

When Consumers Tell Hate Stories: Narrative Frames as Predictors of Brand Hate Intensity

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Abstract

This study examines how narrative interpretations shape the intensity and forms of consumer brand hate. Drawing on a nationwide online experiment ($N = 1,302$), participants were exposed to three types of brand-misconduct narratives or evaluated a brand based on personal experience. Findings show that narrative framing significantly amplifies brand hate: threat-based interpretations are the strongest predictor of emotional, behavioral, active, and moral hate. Regression results demonstrate that narrative framing significantly predicts brand hate ($R = .152$, $p < .001$), with Threat ($\beta = .393$) and Immorality ($\beta = .334$) emerging as the strongest amplifiers of hostility across all dimensions. The absence of a narrative construction strongly predicted lower hate ($\beta = -.381$, $p < .001$). The study demonstrates that narrative meaning-making is a critical mechanism driving extreme negative brand responses and offers a new lens for understanding how consumers translate negative incidents into hostile actions.

Track: Consumer Behaviour