

# **VIDEO ADS' CREATIVITY AND STRUCTURE INFLUENCE ON BRAND CONGRUENCE AND ENGAGEMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Social networks play an important role in the life of today's societies and consumers are engaging more online with brands. Brands create and share information and special video ads on social networks, and, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, social networks allow brands to communicate with their consumers simply and quickly. Therefore, creativity and narrative structures are important for consumers. Brands are producing video ads that show consumers' day context in order to obtain greater social media engagement. Considering that, this paper aims to study whether that goal is being achieved. The empirical research, from which we obtained 427 responses and which was tested using structural equations using the AMOS software, allows to conclude that creativity, the structure of the narrative and the consumer's congruence with the brand are determinants of engagement in social media. Further, presents practical and theoretical recommendations.

## **KEYWORDS**

Video Ads; Narrative Structure; Creativity; Brand Congruence; Social Media Engagement

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The human capacity to create narratives as a way of communicating is one of the oldest tools we know. Disciplines such as marketing and advertising easily recognize the power of storytelling and the importance of implementing approaches that provoke individuals' attitudes and behavior. And this is a reality never achieved before and that affects consumers of the most varied generations, classes and profiles.

In fact, new technologies have enabled this and have allowed barriers to be broken, not only temporal but also spatial. The individual is now in continuous contact with information and content, globally. As a consumer you can search and see what you want, where you want and when you want. Furthermore, with the new media, brands have access to new ways to disseminate information and enhance collaboration, community, conversation and sharing between consumers and among them and brands (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Thus, social media platforms have been adopted in a large part of marketing strategies to enhance consumer engagement (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017) through stories (Brechman & Purvis 2015).

We agree that the receptivity to advertising messages differs from individual to individual, considering their contexts and demographic, social, educational characteristics, among others, but, according to Brechman and Purvis (2015), they are increasingly willing to be transported to the advertising narrative, which further enhances this area of expertise.

On the other side, as consumers prefer products congruent with their self-concept, self-congruence could trigger emotional, attitudinal and behavioral reactions to the brand (Grohmann, 2009). So, engage consumers special through social media platforms is essential to create an effective strategic role in branding and advertising.

Considering the framework, this study aims to analyze whether the advertising videos produced by the brands that show, more and more, the daily lives of the public are being effective in engaging in social media. Specifically, this study analyses the effects of creativity and the structure of narratives on social media engagement. Additionally, we studied the mediating effects of brand congruence. A questionnaire survey was applied and the data obtained were tested using structural equations in the AMOS software.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Video Ad's Narrative Structure and Creativity**

It is important to clarify the concept of transportation for the advertising narrative, initially proposed by Green, in 1996. According to the author, it defines the process of transporting the individual to a fictional reality created from a narrative, creating evident effects on their beliefs, attitudes and behaviors (Green & Clark, 2012), losing access to the real and experiencing the emotions evoked by history (Green & Block, 2000).

In terms of the structure narrative creation, Escadas (2007) states that the ads are not openly persuasive. They present an affective component that unconsciously directs the consumer. Structurally, the narratives are based on a plot with incidents and surprises, on characters to whom conflicts and events happen and at a climax moment where the resolution of the story is presented (Snowden, 1999; van Laer et al., 2014) and the major conflict finally resolved.

According to Bruner (Brechman & Purvis, 2015), the traditional definitions propose that the narratives present a chronology, organizing the events with a temporal dimension, finding a beginning, middle and end. In addition, they seek to achieve causality, that is, the structuring of the elements of history in an organized manner that allows for causal inference. In addition to including emotional appeals, narratives are endowed with structural elements that "provide context, usually establishing an environment that has physical, social and temporal components, and the story is further enhanced with the use of images to guide consumers' imaginations, involvement or immersion in the story (Brechman & Purvis, 2015).

Audiovisual advertising also has specific elements of production, the so-called packshots. It is the plans of dramatic action that have the function of objectifying the product or service commercially. According to Camilo (2005), without the packshot there is no audiovisual advertising narrative. It is essential for the distinction between the advertised product / service and the other elements of the narrative. Usually the packshot appears at the end of the advertising video and is accompanied by subtitles and / or voiceover.

Along with information and entertainment, creativity is also understood as a constructor of consumer attitudes and associations towards ads (Gao & Koufaris, 2006; Taylor, Lewin, & Strutton, 2011).

According to Lee and Hong (2016), both informativeness and creativity, often emphasized in public literature, prove to be the main drivers of behavior favorable to advertisements on social networking services, promoting purchase intentions.

In addition, according to Dessart (2018), the commercial strategy must also involve balancing the elements of the narrative with facts. Using facts, figures and arguments only tends to alienate the individual and promote a distant attitude (Gottschal, 2012), but the symbiosis between the structure of the narrative and the elements of the story creates a powerful tool for transmitting information (Brechman & Purvis 2015) and, when created efficiently, allows for more favorable cognitive responses, warm feelings and positive attitudes of the narrative advertisement, when compared to the advertising of arguments (Chang, 2009). Thus, we tested the following hypothesis:

H1: Creativity has a positive impact on narrative structure.

## 2.2 Brand Congruence

Consumers use brands that give meaning to their self-concept to themselves and to others (Aaker, 1999). The brand congruence theory evidences that people are satisfied with brands or products that are congruent with their actual or desired self-concept (Sirgy & Su, 2000). So, brands represent social or cultural meaning congruent with consumer's own self-concept (Sirgy, 1982).

For Malär *et al* (2011) self-concept include a cognitive and affective perspective because first costumers perceive their self and then the similarity with brand personality, which results in brand congruity perceived by costumers.

Sirgy (1982) evidences that self-image congruity is a process whereby consumers purchase products/brands congruent with symbolic attributes similar to their images of themselves. This congruence has impacts on purchase behaviour, because consumers use products according with their self-image (Pedersen, Nysveen, & Thorbjørnsen, 2003).

The consumer's mental representation of the self-concept consists in two essential aspects (e.g. Sirgy, 1982): the 'actual self' (one's self-image as it currently is) and the 'ideal self' (the image of oneself as one would like to be) that are linked to relevant motives that impact brand congruence: self-consistency and self-esteem (Sirgy, 1982).

Consumers use brands that match with the group's image which they want to belong (Klipfel, Barclay, & Bockorny, 2014) and social networking sites affects ideal social self-image and consumer's socialization (White & Dahl, 2007).

Studies by Mahjoub *et al.* (2015) demonstrated that actual self-congruence affects brand attachment and involvement. When customers use brands similar to their self, they build positive feelings, connection and loyalty to the brand (Mahjoub *et al.*, 2015). So, Consumption behavior would be affected by individuals' self and social image (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2015).

Companies seek similarity between customers actual self and brand personality, which is named self-congruence. (Mälar et al., 2011). Nowadays, companies try to create emotional connection with consumers with brand congruence with consumers' actual self or consumers' ideal self (Mälar et al., 2011).

Because "the consumer tends to purchase brands which have a similar image to his/her self-image" (Engel, 2001, p. 399). Some authors argue that self-brand congruence match with consumers self on dimensions on cultural values (Torelli et al., 2012), gender identity (Grohmann, 2009) and brand personality (Mulyanegara et al., 2007). Additionally, narrative ads, and their creativity have an important role positive attitudes as a brand congruence (Gottschal, 2012). Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H2: Creativity has positive effects on brand congruence

H3: Narrative Ads Structure has positive effects on brand congruence

## 2.3 Social Media Engagement

Consumer engagement has been defined in a number of ways in the literary, from emotional attachment to a brand (Calvert et al., 2014), to more cognitive, behavioral or emotional perspectives (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). Hollebeek et al. (2014) define consumer brand engagement in social media as the ability to create a psychological state in the consumer's mind as they interact with the brand. On the other side, the concept of "social media" refers to "tools for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques – such as web-based, mobile technologies– to turn communication into interactive dialogue" (Coulson, 2013, p. 1).

People use different social media platforms to satisfy different needs (Phua, Jin, and Kim, 2017) and interact according with these needs. Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011) identified six motivations for use social media: entertainment, integration and social interaction, personal identity, information (from studies of McQuail, 1983) and added remuneration and empowerment. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) demonstrated that consumers' needs for integration and social interaction are the main motivators for internet use. While Dolan, Seo, and Kemper (2019) emphasized relational and entertaining content as the most emotional appeals used in social media.

Several studies measure engagement in social media in a specific period of time through likes, shares, and comments (for example in Facebook and Instagram) (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeftang, 2017). This interaction in social media varies according to different levels of engagement from "following" (lower level) to "commenting" (higher level) (Pentina et al., 2018).

Muntinga et al. (2011) proposed a model of consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs) that distinguishes three levels of engagement: consumption, contribution and creation. Based in this model, Tsai and Men (2013) based on consumers' brand related activities on online media (COBRA's) model of Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit's (2011) evidence two levels of engagement: passive consumption (e.g., viewing videos and pictures, reading product reviews) and active content contributing (e.g., responding to comments and other SNS posts, posting one's own product reviews, uploading user-created videos and pictures).

Facebook is the social network site with more users around the world, and it is the platform with frequent use to form and maintain social interactions and relationships (Dunbar, 2016). When the Facebook involvement is higher, users are perceived as more "likable", being sociable

and fun (Utz, Muscanell and Khalid, 2015). For this, it is an important tool to achieve customer engagement (Li et al., 2020).

With social media, people are more connect and engaged, sharing content and information (Aslam et al., 2018). As a result, engagement in social media allows creating relationships between brands and multiple actors, engaging consumers (Westberg, Stavros, Smith, Munro, & Argus, 2018), playing a strategic role in branding (Hajli, Shanmugam, Papagiannidis, Zahay, & Richard, 2017). As consequence it also increases loyalty (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2015), brand awareness/associations, perceived quality (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2015) as well as purchases (Brodie et al., 2013) and firm competitiveness (Mishra, 2019).

On the other side, online communities can also build and maintain trust relationships, improving communication and brand-costumer interactions (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal and Evans, 2006) and increasing also subjective wellbeing (Verduyn et al., 2017).

For researches strategically use of social media “should take deliberate initiatives to motivate and empower customers to maximize their engagement value and yield superior marketing results” (Li et al., 2020, p. 4).

Creative video ads increase motivation to process the ad and improve the attitude toward the ad (Lee & Hong, 2016). Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H4: Creativity video ads is positive related with social media engagement.

H5: Narrative Ads Structure has positive effects on social media engagement.

Positive brand attitudes/evaluations (Graeff, 1997) and social media engagement appears as a consequence of self-brand congruence, because consumers express brand preference, loyalty and emotional attachment (Malär et al., 2011). Thus, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H6: Self Brand congruence is positively related with social media engagement.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in a telecommunications industry. Telecommunications industry is a competitive industry, with low differentiation level of products and services, where advertising and creativity play an important role in competitiveness. In this environment, brands are changing their advertising to engage more and more customers. In context of COVID-19 pandemic environment, we analysed a Vodafone advertising video produced when people are in confinement (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Geus4SNwVkQ>), whose message was "Let's stay home. Let's stay connected".

To test the proposed hypothesis, at first stage, a video ad was presented and, at a second stage, an online survey to collect data from telecommunications customers was conducted. All the measures were adapted from prior studies and have been confirmed to be reliable and valid. Before the questionnaires were distributed, all questions were translated into Portuguese by a specialized technician. Some items were slightly modified to fit telecommunications' advertising context.

#### *Measures*

In order to measure various constructs of the research model, the questionnaire uses a five point Likert scale, ranging from “1” to “5” (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Specifically, creativity was measured using the items adapted from Lee and Hong (2016), narrative advertising structure was measured following Dessart (2018), brand congruence was measured

by the items from Hinsch, Felix, and Rauschnabel (2020) and we measured engagement from Schivinski, Christodoulides, and Dabrowski (2016).

#### *Data collection Procedure and sample*

After translation, the questionnaire was pre-tested by a sample of 15 respondents. Based on your comments and suggestions, the formats and essays have been revised to ensure reliability and clarity. Information about the proposes of the study have been provided at the beginning of the questionnaire. The data were collected through a self-completion survey. The sample has 427 valid responses and the data collection took place from April to June 2020. The demographic profiles were reported in table 1.

Table 1. Demographic profiles (N=427)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid %
Gender	Male	123	28.8
	Female	304	71.2
Age	< 20 years	43	10.1
	20 to 29 years	219	51.3
	30 to 39 years	55	12.9
	40 to 49 years	60	14.1
	50 to 59 years	43	10.1
	up to 60 years	7	1.6

Table 1 shows that 71,2% are female and most of the observations are originate from individuals below 40 years of age (N = 274; 74,3%) (Table 1). The respondents are age average equal to 30.03 years old (SD=12.33).

## 4. RESULTS

The sample size of this study permits the usage of multivariate analysis techniques like Structural equation modelling (SEM) through maximum likelihood estimation, considering the rule of 5:1 (responses:items) (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2018). SEM is a multivariate analysis technique deployed to examine the proposed relationships. This technique that takes into account the measurement error in the model and it is recommended for theory testing in case of large datasets above 200 samples.

We used AMOS v.26 software and the research through SEM was analysed in two stages. First, the we analysed the measurement model (reliability and validity) and second, we analysed the relationship between constructs and evaluate the model fit.

#### *Preliminary data analysis*

At first step, common method bias was analysed, because data were collected from the same source and there have been a problem with commom method bias. To attend to this potential bias, ex-ante and ex-post procedures was employed. Ex-ante procedures were followed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) recommendations. We pre-test the survey to avoid vague concepts and complex syntax and double barrelled questions. At the first page of the survey respondents were informed that answers are anonymous and there are no right or

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wrong answers to each question. Ex post, Harman's one factor test was executed and the result showed four factors and first factor explained 32.15% of the variance.

A preliminary data analysis was conducted and we ran a series of regression models on the various constructs to calculate the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The VIF value is below the threshold (VIF <5) and therefore we assume that multicollinearity is not considered problematic. We also verified the Skewness (Sk) and Kurtosis (Ku) and we concluded that the items do not diverge from normality (Sk <3; Ku <7) (Hair et al., 2018). Additionally, we calculated the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) as well as Bartlett's test of sphericity to measure sampling adequacy. The KMO is 0.835 (KMO >0.7) and Bartlett's test is significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Therefore, the data are suitable for factor analysis.

*Measurement model*

The first step of the SEM analysis is the measurement analysis. We carried out the measurement model through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess reliability and validity. The results of model fit indices were acceptable ( $\chi^2 = 261.884$ ;  $df = 97$ ; GFI = 0.929; CFI = 0.969; NFI = 0.951; IFI = 0.969; TLI = 0.961; RMSEA = 0.080).

Table 2. Results of the measurement model

Latent variable	Items Code	$\lambda$	t-values	R <sup>2</sup>	CR	AVE
<b>CREA</b>					<b>0.784</b>	<b>0.552</b>
	CREA1	0.794	(a)	0.63		
	CREA2	0.824	18.242	0.679		
	CREA3	0.589	12.281	0.347		
<b>NaST</b>					<b>0.840</b>	<b>0.636</b>
	NaST1	0.809	(a)	0.655		
	NaST2	0.834	17.014	0.696		
	NaST3	0.747	15.535	0.558		
<b>CONG</b>					<b>0.911</b>	<b>0.774</b>
	CONG1	0.88	(a)	0.774		
	CONG2	0.919	26.4	0.845		
	CONG3	0.839	22.804	0.705		
<b>ENG</b>					<b>0.943</b>	<b>0.735</b>
	ENG1	0.828	(a)	0.686		
	ENG2	0.821	29.555	0.674		
	ENG3	0.874	22.552	0.764		
	ENG4	0.875	22.592	0.765		
	ENG5	0.894	23.413	0.799		
	ENG6	0.850	21.566	0.722		

$\lambda$  = standardized coefficients ; R<sup>2</sup> = squared multiple correlation; (a) the path is fixed at 1.0 to set the metric of the construct; AVE – Average Extracted Variance; CR – Composite reliability; MODEL FIT:  $\chi^2 = 261.884$ ;  $df = 97$ ; Goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.929; Comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.969; Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.951; Incremental fit Index (IFI) = 0.969; Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.961 root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) = 0.080.

Convergent validity and reliability was examined through the Average Variance extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, table 2 shows that AVE (ranging from 0.552 to 0.774) and CR (ranging from 0.784 to 0.943) are above the threshold values (AVE >0.5; CR >0.7). Additionally, we examine that standardized loadings ( $\lambda$ ) are above the recommended value for each construct ( $\lambda > 0.7$ ) and their significance is considered ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Chin, 1998).

*Discriminant validity*

Moreover, discriminant validity was examined. Table 3 present a Fornell and Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) to examine discriminant validity and we confirmed that all AVE values are higher than squared inter-construct correlation estimates.

Table 3. Discriminating Validity - criterion of Fornell and Larcker (1981)

Construct	CREA	NaST	CONG	ENG
CREA	0.552			
NaST	0.334	0.636		
CONG	0.437	0.334	0.774	
ENG	0.387	0.097	0.336	0.735

Diagonal entries are AVE values; \* all correlations are significant at level 1%

CREA=Creativity; NaST=Narrative Advertising Structure;  
CONG=Brand Congruence; ENG=Social Networks Engagement;

The results indicate that constructs are unidimensional and show acceptable levels of reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity.

*Structural Model*

The second step of the SEM analysis is the hypothesis testing through examination of the structural model and the results are shown in table 4. The result of the chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) test is 365.007 with  $df=98$ , which is statistically significant ( $p<0.01$ ). Moreover, the global fit indices recommend that the model has an acceptable fit (GFI=0.901; CFI=0.901; NFI=0.932; IFI=0.949; TLI=0.938; RMSEA=0.080). The structural paths support hypotheses H1, H2, h3, H4, H5 and H6.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing - Direct, Indirect and Total Effects

Hip	Path	$\beta$	Std Error	t-value	p-value	result
H1	CREA $\rightarrow$ NaSt	0.577	0.045	10.16	$p<0.001$	Supported
H2	CREA $\rightarrow$ CONG	0.491	0.063	8.42	$p<0.001$	Supported
H3	NaSt $\rightarrow$ CONG	0.294	0.076	5,194	$p<0.001$	Supported
H4	CREA $\rightarrow$ ENG	0.479	0.081	7.116	$p<0.001$	Supported
H5	NaSt $\rightarrow$ ENG	-0.184	0.089	-3.1	$p<0.01$	Not Supported
H6	CONG $\rightarrow$ ENG	0.376	0.071	5.935	$p<0.001$	Supported

Notes:  $\beta$  = Standardized Path Coefficients;  $R^2$ : NaST=0.333; CONG; 0.495; ENG=0.461

CREA=Creativity; NaST=Narrative Advertising Structure; CONG=Brand Congruence; ENG=Social Networks Engagement.

Model Global Fit:  $\chi^2 = 365.007$ ;  $df = 98$ ; Goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.901; Comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.900; Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.932; Incremental fit Index (IFI) = 0.949; Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.938; Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.080.

**5. DISCUSSION**

The results evidenced the explanation of the engagement in social networks by the variables included in the model ( $R^2=0.461$ ). The internet in general and social media networks specifically, generate content for users and the amount of information that they receive today is vast. This empirical study examined the creativity impacts on narrative structure. H1 is confirmed by our study ( $\beta_{CREA \rightarrow NaSt} = 0.577$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) as Chang (2009) states. The novelty and

surprising elements in online video ads provide a greater understanding of the structure of the video (Brechman & Purvis 2015).

In order to test H2 ( $\beta_{\text{CREA} \rightarrow \text{CONG}} = 0.491; p < 0.001$ ) and H3 ( $\beta_{\text{NaST} \rightarrow \text{CONG}} = 0.294; p < 0.001$ ), our investigation support that narrative ads, and their creativity has some effects on brand congruence. Consumers use brands that are congruent with themselves and their self-concept and for Malär et al (2011) the self-concept includes a cognitive and affective perspective. Our study, which presents creative elements and a narrative structure, corroborates the study by Gottschal (2012). Therefore, the creativity and the narrative structure of the propagating ad positively influence congruence as a positive attitude to the brand.

To support the hypothesis H4 ( $\beta_{\text{CREA} \rightarrow \text{ENG}} = 0.479; p < 0.001$ ), we analyse that creativity motivates the attitude toward social media engagement like Lee and Hong (2016) because, when video ads are efficiently created they allows more favorable cognitive responses (Chang, 2009).

Our empirical study did not support the positive relationship stated between Narrative Ads Structure and social media engagement. The hypothesis H5 is not confirmed. We found some explanations for this. It is possible that the age of the respondents does not allow us to conclude about this relationship. In addition, our study has a sample with a strong percentage of women. Additionally, the character of the video may be unknown to individuals and therefore, there is no connection between the video advertisement and the intention to engage in social media networks.

Finally, we state that H6 ( $\beta_{\text{CONG} \rightarrow \text{ENG}} = 0.376; p < 0.001$ ) is supported. This result is related with the conclusions of Malär et al. (2011). Thus, positive brand evaluations and social media engagement appears as a consequence of self-brand congruence.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Due to the centrality of social networks today, the empirical study presented here contributed to the advance of theoretical knowledge and has practical implications for management.

The study presents a model in which most of the causal relationships between the constructs were supported by our analysis. The model presented has a good fit.

This research concludes that there is a positive relationship between creativity and narrative ad structure and that the structure of video ads is better interpreted if creativity is present. In this way, brands must reinvent themselves to create amazing videos for their consumers.

Our study also demonstrates that brand congruence is influenced by creativity and through narrative structure. Therefore, video ads that meet each consumer's self-concept are ads that fit to consumer's values. Thus, brands with video ads perceived by consumers as similar to themselves will have more proximity to consumers and also a greater congruence.

In addition, the engagement of social media is explained by the congruence with the video ad, because when brands are congruent with individuals, they develop responses to the brand.

Firms should reflect on these results and promote their creativity on video ads to create mental representations on consumers' minds and, therefore, get more and mode engagement from their consumers.

Despite the important results, we considered that future researches could include other variables to help explain the model.

Thus, as further research, we suggest a model with the experience with the brand as a moderating variable.

In addition, our study only considered a sample of residents in Portugal. The analysis of users, from other countries, may be relevant for the explanation of the model presented.

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