Engaging Hearts and Minds: Examining Narrative Transportation and Its Impact on Affective Engagement, Purchase Intention, and Online Brand Advocacy

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ABSTRACT: In the context of increasingly competitive digital markets, it was important to understand how narrative transportation could increase purchase intention and produce online brand advocates. This study addressed the gap in prior research by examining the effect of narrative transportation on affective brand engagement. It also considered whether narrative transportation directly affected online brand advocacy and purchase intention in a virtual world. A quantitative approach was adopted, and a survey was distributed to Mercedes fans and users. The dataset contained a sample of 270 consumers, and the data were analysed using SPSS AMOS 23 to perform structural equation modeling. The results showed that narrative transportation had a positive effect on affective brand engagement in a virtual world. Similarly, the results indicated that narrative transportation strengthened online brand advocacy and purchase intention. By contrast, the findings revealed that emotional engagement did not directly impact online brand advocacy or purchase intention. These findings were regarded as valuable contributions to understanding how the transformation of storytelling into storydoing could engage consumers seeking captivating brand experiences. Future research could examine this study across other product categories to validate the generalizability of the findings, as well as incorporate additional variables to enrich the current model.

KEYWORDS: Narrative transportation; affective brand engagement; online brand advocacy; purchase intention; artificial intelligence.

1. Introduction

In the current digital era, the needs and expectations of modern consumers were constantly evolving, and the virtual world aimed to make itself increasingly real. Consumers sought original, captivating experiences that went far beyond a simple product or service [1]. Online branding therefore enabled companies to engage consumers, improve brand awareness and perception, and create value through unique and immersive experiences. With new emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the market also witnessed the emergence of narrative transportation as a new way to attract these demanding consumers [2, 3]. Several

researchers explored the relationship between immersive technologies and narration techniques, as well as how they influenced consumer experiences [4]. In other words, when people followed a story, they encountered a common phenomenon called "transport," during which they felt immersed and absorbed in the narrative universe [4]. Transport emphasized the transformation that resulted from temporary exclusion from the real world [5]. From this point of view, narrative transportation referred to an innovative temporary experience that enabled individuals to travel into a narrative world [6]. In the fast-growing technological world, offering innovative customer experiences became an increasingly important element of marketing strategies [7, 8]. The aim was to leverage competitive advantage, ensure survival, increase purchase intention, and create online brand advocates in a world marked by digitalization and evolving consumer needs [9]. Narrative transportation therefore became a key branding strategy, enabling personalized interactions with consumers and reinforcing their behavioral responses such as engagement and advocacy [10].

According to a previous study, 74% of consumers reported that they preferred to buy from brands that offered positive, captivating experiences rather than other brands. They were also willing to pay 16% more for a satisfying experience. In parallel with the technological revolution, Zhu [11] found a crossover effect between technology and narrative marketing, and how both influenced consumer behaviour. They found a significant link: most consumers spent much of their time browsing stories, which had a profound impact on their values and culture. This meant that stories were an effective communication and marketing vehicle for engaging consumers [12]. According to previous research on storytelling, the effectiveness of narrative transportation in persuading consumers relied primarily on the style of storytelling and how stories were told and processed in fun and innovative ways [13, 14]. Despite the importance of storytelling and the demonstrated effects of narrative transportation on consumer behaviour, little research focused specifically on its influence on engagement, advocacy, and purchase intention, and on how it might establish a strong bond between consumer and brand by enhancing experiences and satisfying needs [15, 14].

Previous research, such as Escalas [16], showed that narrative transportation could positively influence consumer attitudes and encourage engagement. For this reason, this paper focused on engagement, particularly emotional engagement, because in prior marketing studies affective engagement was described as the desire to establish a deep connection with a brand. It also reflected the customer's wish to belong to a community and to purchase a product due to affective attachment [17, 18]. The term affective engagement was used to describe the emotional connection and admiration consumers had for the company that promoted them [19]. Some researchers argued that this type of engagement was the most approachable for measuring the relationship between consumers and brands [20], and that emotional connections had a greater impact on customer behaviour than cognitive beliefs [19]. According to the theory of social exchange, understood as a type of social interaction that allowed us to understand beliefs and behaviours toward a brand, consumers who felt positively about a brand were more emotionally attached to it than those who did not [21]. Other research [22] showed that online brand advocacy (OBA) could influence brand-related actions. Brand advocacy referred to the voluntary recommendation by consumers who had positive experiences with a brand [23]. This process involved representing and sharing these experiences with others. For this reason, OBA proved effective in attracting new consumers, as it often manifested itself through social networks, where people shared their experiences and contributed to online promotion [22].

Hence, "online brand advocacy is the strong, influential, targeted and unstimulated recommendation of a brand by an experienced customer; in other words, it is the act of defending or speaking on behalf of the brand" [22].

OBA emerged recently for several reasons, including the fact that consumers were increasingly wired to co-create brand information. However, social media, once controlled by marketers, became dominated by consumers, making them more receptive to brand-related information shared by peers. This transformation strengthened the role of consumers in information dissemination and brand promotion, reinforcing the importance of OBA in today's marketing landscape [24]. Despite this, little research sought to understand how narrative transportation influenced the willingness to become a brand advocate. Such effects were important to examine, as they shaped how consumers were persuaded by brand stories [15]. By studying narrative transportation, researchers could better understand how stories shaped attitudes and behaviours [25]. This was why the present study expanded the literature by examining new experiences. In today's digital environment, consumers were exposed to vast amounts of information and advertising. However, brands that successfully created stories engaged consumers more effectively and generated advocacy at little cost. Examining this process provided an in-depth explanation of how narrative transportation influenced consumer behaviour. In line with this, stories increased affective engagement and emotional arousal by creating immersive experiences for consumers. When consumers were deeply engrossed in stories, they were more likely to develop an emotional connection with the brand, which increased their willingness to actively advocate and promote the brand online [21]. Similarly, when consumers were immersed in a story, they experienced more intense and positive emotions toward the brand. This emotional immersion could trigger their intention to buy products or services associated with the brand [21].

Purchase intention was an important concept in marketing, often used by researchers to understand consumer buying behaviour. According to Fishbein and Ajzen [26], purchase intention was explained by the theory of reasoned action, which suggested that consumer behaviour was determined by intention and influenced by attitude toward the behaviour and perceived subjective norms. In the online context, this theory helped explain online purchase intention, which was influenced by multiple factors. Recent studies [27] analysed the impact of peer social influence on online purchase intention. The concept was also employed by companies to predict and anticipate sales of new products or repeat purchases of existing ones [28]. Originally, it described the transactional buying behaviour of customers after evaluating a product, which justified its inclusion in this study. Consequently, this article aimed to address this gap and explored how storytelling styles based on new immersive and interactive technologies provided consumers with captivating experiences. Although narrative transportation, online brand advocacy, purchase intention, and emotional engagement had been studied separately, few studies examined their direct relationships. However, understanding how stories influenced consumer brand-related actions was essential to uncovering the mechanisms underlying their behaviour. This study therefore examined the impact of narrative transportation on emotional engagement, online brand advocacy, and purchase intention. The objective was to determine the extent to which narrative transportation influenced affective engagement, purchase intention, and advocacy. This work enriched the marketing literature and provided contributions and implications by offering a framework for future research on digital consumer behaviour and presenting results to guide professionals in improving narrative

campaigns to stimulate consumer responses. The article offered a conceptual framework for testing new research hypotheses, presented the methodology, reported the empirical results, and provided a detailed discussion of the findings.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Hypothesis test.

2..1.1. Narrative transportation and affective brand engagement.

During immersive experiences, individuals became so emotionally and mentally involved in the narrative that they momentarily lost awareness of their real environment. Narrative transportation often involved strong identification with characters, emotional investment in the unfolding of the story, and the ability to visualize and vividly feel events. This process was influenced by factors such as the quality of the writing, the coherence of the story, the depth of the characters, and the story's ability to evoke emotions in the reader, viewer, or player [4]. According to narrative transportation theory, the way in which a story was constructed influenced people's immersion in the story while allowing them to temporarily forget their real world. Storytelling was therefore considered an essential pillar of effective marketing strategies for disseminating brand information [11]. Within this framework, transport occurred when consumers felt they were mentally traveling in a world evoked by the story, due to their empathy toward the characters and the development of their imagination in relation to the plot. Based on the theory of social exchange, when consumers immersed themselves in a captivating brand story, they developed emotional engagement with that brand rather than with others. In other words, a brand's ability to offer original, immersive experiences enabled it to create a valuable relationship with consumers [14], fostering their emotional attachment. Previous study [29] showed that narrative transportation fueled emotions toward a cause. Similarly, Green and Appel [30] demonstrated that narrative transportation mobilized individuals' emotions, evoked affective responses, and encouraged engagement.

H_1: Narrative transportation in the era of artificial intelligence positively influenced affective engagement with the brand in the virtual world.

2.1.2. Affective brand engagement and online brand advocacy.

Consumer engagement represented a strong interaction between consumers and brands, which manifested itself on social networks by involving people in a dialogue or experience that influenced their behaviours [31]. Affective engagement was seen as the amount of subconscious feeling generated during this interaction with the brand. These feelings encouraged consumers to partake in positive experiences and actively recommend the brand to others [32]. Based on these definitions, Sashi [33] showed that engaged customers could become active members of an organization and use social media platforms to facilitate collaboration with it. As a result, marketing practitioners demonstrated that online consumer engagement was a key factor in their strategies, as it improved positive brand attitudes and behaviours. Furthermore, according to Bilro et al. [32], powerful brands could be created more through emotional engagement than through cognitive or behavioural engagement. In fact, when consumers were affectively engaged, they became more likely to communicate their

experiences with other consumers, discover new products, and advocate for the brand [32]. Bilro's study [32] also showed that positive emotions developed by consumers could help brands, as these emotions were created through engaging and immersive experiences with the brand, prompting them to become active brand ambassadors. In other words, if consumers engaged emotionally with a brand, they became more active in promoting it.

H$_2$: affective brand engagement influences online brand advocacy behaviours in virtual world.

2.1.3. Affective brand engagement and purchase intention.

As demonstrated earlier, the concept of purchase intention represented an essential pillar for assessing consumer behaviour towards a brand and for anticipating new product sales or repeat purchases of existing products [28]. According to Habib et al. [34], purchase intention was triggered when a consumer decided to choose one brand over others despite their products possessing almost the same characteristics. In the same context, some authors studied brand engagement and purchase intention. They suggested that consumers preferred to buy products for which they had a strong emotional attachment. Consequently, affective engagement could directly trigger consumers' purchase intentions. There was a significant link between emotional engagement and purchase intention [35–37]. Therefore, it was crucial to explore this aspect further:

H$_3$: Affective brand engagement influences purchase intention in virtual world.

2.1.4. Narrative transportation and online brand advocacy.

Good brand communication from consumers attracted others and encouraged them to adopt the brand's new products [31]. This meant that when consumers shared persuasive messages and narratives using narrative transportation about a brand's new products, it captured the attention of other consumers by immersing them in engaging experiences. Previous research affirmed this and showed that narrative techniques attracted consumers' attention and sustained their interest. In other words, being absorbed in a story made people feel more positive and more willing to recommend the brand to others, which reinforced online brand advocacy (OBA) [38, 39]. Indeed, narrative transportation was a process in which attention, imagination, and emotion combined to enable individuals to become fully immersed in a brand-related story world [39]. This immersion drove consumer behaviour and encouraged them to become brand ambassadors. It also motivated people to share their experiences on social media, strengthening the brand image, engaging other consumers, and reinforcing OBA. Therefore, it was crucial to explore this aspect further:

H$_4$: Narrative transportation in the era of artificial intelligence influences online brand advocacy virtual world

2.1.5. Narrative transportation and online brand advocacy.

The narrative marketing deployed by companies helped to express the value and benefits of the brand, striving effectively to maintain consumer trust and loyalty. In the process, a consumer–brand relational exchange was created, improving positive attitudes towards the brand. These

attitudes also reinforced consumers' desire to purchase [40]. In parallel, the use of innovative and captivating technologies in narrative marketing engaged consumers and immersed them in the story, establishing an emotional bond with the brand. This, in turn, triggered consumer purchase intentions [25, 41]. In the same context, Wilk argued that narrative transportation influenced immediate purchase. Indeed, when brands used a modern narrative style with the help of immersive technologies, consumers became more emotionally attached to the brand [22]. As a logical consequence, purchase intention was higher. Therefore, it was crucial to explore this aspect further:

H_5: Narrative transportation in the era of artificial intelligence influences purchase intention in virtual world.

The conceptual model is presented as follows in Figure 1. The conceptual model presents narrative transportation as an independent variable, affective brand engagement as an intermediate variable, and purchase intention and online brand advocacy as dependent variables.
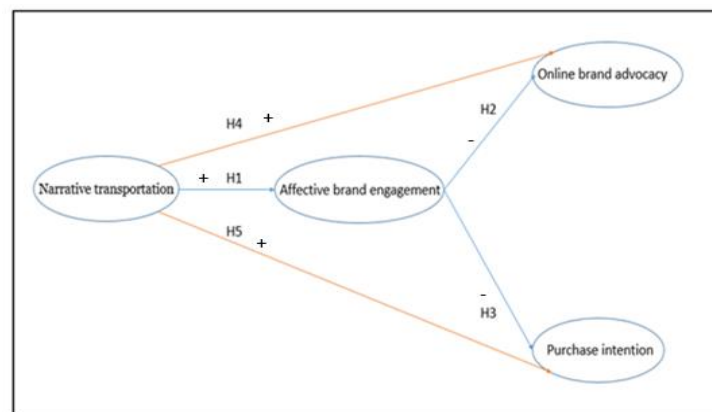

Figure 1. Conceptual model.

2.2. Choice of brand and study population.

The main objective of this article was to demonstrate how narrative transportation affected emotional brand engagement in the virtual world and the influence of emotional engagement on online brand advocacy and purchase intention. This study also examined the direct effect of narrative transportation on online brand advocacy and purchase intention. In the paragraphs below, we describe the research methodology adopted to achieve this objective. In this study, we focused on luxury brands because they accounted for nearly two-thirds of the global market. This choice enabled marketers to recognize the luxury brand domain as a key pillar of effective marketing strategy, while also understanding consumers' perceptions of brands in order to offer them new, engaging experiences, particularly in a virtual environment [13]. For this reason, we selected the automotive industry, with a specific focus on Mercedes-Benz. Mercedes-Benz was chosen because it consistently employed narrative strategies to convince and influence consumers. For example, the brand showcased its rich heritage and history to create an emotional connection, evoking elegance, sophistication, and continuity from its origins to the present day. It was internationally recognized for its innovative products, strong brand identity, and high level of consumer engagement. This made it a relevant case for examining why consumers chose to interact with the brand and how such engagement manifested itself. The

study was conducted in Tunisia and targeted social media users who had prior experience with Mercedes-Benz. Participants varied in terms of age, gender, and occupation, ensuring diversity in the sample.

2.3. Experimental procedures.

This research study employed a quantitative correlational design to test the relationships between narrative transportation, affective engagement, purchase intention, and online brand advocacy. An online survey was created using Google Forms, incorporating validated scales to test the proposed hypotheses. The measurement scales used in this study were adopted from previously validated instruments in the literature. The target respondents were Mercedes-Benz users, and a convenience sampling method was applied, as the survey specifically targeted individuals with experience of the brand. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of 30 participants to ensure clarity, comprehensibility, and appropriate completion time. Following this pre-test, necessary adjustments were made before the final distribution. The final survey was distributed in Tunisia during January and February 2025. At the beginning of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to confirm their consent to participate in the study. Only those who provided consent were able to proceed, and it was clearly stated that all responses would remain confidential. After data collection, responses that did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded. To be included, participants were required to (1) be active social media users, (2) have prior experience with Mercedes-Benz, and (3) have interacted with the brand online. Incomplete questionnaires were also removed to ensure the reliability and quality of the dataset. Once the final dataset was obtained, responses were coded and prepared for analysis. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS 23 to perform structural equation modelling (SEM), which enabled the testing of hypothesized relationships between the study constructs. The detailed results of the data analysis are presented in the following sections.

2.4. Participants.

Our survey consisted of 17 items, and for the study to be considered valid, the recommended sample size was 10 times the number of observable variables [42]. Accordingly, at least 170 responses were required. In total, 300 questionnaires were distributed online, and 280 responses were received. After screening the data, incomplete responses and those not meeting the inclusion criteria were excluded, leaving 270 valid responses for analysis. Thus, the final sample used in this study consisted of 270 respondents. The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

2.5. Measures.

For narrative transportation, items were identified based on the existing literature. The independent variable (narrative transportation) was assessed using three items adapted from the scale of [16], which reported a Cronbach's α of 0.849. The first dependent variable, purchase intention, was measured using five items from the scale of [43], with a reported Cronbach's α of 0.886. The second dependent variable, online brand advocacy, was measured using six items adapted from [44], which demonstrated a Cronbach's α of 0.935. The mediating variable, affective engagement, was measured using three items from the scale of [45], with a

Cronbach's α reliability score of 0.914. All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Table 1. Sample charesteristics.

Variables	Terms	Number	Percentage
Gender	Woman	86	31.9%
	Men	184	68.1%
Age	-25	34	12.6%
	26 To 35	66	24.4%
	36 To 45	104	38.5%
	46 To 55	50	18.5%
	+56	16	5.9%
Marital Status	Single	101	37.4%
	Married	134	49.6%
	Widow	28	10.4%
	Other	7	2.6%
Educational level	Primary	32	11.9%
	Secondary	38	14.1%
	Baccalaureate	56	20.7%
	University	133	49.3%
	Other	11	4.1%
Employment sector	Agriculture	20	7.4%
	Bank	46	17%
	Accounting/management/finance	44	16.3%
	Distribution/commerce	34	12.6%
	Marketing/ communication	29	10.7%
	Hotels/ restaurants/ tourism	29	10.7%
	Health	18	6.7%
	Electronics	4	1.5%
	Civil service	19	7%
	Other	27	10%

2.6. Statistical analysis.

The collected data were subjected to descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using IBM SPSS 25. Subsequently, AMOS 23 was employed to perform confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) in order to test the proposed hypotheses.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results.

First, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the structure of the items [42]. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) index was found to be greater than 0.5, demonstrating a satisfactory level of sampling adequacy and inter-item correlation. In addition, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Similarly, the communalities of all variables were greater than 0.5, allowing them to be retained. Taken together, these results indicated that the data were appropriate for factor analysis and that the measurement scales were valid within acceptable thresholds.

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis.

Items	KMO	Bartlett	Communality
TN1	0693	000	0.766
TN2			0.712
TN3		000	0.851
AFF-ENG1	0.795		0.850
AFF-ENG2			0.866
AFF-ENG3		000	0.847
OBA1	0.898		0.703
OBA2			0.757
OBA3			0.786
OBA4			0.785
OBA5			0.736
OBA6			0.773
PI1			0.703
PI2			0.613
PI3			0.725
PI4	0.825	000	0.683
PI5			0.618

Second, the reliability of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. To ensure internal consistency, a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.7 was required [42]. As shown in Table 3, all scales achieved Cronbach's alpha values above this threshold, indicating satisfactory reliability of the measurement instruments.

Table 3. Reliability.

Scale	Nombre of items	Cronbach alpha
Narrative transportation	3	0.847
Affective brand engagement	3	0.914
Online brand advocay	6	0.935
Purchase intention	5	0.886

Third, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS 23 to test the reliability and validity of the measurement scale items [42, 46]. The results of the CFA are presented in Table 3. Composite reliability was also assessed, as it evaluates the overall reliability of items that are conceptually similar but not identical. The Jöreskog's rho method was used for this purpose, with the recommended threshold set at 0.7 [47]. All constructs exceeded this value, confirming satisfactory internal consistency and construct reliability (Table 3). Fourth, convergent validity was assessed using the Fornell and Larcker method. The results showed that all average variance extracted (AVE) values were greater than 0.5, indicating strong convergent validity [48]. Furthermore, discriminant validity was examined by comparing the square root of the AVE of each construct with the inter-construct correlations. In all cases, the square root of the AVE exceeded the correlations between constructs, confirming the presence of discriminant validity (Table 4). With both convergent and discriminant validity established, the measurement model was validated, enabling the testing of hypotheses.

Table 4. Convergent and discriminant validity.

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Composite reliability	AVE
Narrative transportation [16]	– While using virtual environment tools, I could easily imagine the events taking place.	0.766	0.847	0.677
	– I could imagine myself at the scene of the events described in virtual environment	0.712		
	– I could feel mentally involved in virtual environment while using it.	0.851		
Affective brand engagement [36]	– I feel very positive when I watch the Mercedes videos in virtual environment	0.850	0.953	0.780
	– Watching the Mercedes video commercial in Virtual Environment makes me happy.	0.866		
	– I feel good when watching the Mercedes video ad in virtual environment	0.847		
Online brand advocacy [44]	– I undertake to pass on the promotions offered by Mercedes to others.	0.703	0.989	0.609
	– I actively inform others, both online and offline about the superiority of Mercedes and its products.	0.757		
	– I am ready to protect the reputation of Mercedes	0.786		
	– I recommend Mercedes and its team to others –	0.785		
	– I encourage friends and relatives to use Mercedes in the future	0.736		
	– I provid advice to others about Mercedes	0.773		
Purchase intention [43, 49]	– I intend to buy a Mercedes car.	0.724	0.973	0.708
	– I strongly recommend others to buy a Mercedes car.	0.644		
	– I find that buying a Mercedes is well worth it	0.742		
	– I'm probably going to buy a Mercedes frequently in the future.	0.689		
	– I plan to spend more to buy a Mercedes car	0.641		

In addition, the structural model demonstrated a good fit according to Russell's recommended thresholds [50]. The fit indices indicated that RMR was below 0.08, GFI and NFI exceeded 0.80, AGFI was above 0.70, TLI and CFI were greater than 0.90, and χ^2/df was less than 5, confirming that the model achieved an acceptable level of overall fit (Figure 2).
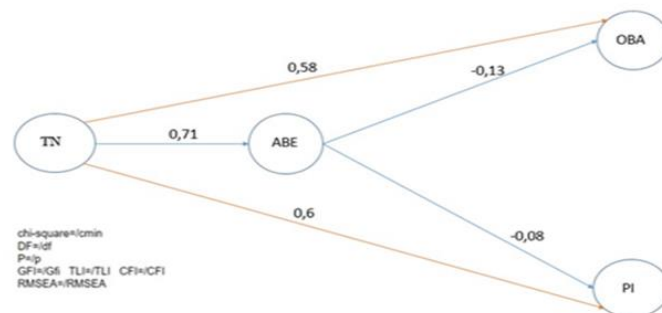

Figure 2. Structural model.

Figure 2 presents the results of the hypothesis testing. The analysis showed that narrative transportation significantly influenced affective brand engagement (CR > 1.96, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), supporting H_1. For H_2 and H_3, the CR values were < 1.96 and the p-values were 0.130 and 0.333 (> 0.05), indicating that both hypotheses were rejected. This result demonstrates that affective brand engagement had no direct effect on purchase intention or online brand advocacy (OBA). In contrast, narrative transportation had a direct and significant effect on both online brand advocacy (H_4) and purchase intention (H_5), with CR values of 6.249 and 6.385,

respectively, and $p = 0.000$ (< 0.05). Thus, H_4 and H_5 were accepted, confirming strong positive relationships between narrative transportation, OBA, and purchase intention.

Table 5. Hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Values	CR	P	Results
H_1	NT → ABE	10.680	>1.96	0.000	Accepted
H_2	NT → ABE	-1.512	<1.96	0.130	Rejected
H_3	ABE → PI	-9.69	<1.96	0.333	Rejected
H_4	NT → OBA	6.249	>1.96	0.000	Accepted
H_5	NT → PI	6.385	>1.96	0.000	Accepted

3.2. Discussion.

The primary objective of this study was to examine how narrative transportation influences affective brand engagement and whether it has a direct effect on online brand advocacy and purchase intention. Drawing on previous studies [4, 13] and supported by our quantitative findings, we proposed that narrative transportation influences affective brand engagement, online brand advocacy, and purchase intention in a virtual environment. Walkington et al. [51] confirmed that narrative transportation enhances both cognitive and affective consumer responses, while Kaczorowska et al. also reported a positive association between narrative transportation and affective engagement. Consistent with these studies, our results demonstrate a direct and significant relationship between higher levels of narrative transportation and affective brand engagement (H_1), implying that narrative transportation strengthens consumers' emotional connections with brands. The findings suggest that narrative transportation, particularly when reinforced by virtual environments, generates heightened levels of emotional engagement. For example, Mercedes-Benz's narrative style has become a key source of consumer attraction, as the brand increasingly employs virtual environments such as mixed reality (MR) to encourage consumers to interact, share, comment, advocate, and make purchasing decisions. A well-crafted narrative, therefore, has the power to deeply engage consumers emotionally. Supporting this view, El Bayed [52] examined brand engagement and its influence on consumer behavior, finding that engagement significantly impacts purchase behavior. Likewise, Sashi and Bilghilan [53] demonstrated that emotional engagement is positively associated with brand advocacy, emphasizing the importance of building emotional connections with consumers to strengthen advocacy.

However, our results contradict these findings. We found that affective brand engagement was not significantly associated with either purchase intention or online brand advocacy (H_2 and H_3). This indicates that although affective engagement is valuable, it is insufficient on its own to drive advocacy or purchase decisions. Companies should therefore invest in affective engagement while also addressing other variables that may influence consumer advocacy and purchase behavior. Importantly, our findings confirm that narrative transportation has a direct and significant effect on both online brand advocacy and purchase intention (H_4 and H_5). These results align with prior research; for instance, Vartikar [39] showed that immersive storytelling fosters consumer engagement, while Samuelsen [54] and Wang et al. [55] demonstrated that consumers exposed to immersive narratives reported significantly higher purchase intentions than those presented with factual information. Together, these findings underscore that when consumers are deeply invested in a brand's story, they are more likely to share their experiences, recommend the brand on social media,

and actively promote it. Moreover, persuasive narratives can directly influence decision-making, encouraging consumers to purchase and to choose the brand over competitors.

4. Conclusions

At a theoretical level, this study adds several new insights to the marketing literature. It builds on previous research on narrative transportation, which has often been examined in the contexts of tourism, the automobile sector, and luxury products. Our study makes a significant contribution by investigating narrative transportation in the luxury automobile brand Mercedes. Furthermore, while many studies have explored this construct in simpler contexts such as websites and social networks, this research extends the discussion to the virtual world. This represents a distinctive contribution to the field. These theoretical contributions provide the foundation for several managerial implications. First, our findings support the notion that the style of narration has evolved over time, moving from storytelling to storydoing. Consumers increasingly want to live an authentic story with the brand in order to be convinced and engaged with its products, as is the case with Mercedes. As a result, businesses must develop innovative ways to influence and engage their customers. Our study also demonstrates that companies can rely on narrative transportation to influence purchase decisions and brand advocacy. The results of our analysis led to several important conclusions and recommendations. Narrative transportation was found to have a direct and significant effect on affective brand engagement, online brand advocacy, and purchase intention. To maximize the effectiveness of narrative transportation in online brand promotion, it is essential to fully understand and strategically apply the concept. By combining compelling stories across multiple media platforms such as social media, blogs, and videos, brands can create a cohesive and immersive experience for consumers. This deeper participation not only fosters a positive attitude toward the brand but also increases the likelihood of purchase. To evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies, the use of measurement scales specific to narrative transportation is recommended, as they can help quantify consumer immersion and engagement. By employing such approaches, brands can successfully convert their consumers into dedicated advocates and enhance purchase intention. Although these findings provide valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge the study's limitations, which also suggest opportunities for future research. First, this study focused only on the affective dimension of brand engagement; future research could include other dimensions, such as behavioral and cognitive engagement. Second, the analysis was limited to luxury products and a specific automobile brand, Mercedes. Future studies could examine other product categories or sectors such as tourism. Third, not all variables commonly associated with narrative transportation, engagement, online brand advocacy, and purchase intention were considered. Future research could expand the model by including additional variables such as trust and perception. Finally, moderator variables were not integrated into this study, and it would be valuable for future research to explore their role in strengthening or weakening the observed relationships.

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Author Contribution

Competing Interest

All authors declare that there are no financial, personal, or professional relationships that might influence or appear to influence their research.

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