the two other stimuli, and displaying more text would reasonably signal more effort. When designing the stimuli, these effects were attempted to be mitigated by changing the spacing so that the texts would appear like they were approximately the same length (see appendix 1), but ultimately this was insufficient.

The overall signaling effect was not so strong since the relationship between perceived effort and brand-ability was rather weak. This might be explained by our choice to exclude the toothpaste brand in the treatment. Instead, participants were asked to imagine that the product was from a real brand and to answer the brand-ability and quality questions based on that. However, the relationship between the next step of the signaling effect, brand ability and brand quality, was still rather strong.

Product attitude and purchase intention

The consumer response outcome variables product attitude and purchase intentions behaved similarly in the sense that they were both significantly higher for a more creative story than for the absence of a story. However, there was no difference between the less creative product story and the creative product story for neither product attitude nor purchase intentions. Again, this most likely relates back to the creativity manipulation,

and the fact that the difference in creativity is not large enough to yield a significant difference in outcomes.

5.1. General discussion

Summarized, we could see a significant difference between participants that received the creative product story compared to the less creative product story for three immediate consumer responses; transportation, affect and empathy. This indicates that even though creativity did not differ significantly between the manipulated stories in the main study, there was presumably still enough difference to yield a significant effect for these variables. However, the insignificant difference between stimuli 2 and 3 is a limitation of great concern in the main study. In contrast the prestudy, the difference between the story that was supposed to be a creative product story opposed to a less creative one was not close to being significant, although we could see a difference in the right direction. Meaning that even though our original hypotheses were tested, the results cannot be guaranteed, and they would have to be tested with new data with a more effective manipulation.

However, since there were significant effects still found from the manipulation it raises the question whether other confounding effects might have been evoked among participants. For instance, the creative product story might have been perceived as more humorous which could have explained how participants viewed the treatments. In future studies, creativity needs to be the sole source of effects to make any generalizable findings about the role advertising creativity plays in narrative advertising. In hindsight, the second stimuli (ordinary product description followed by a story) could therefore have been done less creative to distinguish the creativity between the stimuli.

Alternatively, another possible explanation for the observed differences in transportation, positive affect and empathy, could be that the extent to which the participants perceived the product description to be a story differed significantly between the more and less creative story. The creative product story (stimulus 3) had a higher mean score than the less creative story (stimulus 2) when the participants were asked to what extent they perceived the product description to be a story. Presumably, this could be since stimulus 3 was a product description containing only a creative story while stimulus 2 contained

an ordinary product description followed by a less creative story. This could have elicited the narrative advertising effects rather than the creativity itself.

However, the complementary analysis revealed that all hypothesized consumer responses did increase significantly when participants were divided based on how creative they perceived the different product stories. This is the main finding of this study as it confirms that advertising creativity does play a role in narrative advertising, as the effects of storytelling increase with more creativity. Additionally, it confirms the notion that consumers ought to be the judge of creativity (Modig & Dahlen., 2020).

As established by previous narrative research, consumer responses differ depending on information presented in a brand story or in a list (Solja et al., 2018). Additionally, advertising research has established that consumer responses differ depending on the creativity of an ad (Rosengren et al., 2020). Thus, we assumed that a less creative product (stimulus 2) would yield higher narrative and advertising creativity effects than an ordinary product description with significantly lower creativity would yield (stimulus 1). However, there was no significant difference in any of the effects between respondents' responses, receiving a no story and a less creative story, except for perceived effort. Again, this might be possible to relate back to the design of the stimuli. The less creative product story contained the ordinary product description above the story (see appendix 1), implying that there was a lack of both originality and a narrative in the beginning of the text. This might have caused participants to process the information through the central route, rather than the peripheral that is most often used for the narrative format (Cacioppo & Petty 1986). Thus, this could have prevented narrative processing and consequently, differences in effects were omitted.

The predictive power of effects

Now that we have established that advertising creativity does play a role in narrative advertising, we will discuss its predictive power relative to effects from narrative advertising.

Both the product attitude and purchase intention regression models suffered from multicollinearity. In hindsight, this was expected since many of the measures contained similar questions. This was addressed through revising different alternative combinations of variables for the models, using both indexes and separate questions. Consequently, the

best suitable combination was chosen, although omitting the empathy variable. Still, caution must also be taken when interpreting these results. However, the models give an indication of how the effects from narrative advertising and advertising creativity relate to each other in predicting product attitude and purchase intentions. The results revealed that the most important predictor of both product attitude and purchase intention was positive affect. This is not surprising because, as previously mentioned, it is an effect that has been measured and acknowledged in both research areas. The explanation could be found in the initial feeling a consumer gets when viewing a stimulus will determine how they evaluate the product (Rosengren et al., 2020), which in turn will affect purchase intentions (Ajzen, 1991).

Further, the second most important predictor for product attitude and purchase intention was critical thoughts. Presumably, in a real world setting when consumers evaluate a product, they consider elements such as packaging, brand, and product features. However, in this study most evaluation elements were excluded. For instance, the brand was eliminated, and the toothpaste was visualized only through a white tube labeled toothpaste. Consequently, this directed the consumers' focus to the limited information available in the product description. Thus, the extent to which the consumer believes the stated product features plays a prominent role in their evaluation, and purchase intention.

Moreover, transportation lacks predictive power of product attitude and purchase intention. This can be explained by the fact that transportation affect critical thoughts (Chang, 2009; Green et al., 2000; Solja et al., 2018) and therefore transportation still plays an indirect role in determining purchase intention.

Up until this point, the importance of the identified predictors to product attitude and purchase intention has been relatively similar. However, for purchase intention no more significant predictors were identified. Conversely, for product attitude processing and effort had a similar predictive power, even though effort was slightly stronger. That processing was found to be a predictor of product attitude could be because if a consumer would find an ad uninteresting, the likelihood of spending time processing it carefully, would most likely be low. Conversely, if a consumer finds an ad interesting and exciting, they would presumably both process it more carefully, and develop a better product attitude towards the advertised product. Further and as aforementioned, a signaling effect

occurs due to consumers' perceived effort of the product descriptions resulting in higher quality perceptions of the sender. Subsequently, higher quality perceptions will have a predictive power over product attitude.

5.2. Conclusions

This study aimed to answer the question: what role does advertising creativity play in narrative advertising and how does it affect customer outcome responses in a B2C setting? It can be concluded that advertising creativity indeed plays a part in narrative advertising. Advertising creativity enhances effects of narrative advertising and employing it results in higher customer outcome responses such as product attitude and purchase intention. Additionally, creativity effects such as perceived effort and processing was proved to have a predictive power of product attitude in a narrative context.

5.3. Theoretical and managerial implications

The main theoretical takeaway is that when measuring effects from storytelling it might be beneficial to add the creativity dimension and the effects that it implies. As previously mentioned, customer outcomes such as purchase intention and product attitude in narrative research have been explained mainly by narrative transportation, critical thoughts, affect and empathy. However, with this study we can show that the customer outcomes also depend on advertising creativity and its effects. Additionally, added creativity enhances the effects of narrative advertising. This insight enables studies of advertising creativity into adjacent areas.

For marketing practitioners, storytelling is a widely known concept, and it is used frequently in different types of content. With this study we have been able to show that it does not only matter if the ad contains a story or not, but rather, if the story included is creative. Evaluating narrative advertising content based on the originality and relevance dimensions could therefore be beneficial to ensure that the full potential of using a story is realized. Presumably, a creative story is a better story since it ought to contain elements that the reader finds more interesting. Such elements could, as previously mentioned, be an unexpected plot or an eccentric character.

Furthermore, as ecommerce is growing and the competition among online retailers increases, marketers need to utilize opportunities to differentiate their products. Additionally, the different design aspects of the point of purchase also becomes more important. However, based on our product description analysis, product descriptions are currently quite uniform, at least for a product such as toothpaste. Thus, we believe that there is a large potential for creativity in this area. Even adding a short product story might result in a higher level of creativity just because it is so uncommon. That in turn can lead to benefits, such as an increased product attitude and purchase intentions both from the creativity itself but also from the enhanced storytelling effects. Using the product description as a media of advertising is also efficient from a cost perspective, since it is an internal media channel that already exists.

5.4. Limitations and future research

This study does not come without limitations. First, and most importantly, the manipulation in the main study did not work out as planned, which has been discussed in detail in the general discussion. However, we were still able to draw some interesting conclusions based on the complementary analysis using the distribution of participants' perceived originality. This indicates that investigating the role of advertising creativity in narrative advertising is an interesting area for future research.

Second, we only tested the effects for one type of product, namely a toothpaste. In previous research about advertising creativity, product involvement has been found to moderate the relationship between advertising creativity and its effects. Advertising creativity in the context of a high-involvement product category, as opposed to a low-involvement product category, yields higher effects (Rosengren et al., 2020). A toothpaste would arguably be a low-involvement product, as it is a utilitarian product that is usually bought on routine (Rossiter, Percy, & Donovan, 1991). Therefore, the results might have been stronger if we had chosen a high-involvement product. Exploring how the involvement would affect the findings in this study is a potential area for future research.

As previously mentioned, the study was conducted in an artificial situation, meaning that it does not necessarily represent the reality of online shopping. When taking the survey, the participants had to read through and process the product description carefully no

matter what stimulus they were exposed to. Therefore, for instance, the processing effects were the same for all groups. If it would have been a real situation, the difference in the effects might have been greater as an ordinary product description might not receive as much attention from the reader as a creative product description. Furthermore, since it is an artificial situation, we also measured purchase intention rather than actual purchases. As determined by Ajzen (1999) intentions is an important predictor of behavior, but it does not equal behavior. Further research on how different product descriptions affect sales on a real website would be valuable to gain an understanding of the practical implications.

Judging the realism of this study, it can also be questioned how common it is to use stories in product descriptions, especially for a utilitarian product like toothpaste. When we investigated different toothpaste product descriptions, this was not prevalent. However, research like this might help emphasize that this can be an area of improvement for online retailers.

In this study, we focused on measuring product outcomes such as product attitude and purchase intentions and had less focus on brand outcomes. Thus, it would be beneficial to further investigate how the brand attitude gets impacted by advertising creativity in narrative advertising.

Finally, the product descriptions differed in text length. This was difficult to avoid as a story plus a standardized product description (stimulus 2) is inevitably longer than only a story (stimulus 3) or only a standardized product description (stimulus 1). The effects of this was attempted to be mitigated by adjusting the spacing so that the texts would look approximately the same in terms of length (see appendix 1). Still, effort was presumably affected. Thus, future studies should take this into consideration.

In summary, even though this study had some limitations it did show that advertising creativity is an important dimension in narratives. Therefore, this is an interesting area for future research as it can further help marketers use creativity in their favor to fully utilize the potential of narrative advertising.

6. Appendix

6.1. Appendix 1: Treatment

Ordinary product description (stimulus 1)

TOOTHPASTE

Product description

Tasteful mint toothpaste for adults.
Contains 1450 ppm of flour which is recommended by the Swedish dental association.
The flour will strengthen your teeth, protect the enamel and relieve irritation. The new paraben free formula will make your teeth whiter.
Visible results after two weeks of usage guaranteed.
Clinical study conducted has shown better resistance against caries than other flour tooth pastes.

Apply two times a day.

Available in 75 ml or 125ml packages.

Ordinary product description and story (stimulus 2)

TOOTHPASTE

Product description

Tasteful mint toothpaste for adults. Contains 1450 ppm of flour which is recommended by the Swedish dental association. The flour will strengthen your teeth, protect the enamel and relieve irritation. The new paraben free formula will make your teeth whiter. Visible results after two weeks of usage guaranteed. Clinical study conducted has shown better resistance against caries than other flour tooth pastes.
Apply two times a day.
Available in 75 ml or 125ml packages.

I remember the day I met you. You were about to change my life.
I had been recommended to see you by my friends.
After a rough day you brought me gifts. That always cheers me up.
Before I felt weak, was easily irritated and vulnerable.
You have made me stronger, have relieved my irritation and protected me ever since.
Two weeks after our first meeting, they said that my appearance had changed.
I'm lucky to have you and no one else.
When you come visit me, I am the happiest.
Your appearance doesn't matter.
I will always love you. Til death due us apart.
You complete me, my toothpaste <3
Yours truly,
Teeth

Stimulus 3: Product story (Stimulus 3)

TOOTHPASTE

Product description

I remember the day I met you. You tasted mint and were about to change my life.
I had been recommended to see you by the Swedish dental association.
After a rough day you brought me flour, the 1450 ppm kind. That always cheers me up.
Before I felt weak, was easily irritated and vulnerable.
You have made me stronger, have relieved my irritation and protected my enamel ever since.
Two weeks after our first meeting, they said that my appearance had changed. All thanks to your paraben free formula, I'm whiter now. Exactly as you guaranteed.
You had been serving in clinical studies, combating caries better than your comrades.
So I'm lucky to have you and no one else.
When you come visit me, once in the morning and once in the evening, I am the happiest.
It doesn't matter if you are 75ml or 125ml.
I will always love you. Til death due us apart.
You complete me, my toothpaste <3
Yours truly,
Teeth

6.2. Appendix 2: Measures

Measures

Variable	Items measuring the variable	Endpoint labels	Source	Reliability
Affect	How interested were you in the product description? How inspired were you by the product description? How attentive were you towards the product description? How excited were you by the product description?	Not at all/Very much (1-7)	Yang and Smith (2009)	α=.86
Depth of processing	I related parts of the product description to my own life. I used my imagination to go beyond the information presented in the product description. I was able to imagine using the product in the product description.	Strongly disagree/Strongly agree (1-7)	Smith et al. (2007)	α=.83
Signaling	How much do you think development of the product description cost? product description? How much time do you think has been devoted to the development of the product description?	Very cheap/Very expensive (1-7) Very little/Very much (1-7)	Rosengren et al. (2018)	α=.72
	If this was toothpaste from a real brand, what do you think is the general quality level of the brand?	Very low quality/Very high quality (1-7)		
	Brand is smart. Brand is likely to develop valuable products in the future. Brand is good at solving consumers' problems.	Do not agree/Agree completely (1-7)		α=.88

Measures (Continued)

Variable	Items measuring the variable	Endpoint labels	Source	Reliability
Originality	The product description broke away from habit-bound and stereotypical thinking. The product description contained ideas that moved from one subject to another. The product description connected objects that are usually unrelated. The product description finished basic ideas so that they become more intricate. The product description was artistically produced.	Strongly disagree/Strongly agree (1-7)	Yang & Smith (2009)	α=.90
Relevance	The product description was relevant to me. The product description spoke to my concerns. The described product fits my needs well. The described product is important to me. I related parts of the product description to my own life.	Strongly disagree/Strongly agree (1-7)	Yang & Smith (2009)	α=.84
Narrative transportation	I could easily picture myself in the scenes described in the product description. I was mentally involved in the product description while reading it. I wanted to learn how the product description ended. The product description affected me emotionally.	Not at all/Very much (1-7)	Adapted from Green & Brock (2000)	α=.82
Critical thoughts	My teeth will get whiter with this toothpaste. After two weeks my teeth will get whiter after using this toothpaste. This toothpaste provides better protection against caries than other toothpastes.	Don’t agree/Agree completely (1-7)		α=.86

Measures (Continued)

Variable	Items measuring the variable	Endpoint labels	Source	Reliability
Empathy	I experienced feeling as if the events were really happening to me. I felt as though I were one of the characters. I experienced many of the same feelings that the characters portrayed. I felt as though the events in the product description were happening to me. I felt as if the characters' feelings were my own.	Not at all descriptive/ Very descriptive (1-7)	Escalas & Stern (2003)	α=.97
Product attitude	What is your overall evaluation of the product?	(-3 to +3) Bad/Good Pleasant/Unpleasant Unfavorable/Favorable	Smith et al. (2007)	α=.92
Purchase intentions	How likely are you try out the product in the product description? How likely are you purchase the product in the product description? How likely are you pay a higher price for the product in the product description?	Very unlikely/Very likely (1-7)	Smith and Swinyard (1988)	α=.88

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