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Citation: van Laer, T. (2015). Narrative transportation: How it relates to “make-believe”. Paper presented at the Research Seminar, 2 Jun 2015, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.

This is the accepted version of the paper.

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Narrative Transportation:

How It Relates to “Make-Believe”



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A Story about Stories



Relevance of stories

“There is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups, have their stories (...). Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural.” (Roland Barthes 1975, 237)

“The one who tells the story rules the world.” (Hopi proverb)

- ❖ **On a collective level**, stories permeate the history of mankind (Boyd 2009; Moore 2012) as early wall graffiti testifies (David and Wilson 2002; Smith 2007).
- ❖ **On an individual level**, stories represent one of the first—if not the first—form of cultural transmission after birth.



A Story about Stories



Interpreting stories

Narratology, or the study of stories, implies a holistic appreciation of stories by means of an “examination of the content, structure, and context” (Stern, Thompson, and Arnould 1998, 199):

- ❖ **Structural analysis** (Barthes 1975) consists of inspecting the “basic rules of narrative accounting” (Gergen and Gergen 1988, 30), which make stories much more than a sequence of propositions (Adaval, Isbell, and Wyer 2007; Adaval and Wyer 1998; Pennington and Hastie 1988) .
- ❖ **Post-structural analysis** directs attention to the cultural, historical, and social context in which the story unfolds and that make it possible and interpretable (Holt 1997; Shankar et al. 2001; Thompson 1997).

A Story about Stories



Stories in consumer research

Stories have attracted much scholarly attention of consumer researchers.
I identify two disciplinary approaches of consumer research to stories:

- ❖ **Stories as consumable goods**, whenever scholars' attention is directed to stories-as-consumed. Among others, edutainment (Moyer-Gusé 2008), social media with stories at centre stage (van Laer and de Ruyter 2010), reality television shows (Hall 2009) and interactive video games (Baranowski et al. 2008) have been covered.
- ❖ **Stories as a persuasive lever**, whenever scholars' attention focuses on stories' capacity of activating affective and cognitive changes in story-receivers—that is, consumers of the story—that may eventually affect their beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviours (Gerrig 1993; Green 2008).



A Story about Stories



Stories in my research

My research focuses on:

- ❖ **Narrative transportation** occurring whenever the consumer experiences a feeling of entering a world evoked by the narrative and is thus 'lost in the story' (Nell 1988). This particular state of suspension of disbelief and deep involvement is possible when certain contextual and personal preconditions are met, as Green and Brock (2002) postulate for the **Transportation-Imagery Model**.
- ❖ **The dyad storyteller – story-receiver**, where the storyteller acts as the producer of the story and the story-receiver as its interpreter and consumer.



Narrative Transportation



Key constructs: Ingredients of the potion

The conceptual building blocks of my work are four:

1. Story
2. Narrative
3. Narrative transportation
4. Narrative persuasion



Narrative Transportation



Key constructs: Ingredients of the potion

Former works use the concepts of story and narrative interchangeably (Chase 1995; Grayson 1997; Shankar et al. 2001). Yet, on closer inspection of Thompson's (1997, 438) hermeneutic analysis of consumer stories we read that a narrative is derived from a process of attribution of meaning to and interpretation of a story.

1. **Story** is the **story-as-told**, that is, a storyteller's account of an event or a sequence of events leading to a transition from an initial state to a later or end state (Bennett and Royle 2004). It always implies: (a) a plot (narrative movement + narrative framing; Thompson 1997); (b) some characters; (c) a climax; and, (d) an outcome.
2. **Narrative** is the **story-as-received**, that is, the story-receiver's consumption of the story through which (s)he does not just read the story but **makes it believable** in the first place according to her/his prior knowledge, attention, personality, demographics, and significant others (Fishbein and Yzer 2003).

Narrative Transportation



Key constructs: Ingredients of the potion

Narrative transportation and narrative persuasion constitute respectively the focus and relevance of the model we provide:

3. **Narrative transportation** is the extent to which (1) a consumer *empathizes* with the story characters (Slater and Rouner 2002) and (2) the story plot activates her/his *imagination* (Green and Brock 2002), which leads her/him to experience *suspended reality* during story reception.
4. **Narrative persuasion** is the effect of narrative transportation, which manifests itself in story-receivers' affective and cognitive responses, beliefs, attitudes, and intentions from being swept away by a story and transported into a narrative world that modifies their perception of their world of origin (Phillips and McQuarrie 2010).



Extending the TAM



Gap and research objectives

Extant narrative transportation literature remained fragmented, in terms of both its conceptual breadth and its empirical findings (Green et al. 2004a; Moyer-Gusé 2008; Nabi and Krcmar 2004; Slater 2002a).

1. **Develop a model** that integrates the antecedents and consequences of narrative transportation.
2. **Empirically assess the model** with a quantitative meta-analysis of extant research.
3. **Uncover issues that deserve further attention** and provide directions for further research.

Extending the TIM



Why an extension is needed and how we proceeded

The research offered an extension of the Transportation-Imagery Model (Green and Brock 2002):

- ❖ **Extending the TIM:** the original model does not cover the full set of variables the literature reveals; some of which appeared after its publication.
- ❖ **How we extended the TIM:**
 1. We separated antecedents of narrative transportation from its consequences.
 2. On the antecedent level, we further distinguished between antecedents on the storytellers' and the story-receiver's side.
 3. We checked for a moderation effect of measurement scale.
 4. We did not include medium among the antecedents of narrative transportation since extant studies are scant and thus can't provide meaningful insight (Valentine, Pigott, and Rothstein 2010).



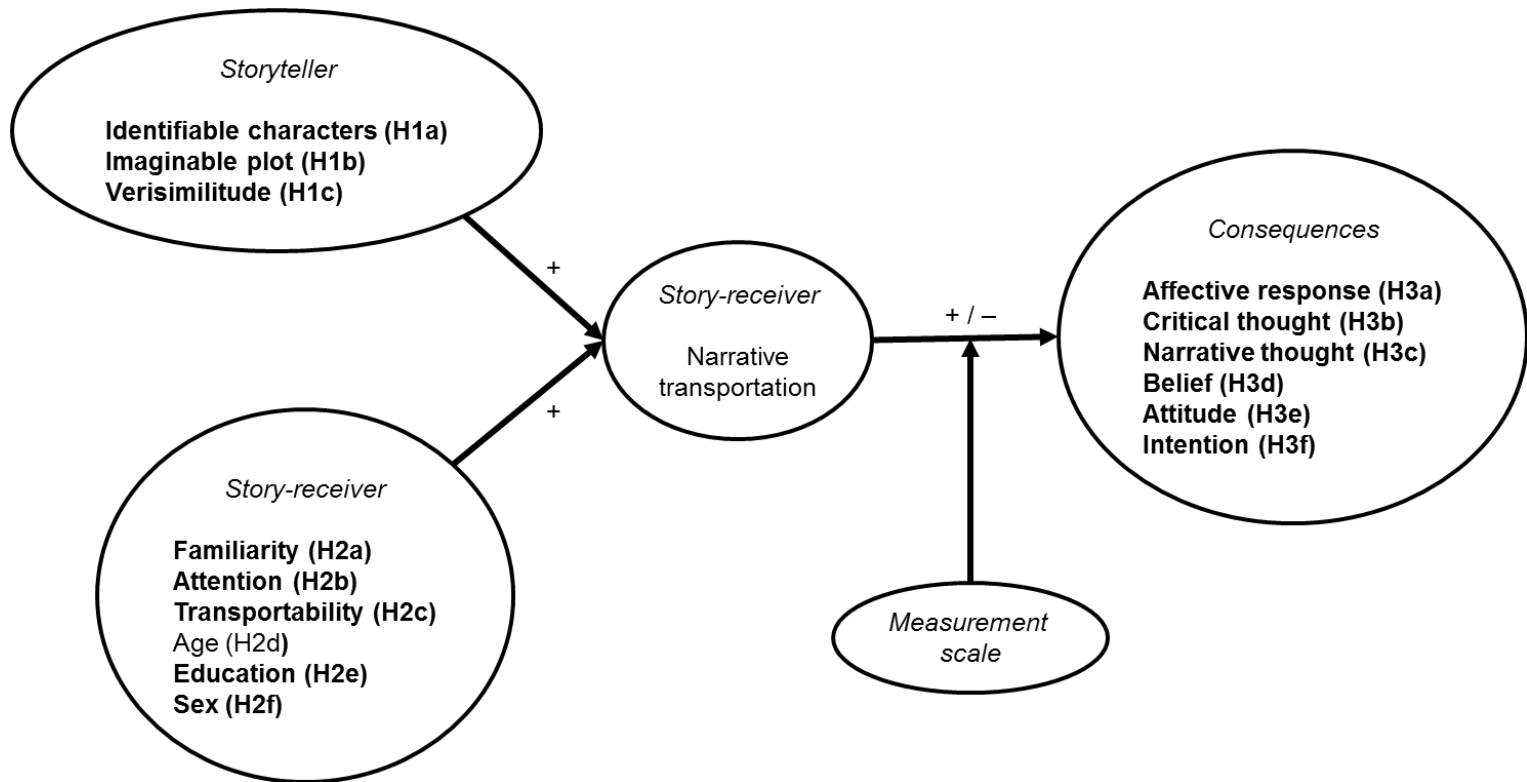
Extending the TIA

An overview of the model

Antecedents

Narrative transportation

Consequences



Learning from the story



Possible limitations of narrative transportation theory and measurement

1. Directionality of the empathy-suspended reality relationship

Concern: Empathy/identification and suspended reality seem interchangeable components of narrative transportation.

Alternative: Empathy is a connection with the character that precedes suspended reality while *unity of perspectives between character and story-receiver* is an effect of narrative transportation. Identification is both empathy and perspective-taking (Busselle and Bilandzic 2009 *Media Psychology*).

Impact: Story-receivers are transported more (but do not identify more) after receiving information regarding the character's future than after information regarding the character's past (Tal-Or and Cohen 2010 *Poetics*).

2. Internal validity of the Transportation Scale (Green and Brock 2000, 704)

Concern: The item "I found myself thinking of ways the narrative could have turned out differently" does not correlate with the other items.

Alternative:

1. Narrative Engagement Scale (12 items; Busselle and Bilandzic 2009)
- (2. Transportation Scale-Short Form (6 items; Appel et al. 2015 *Media Psychology*))



Learning from the story



Possible limitations of narrative transportation theory and measurement

3. Discriminant validity of scales' items versus (enjoyment) consequences

Concern:

1. The item "The narrative affected me emotionally" seems to measure affective response instead of narrative transportation/engagement.
2. Enjoyment/affective response ("I enjoyed the film very much") and intention ("I would watch this film again" and "I would recommend this film to my friends") load on the same factor as narrative transportation.

Alternative: Control for common method bias by separating the measurement of narrative transportation/engagement and its consequences temporally or methodologically (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

4. Reliability of post-hoc self-reporting to measure narrative transportation

Concern:

1. Narrative transportation probably varies during story consumption.
2. Story-receivers may regulate their experience.
3. Participants can perceive their experience differently post-hoc (or lie).

Alternative: Eye-blink rate variability (Nomura et al. 2015 *Frontiers in Psychology*)

