When Advertising Feels Like Entertainment: Effects of Branded Short Films on Consumer Engagement

(Abstract)

Branded short films are increasingly prevalent in the shortform video era, but limited research has experimentally compared their effects with conventional video advertisements. Drawing on theories of experiential media consumption, this research examines how advertising format influences consumer responses through experiential viewing processes. Across two between-subjects experiments, participants viewed either a branded short film or a traditional video advertisement using real stimuli. Study 1 employed advertising from BMW, while Study 2 replicated the design using advertising from the jewelry brand TOUS, which has lower familiarity amongst consumers in the U.S. Results indicate that branded short films generate greater perceived enjoyment and novelty than traditional video advertisements. Parallel mediation analyses further show that these experiential responses indirectly increase social sharing intentions and wishful purchase intentions. The results highlight the role of experiential engagement in shaping advertising effectiveness and demonstrate how narrative-based formats can encourage consumer participation in digital media environments.

Keywords: branded short films, advertising, social sharing, novelty, entertainment