

## Health Narrative shaped reader's health behaviors: Examination of determinants with literature review approach

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### Abstract

The health consciousness worldwide is on the rise and new sources of health knowledge dissemination are emerging. The media controlled framing of consumer's interests, setting the narrative, sharing a piece of information and withholding a non monetizable piece of information; all matters in shaping reader's health responses, behaviors and stimulus to consume or de-consume. The narratives and framing of peculiar health information with aid of storytelling identifies as one of the most adopted method of projecting and portraying a message (health information in this case) across a select audience. Narrative setting and narrative transportation is vital part of media embedded coded communications. The narrative establishment could be with regard to an aspect or selective information or piece of knowledge that could be critical to influencing the formation of specific habit, can promote usage of a special product or service or make the reader abstain from indulging in a set of action or practices. Narrative establishment and transportation in health communications especially the health advertisements are instrumental in promoting select demand for a product or service vis a vis the health condition being discussed. The reader's reactance and subsequent attitude formation is critical for the health advertorial to be effective in setting trend and influencing habit across mass readers. Hence the paper evaluates and assesses the vivid dimensions of the research construct and seeks to reflect on the contributing determinants of the phenomenon

**Key Words:** *Health Narrative, Fear appeal, Subjective health knowledge, Customer reactance, fake news*

### Introduction

Rising consciousness about personal health in urban and educated classes is a global phenomenon. The proactive stance with regard to self-health management with media induced advisory, set of protocols and practices and tips has long been observed as shaping individual's view point about what is pro-health and what is anti-health. In fact the traditional information regarding healthy lifestyle was disseminated by grandparents to their offspring which used to circulate across family and community. Yet as the modern contemporary societies transform to nuclear families and as the new generation is getting distant from the grandparents, new sources of health information dissemination are figuring up.

#### *Media based health information story telling*

The media in all forms –social media, print media, and electronic media and published research; all are engrossed in spreading their own right and wrong version of healthy living amidst urbanization problems amidst disease management and amidst lifestyle induced challenges. The media propagated communications; preset narratives seem a versatile communication tool in shaping reader's and viewer's perceptions, opinions and mindsets. As the information

dissemination in contemporary societies is getting paced up, narrative setting and narrative transportation is getting more a part of the usual agenda setting and management in matters related with public health and community well-being.

### *Why this research?*

In this regard this research paper attempts to explore the determinants of reader's health behaviors in preview of narrative philosophy and under context of marketing communication advances. The study seeks to bring together the scattered literature on the elements that impact, that shape up and influence the health based actions under influence of health advertorial propositions. Especially in context of Chandigarh capital region in Northern India, which is witnessing rise in metabolism related disorders especially the diabetic and obesity, eyes and mental cognitions related disorders, the study makes sense. The diabetics and body metabolism based health information and respective favorable action from readers is subject to the set narrative, implicit message, fear appeal being made, health based subjective knowledge being shared and manner of enhancing the believability of the aforesaid health based information. The reader's reactance and subsequent attitude formation is critical for the health advertorial to be effective in setting trend and influencing habit across mass readers. The research hence carves out the "Health Narrative shaped reader's health behaviors" as topic of study.

## **Health Narrative shaped reader's health behaviors: A research construct**

### *Understanding Health Advertorial*

Health advertorial have emerged as a novel form of market and media generated communications where the narrative about a health condition is set, transportation and subjective knowledge with select facts and figure is communicated. Health advertorial as a media propagated tool involves the aspects of presenting a story, setting a series of events, sharing selective information regarding future habit formation. The health advertorials constitute a manner of communication where by the preset and selective information about health is programmed and coded across masses and fear is being leveraged to make them change over. Such a change over and fear appeal hinges on the narrative setting (what is good and what is bad) and transporting that narrative to enable the readers to adapt and shift over to new ways (leading to adoption of a health product or service or following a health protocol). The narratives and framing of peculiar health information with aid of storytelling identifies as one of the most adopted method of projecting and portraying a message (health information in this case) across a select audience.

### *Coded communications and impact on behavior*

The well-constructed story and effective features is widely believed to resonate well with the recipient's mindsets and seek to bring a positive and favorable change in the mindset with regard to health based staying and adoption of new habits or practices. The persuasive power of health advertorials and the embedded story telling hence focus on the promotion of a belief, an attitude or a behavioral intention to enable the readers to adopt and admire the change. The literature (Ackermann, Mugge, Schoormans, 2018) on subject reports the incidence of narratives as involving the readers to an extent that change management is feasible and operationalized. The

reader's subsequent involvement through narrative establishment and narrative transportation; thus requires contingent research attention in the research with regard to evaluation of effectiveness of health advertorial in shaping the behavioral intent and framing new mindsets and habits.

### *Understanding Health Narrative shaped reader's health behavior*

Health narrative determined behavior can thus be interpreted as that selective and segmental and niche behavior that corresponds to a desired and programmed understanding of health issue and advertorial suggested ways of coping with the aforesaid health challenge. In simpler terms, such a health behavior gets strength from health based information (Elrod, Fortenberry, 2020) being communicated across narrative, subjective health knowledge being shared with the reader, fear appeals being made and the measures being undertaken to enhance levels of believability of information. In fact as per literature, narrative setting and narrative transportation is vital part of media embedded coded communications. The narrative establishment (Flynn, Goldsmith, 1999) could be with regard to an aspect or selective information or piece of knowledge that could be critical to influencing the formation of specific habit (sought be healthy or projected as healthy), can promote usage of a special product or service or make the reader abstain from indulging in a set of action or practices. Narrative establishment and transportation (Bedford, Obregon, 2017) in health communications (health advertorials) especially the health product based advertisements are instrumental in promoting select demand for a product or service vis a vis the health condition being discussed. Health based narrative setting thus classifies as involving the aspect of setting an idea or thought into the fragile and liquid thinking pattern of the reader. The story telling, idea plotting or idea piloting and weaving supporting references; all comprises the art of setting the narrative an effective manner. Especially with regard to health information, the narrative settings has been reviewed as involving the aspects of elaborating on the good and bad consequences of following a particular course of action (Sullivan, Leopoldina, 2021). The narratives and framing of peculiar health information with aid of storytelling identifies as one of the most adopted method of projecting and portraying a message (health information in this case) across a select audience. The sections below focus on the proximal and distal determinants of mechanics of health advertorial in developing economy perspective.

### **Proximal and distal determinants of Health Advertorial success**

In literal terms, the proximal determinants often involve the individual reader as an agency himself as well as the environment in which influence mapping is being undertaken. The distal correlates identify as the distinct uncertainties that shape up the opinion making and perception development with regard to state of health based opinion formation. The proximal correlates of health based opinion development in turn represent the neighboring as well as the core agentic (individual driven) influences whereas the distal influences on health based opinion development categorize as the distant and contextual influences that collectively impact the prospects for shaping the probability for desired health acceptance across masses (Hand, 2017). The construct operationalization with regard to health advertorials (Hand, 2017) regards the information twisting, information modeling and information suppression as vital to setting the communicative agenda (Krishna, Thompson, 2019). In case of diabetics for instance, not all natural fruits raise the glycemic level in blood yet the selective information mastery often creates such an impression. The classical ecological model of perception development (Gonzalez, Inesta,

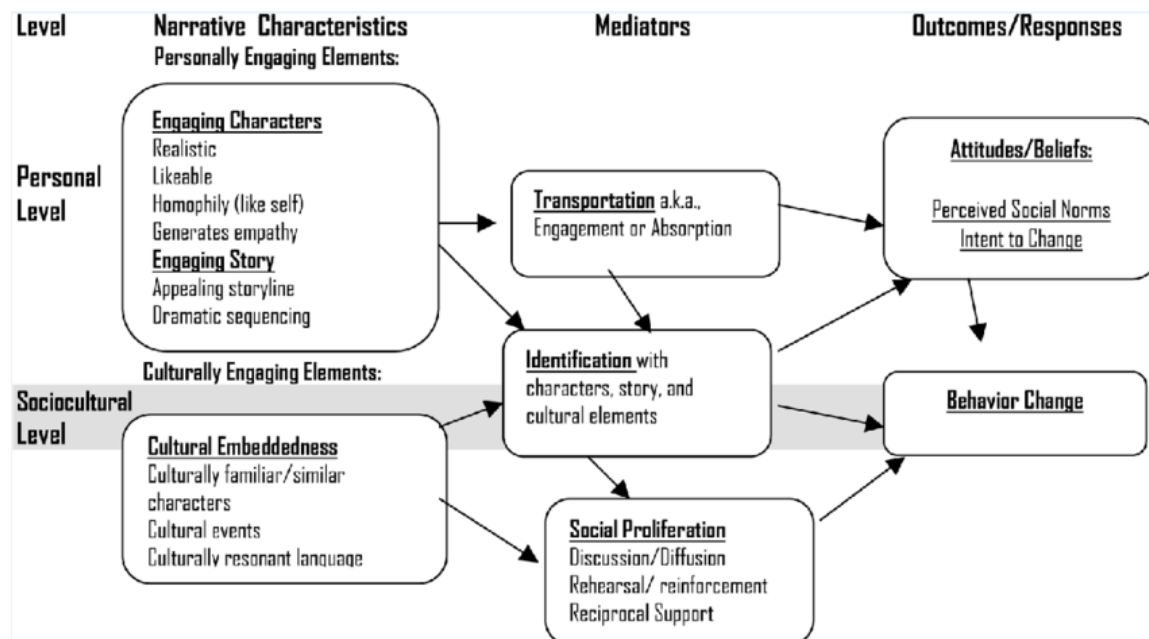
2016) concentrates on the processes between an individual and diverse levels of environment as defining the interactions across subsystems and resultant outcomes in form of individual embedment and prospective transformation in outlook. The classical Bronfenbrenner's five subsystems model (Gonzalez, Inesta, 2016) helps explain the influences on workability of the health advertorials in national and international perspective. The reader and his health beliefs (Watkins, Dunston, 2023) are susceptible to influences from microsystem (from individual himself), from meso system (from connections and social circles, publically available information and knowledge inventory across generations), from exo system (indirect environment), from macro system (existing social norms, mores and values) and chrono system (changes over the period of time). The 'bio-psychological individualistic' attributes have been interpreted as the individual driven health dispositions to develop themselves as more healthy, to adapt to health based life styles, sense of self health awareness, health harnessing potential and health capital. The possible 'proximal processes' enveloping the development of the habits (learning and unlearning) of viable life style has a lot to do with the proportion in which these overpower the psychological and cognitive enhancement. Some studies (Bielinski, Tomczynska, 2015) explore the health advertorial as involving the aspects of marketization of social perception and mass agenda setting exercise. The health advertorial (Green, Brock, 2000) supports the marketization agenda as this advances a peculiar and particular set of values and habits as against the usually accepted and better healthy ways of living and thinking. The individual reader's susceptibility to health over information (Torres, Brigg, 2007), to health based disguised and asymmetric information exchanges has always been observed as detrimental in over indulgence in being health conscious and over reactance to health based information exchanges.

### **Review of studies on theoretical frameworks**

Narrative setting, narrative communications and narrative transportation are inter related. A research (Kreuter, Storey, 2007) on narrative interpretation emphasizes the critical role of narrative in changing the course of reader's decision making. As such narratives (Torres, Brigg, 2007) constitutes the representation of select events that are inter connected, or can comprise characters that bar an identifiable structure that is bounded by space and time and may contain explicit or implicit message regarding the topic under discussion. Another meta analytical study (Winterbottom, Mooney, 2008) interprets the phenomenon as involving the story like proses that owe focus only on the elaboration of a certain specific series of event and seek to provide the appealing detail, attributes, characters or some characteristic plot with regard to problem in focus. The narrative establishment in media perspective has a larger history of setting the prerogative in line with promoted or postured information and crating implications for adoption of a particular habit. A research (Rahmanian, 2021) on subject of consumption narratives highlighted the critical role of narratives in self-perception articulation, in processing experiences and in conveying the meanings with regard to opinion formation regarding good or bad, regarding merits and de merits of the health information in particular. The study reviewed the research across aspects of manner of receiving of information by consumers, communication patterns of tacit knowledge by metaphor, consumer based creation of meaning and attributions of logic to information communicated in advertorials, consumer based sense making of the influences from the contingent aspects, consumer based maintenance and development of new identities. The research concluded that there is significant impact of narrative embedded stories on the consumer psyche and belief re assessment. Another research (Graaf, Sanders, 2016)

figured out the role of setting health narratives in health communications. The study observed the incidence of content derived health behavior aspirations as yielding a high emotional impact on the customer’s mindsets. The study observed that the print health narratives were more contingent in impact generation than the other media derived narratives. Another academic research (Flynn,Goldsmith, 1999) pointed to the narrative based subjective knowledge determination as a natural outcome of narrative transportation. The study across customer’s knowledge development measures adopted three point measures of objective knowledge, subjective knowledge and experiential knowledge to figure out the respective impact of knowledge being gained on the shaping of behavioral attributes. Another research (Larkey,Hecht, 2010) pointed to the health promotion interventions for specific cultural groups as incorporating the ideas of narrative theory, locating culture within narratives of cultural members and narratives as focal point for expressing and shaping health behavior. The study devised a functional model for culture centric narratives in health promotion based on persuasion and health promotion quotient. The study devised that narrative setting has multidisciplinary roots and involves an amalgam of ideas and paradigms form anthropology, psychology and communication and customer’s social construction through narrative exchanges. The study observed that narratives seek to organize the customer’s thoughts, seek to communicate and set a trend with regard to a peculiar pattern of ideas and offer an affinity to storytelling in a particular pattern. The study observed that cancer prevention and precautionary screening is usually promoted as a patient constructed story across health narratives. The study identified the narrative characteristics especially the engaging characters at personal level as shaping the scope for transportation of such stories, level of engagement or absorption, a characteristic identification with the pre told story, promotes social participation and finally leads to a perceived social norms and intent to change.

Figure 1: Narrative in Health Communications model

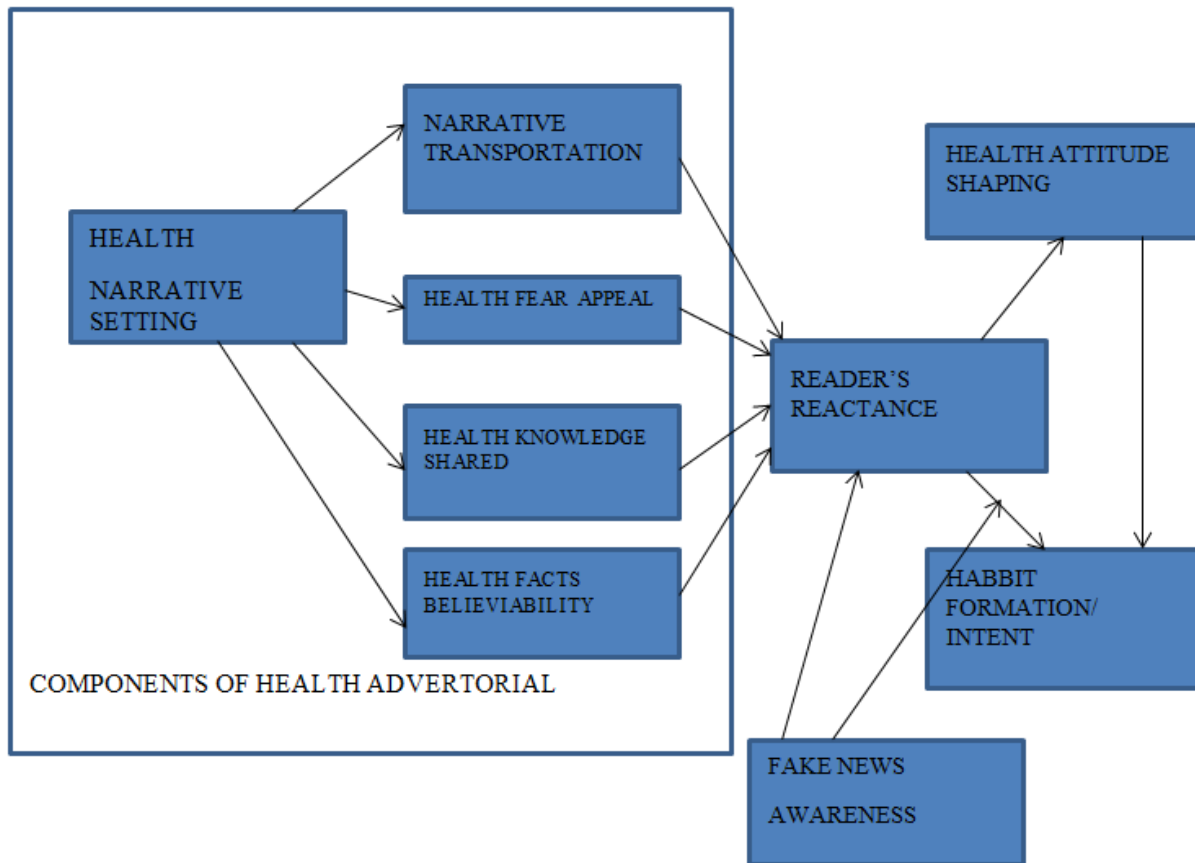


Source: (Larkey,Hecht, 2010)

A research (Pallai,Tran, 2019) pointed to the prevalence of extensive usage of storytelling in shaping the manner in which the community health is administered. The study across Minneapolis revealed the incidence of significant impact of preset and pre-determined story telling on the ways of thinking and actions with regard to health. The study predicted the incidence of significant impact of health based stories on change initiation across masses. Especially with regard to public drinking and community health programs on the matter, this approach has been leveraged extensively. The marketization of human values and marketization of human concerns and fast spreading global monetization agenda is inducing people to consume more. The mass reader's exposure to novel and new marketing practices has been observed as instrumental in shaping the market orientation across consumer mindsets. The direct effects of individual 'health based' materialistic aspirations has been observed as enhancing the ability of the consumer's mindset to gain market based appreciation instead of tinkering after existing product offering. The respective 'indirect' effects of 'health based' materialistic aspirations and access to subjective health knowledge, could be evident in terms of enhanced consumer ability to align with to branded health products and processes, increase in quantum of information consumption on usual basis, inclination with regard to marketed health goods and services, access to information in market brands decision making and strategy execution, market decision making without any significant delay in pace to market. Another research (Bielinski,Tomczynska, 2015) figured out the role of individual and institutional circulation of knowledge in and across social networks. The study deciphered the domination of economy over science and attributed neo liberal attitude towards knowledge creation. The study foresees the opinion that economic norms and values seem to supersede traditional ethos of social living. The study further explored the relationships across individualism, community's achievement orientation, money based fetishism, frequency of individual behavior and extent of prioritization of economic social roles versus the non-economic social roles. The study relied on a sample population of 801 respondents and observed that phenomenon witnessed marked rise in men vis a vis women respondents to the study.

## Conclusions

The health marketization is a global economic phenomenon which is influencing the consumption, production and consumer behavior with regard to health in manifold ways and means. The health marketization in itself involves multiple meanings and connotations. The study is desired as the marketization is bearing an irreversible socio-economic change across urban and rural communities, their life style, mores and social values as well as anthropological and sociological economic mores. The diverse frameworks, the proximal and distal aspects and the discourses on subject matter; all indeed point towards the incidence of significant impact of health based narrative setting on the shaping of narrative transportation, fueling the health based fear appeal, spread of selective health based knowledge and sharpening or suppressing the believability of health information. Hence the study proposes this flow of influences in health advertorial based market communication perspective in context of developing economy.



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