A Text Mining Study of Consumer Post-Exposure Narratives to a Racially-Themed Controversial Campaign: A Narrative Transportation Perspective

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Abstract: Controversial advertising is a popular advertising creative strategy and technique that can grab consumer attention, generate emotional responses, and cause attitude changes. Storytelling advertising campaigns with a strong racial equality theme can easily spark controversies in today's Woke culture, as a type of social justice movements for Black minorities. This study employs a one-shot pre-experimental design to collect consumers' narratives after watching a professionally-produced controversial racially-themed campaign by Pepsi. We rely on past research in narrative transportation and controversial advertising as our interpretive lens to analyze text mining results. A total of 61 participants were conveniently recruited to participate in this study. This study found that audience's gender, generation, and race/ethnicity can predict variations in terms of their negative/positive sentiments toward and perceptions about a racially-themed controversial ad. Discussions and implications are provided.

1.   Introduction

The Trump Presidency (2017-2021) has been perceived by Americans as an era with greater racial tension (McCammon, 2020). According to a survey conducted by NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll (2020) after the widespread national protest against the death of George Floyd, two-thirds of Americans have expressed that Trump has increased racial tension in the U.S., despite observable divides among political parties and ethnicities (McCammon, 2020). The repercussions of his rhetoric on COVID-19 reportedly contribute to hate crimes against Asian Americans even during Biden's Presidency (Shi, 2021; Sommerlad, 2021).

Caused by the police brutality in Minneapolis, Minnesota in May 2020, the death of George Floyd marks an important historical milestone in the mobilization of the public to pursue racial equalities in the U.S. (Cray & Morrison, 2020). This incident has spawned over 1,000 protests in the U.S. (Groppe & Phillips, 2020). These protests were mostly organized by #BlackLivesMatter (henceforth, BLM), originally established in 2003 as a social justice movement, to protest against the acquittal of George Zimmerman after his shooting death of Trayvon Martin in Miami Gardens, Florida (Black Lives Matter, n.d.; CNN Editorial Research, 2020). Research has found that the inappropriate use of force by the police has been the principal cause of death among young minority men in the U.S. (Edwards, Lee, & Esposito, 2019). In addition, if compared with their White counterparts, Black women are 1.4 times more likely to be killed by the police (Edwards et al., 2019).

Without considering the social milieu and public sentiments about police brutality against ethnic minorities in the U.S., Pepsi launched a video storytelling campaign in 2017, titled "Jump In" to express its support of racial equality and social justice issues. Pepsi claims that this campaign portrays "multiple lives, stories and emotional connections that show passion, joy, unbound and uninhibited moments" (Smith, 2017, n.p.). This racially-themed storytelling campaign (2:40 in length) describes Kendall Jenner who took part in an on-going BLM protest on the street after she walked away from her photo shoot to join a group of carnival-like protestors holding signs such as "Join the Conversation", "Love", and "Peace" (Batchelor & Hooton, 2017; Smith, 2017). In the end, Kendall Jenner handed a blue Pepsi can to one of the policeman in a supposedly intense stand-off situation, while the protestors cheer for her friendly interactions with a smiling policeman.

Imitating a similar historical event that describes the arrest of a 28-year-old protestor, Ieshia Evans in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (Smith, 2017), Pepsi has been criticized for the trivialization and commercialization of social justice protests (Batchelor & Hooton, 2017; Smith, 2017). Critics also accuse Pepsi of intentionally de-contextualizing actual police-protestor interactions in the past by removing often intense, violent, racial and historical relationships. Pepsi creates a controversy by mocking a similar situation by describing a social protest as fashionable, festive, and jovial, without considering the social and political significance of these "life-or-death" issues (Taylor, 2017, n.p.). Pepsi's marketing blunder was worsened by a rapid spread of negative publicity across various social media platforms (Reuters, 2017) and major news outlets (Amatulli, 2020). Despite these apparent disastrous outcomes for Pepsi, an important question arises: Does the audience respond similarly to a racially-themed campaign as shown in their post-exposure narratives? Given that a controversial storytelling campaign will have significant impacts on a company's branding outcomes (Lien & Chen, 2013), it is important to investigate whether consumers with dissimilar demographic background react to a controversial storytelling campaign in a different way?

2.   Literature Review and Research Questions

2.1   Controversial Storytelling Advertising

Controversial advertising is also known as "offensive advertising" (Christy & Haley, 2008; Gurrieri et al., 2016), "shockvertising" or "shock advertising" (Parry, Jones, Stern, & Robinson, 2013; Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cheerier, 2016), or even "incongruent mild disgust" ad (Dens, Pelsmacker, & Janssens, 2008). These terms imply that controversial advertising increases attention through messages incongruent with consumers' values, norms, and mental schemas. Compared with other creative tactics and strategies (such as sexual, comparative, or emotional appeals), controversial advertising has been claimed to be a less explored area (Gurrieri et al., 2016). Controversial advertising is defined by the extent, nature, and outcome of consumer reactions caused by its contents, context (Christy & Haley, 2008), media outlets, product types (Gurrieri et al., 2016), and culture (Prendergast, Ho, & Phau, 2002). Because of its strong managerial emphasis, existing controversial advertising research often focuses on whether consumers will be offended by advertising contents and whether these effects will decrease their attention and subsequent branding and sales outcomes. From the advertiser's perspective, a well-planned mild controversial advertising campaign can generate earned media impressions when

major media outlets and social media influencers offer free publicity. For example, the United Colors of Benetton's "Unhate" campaigns showing rivaling world leaders kissing each other successfully positions this company as a social conscious brand and as a strong opponent of the culture of hate and the "fear of other" (Platiau, 2011, n.p.). On the other hand, an accidental controversial campaign can damage a brand's image. For example, H&M's "Coolest Monkey in the Jungle" proves disastrous when a Black teenager is shown to wear a hooded top with that logo (Bartiromo, 2018).

Past research on controversial advertising executions have observed that provocative and offensive campaigns often generate negative attitudes toward the ad as a result of evoked negative emotions, in spite of increased attention (Arnaud, Curtis, & Waguespack, 2018). In today's Woke culture that emphasizes the uttermost importance of social justice and liberal progressive agenda (Foster, 2021, n.p.), consumers are more vocal and willing to share what they really feel about a racially-themed controversial campaign. Thanks to the conversation functions of many social media platforms, consumers' immediate responses to a controversial campaign will show their spontaneous elaboration with these offensive messages (Bartiromo, 2021). In response to the H&M campaign, a tweet by Nicaise Njiky from Quebec, Canada states: "@hm in case you didn't notice that black people aren't "monkey" just humans like others!!! Stop using silly pictures to make profit!#HM racist #H&Mfoolishness" (Bartiromo, 2021, n.p.). Another tweet by Tammygirl has even questioned the persuasive intention of H&M by criticizing "H&M didn't need to use a black child! They know how "monkey" has been historically used as a racial slur. I think these companies profit off of Black outrage on Twitter! This was intentional" (Bartiromo, 2021, n.p.).

Ample empirical research has conducted on the persuasive effects of controversial advertising campaigns on brand attitudes, ad liking, and memory (Bellman, Abdelmoety, Murphy, Arismendez, & Varane, 2018), brand recall and attitude (Dens et al., 2008), and brand experience, love, and loyalty (Kang & Yang, 2021). Unfortunately, most of these studies have not fully addressed the urgent issue of racially-themed contents by exploring how consumers will respond to these advertisements. Existing research on controversial advertising often focuses on nudity and sexual appeals, obscenity, or violent imagery (Bellman et al., 2018; Dens et al., 2008; Prendergast et al., 2002). Racially-themed advertising campaigns can provoke consumers to think about racial equality issues in society and deal with "socially sensitive" topics (Dens et al., 2008, p. 29) and can cause controversies as a result.

Additionally, while print advertisements have been used for controversial campaigns (Gurrieri et al., 2016), increasingly, the multi-modal and engaging video storytelling advertising has been adopted by advertisers to tell an emotionally engaging brand story. The exponential growth of YouTube, TikTok, and other video-dominant social media platforms has supported the need to study controversial video storytelling campaigns to examine their effects on consumer attention, emotional responses, and attitude changes. Unlike short pre-roll advertising on YouTube, full length, or longform, storytelling video advertising can make consumers feel that the brand resonates with their own personal life (Kim, Lloyd, & Cervellon, 2016). Storytelling video advertising is also found to be more effective than its straight-sell counterpart in generating favorable brand attitude and word-of-mouth sharing (Coker, Flight, & Baima, 2017).

2.2   Theories of Narrative Transportation

Storytelling advertising enables advertisers to use creative strategies and techniques ranging from dramatization, slice of life, and transformational ads (Escalas, 2004) to tell a brand story by delivering a strong emotional appeal about a brand. These long form video campaigns often include "an identifiable beginning, middle, and end that provides information about scene, characters, and conflict; raises unanswered questions or unresolved conflict; and provides resolution" (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007, p. 778) and is capable of telling a complete brand story. For example, Extra Gum's 2015 campaign, *Juan and Sarah*, describes a romantic story between two high school sweethearts to document the growth of their love, in spite of their long-distance relationship (Kang & Yang, 2021). This 2:00 storytelling campaign demonstrates the essential role Extra Gum has played in keeping their love growing and ends with the tagline, "Give Extra, Get Extra" (Kang & Yang, 2021).

The theory of narrative transportation postulates that consumers are transported into fictional circumstances as described in the ad, resulting in the reduction of their resistance to advertisers' persuasive intent, taking a peripheral route of processing (Kang & Yang, 2021), generating fewer counterarguments about these branded narratives (Brechman & Purvis, 2015; Escalas, 2004). Narrative transportation is defined as "a convergent process, where all mental systems and capacities become focused on events occurring in the narrative" (Green & Brock, 2000, p. 701). The Extended Transportation Imagery Model also confirms that narrative transportation has positive effects on consumers' affective response, positive thoughts, attitudes, intention, but negative effects on critical thoughts (Laer, Ruyster, Visconti & Wetzels, 2014).

However, while most brand storytelling campaigns aim to evoke favourable emotional responses to enhance brand image, a controversial advertising campaign is likely to increase "message scrutiny" when consumers are motivated to "engage in careful attention and thoughtful elaboration on a message" (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010, p. 30). Therefore, will narrative transportation continue to function even for the controversial Pepsi's campaign that has been criticized as "out-of-touch" (Amatulli, 2020), "misstep" (D'Addario, 2017), and "offensive" (Batchelor & Horton, 2017)? Unlike other types of storytelling campaigns, a controversial campaign can evoke strong and negative attitudes toward the ad, reduce consumers' receptivity to persuasive intents in the ad (Brechman & Purvis, 2015), generate more elaboration on advertising contents (Moyer-Gusé, 2008; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010), and decrease consumers' identification and involvement with the story characters and features (Moyer-Gusé, 2008; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010). On the basis of the above literature review, we propose our two research questions:

Research Question 1: What will be consumers' emotional responses after they are exposed to a racially-themed controversial storytelling campaign?

Research Question 2: What will consumers think of racial equality issues after they are exposed a racially-themed controversial storytelling campaign?

2.3   The Importance of Demographic Variables

Demographics have been studied to examine how consumers respond to controversial advertising campaigns. For example, Prendergast et al. (2002) and Phau and Prendergast (2001) compare how consumers in Singapore and Hong Kong respond to controversial advertising and

report that ads on sexually-transmitted diseases, dating services, and male underwear are perceived to be more offensive in Singapore than in Hong Kong. Additionally, other demographic characteristics (such as age, country of origin, education, gender, income, and religion) can also interact with products, media, and executions of controversial campaigns (Christy, 2006). Waller, Deshpande, and Erdogan (2013) recruit 930 university students from six countries (i.e., South Korea, Canada, India, Kazakhstan, Australia, and Turkey) and conclude that gender and religion predict how likely cross-cultural participants will be offended by violent images in the ads. Christy (2006) also observe that women, older age, higher education and income often represent the consumer segments most likely to be offended by sexually advertising messages. Huhmann and Mott-Stenerson (2008) observe that participants' ethnic identification and generation do not predict the number of ad-evoked cognitive responses.

Previous research has found that consumer perceptions of racial equality issues and social justice movements are affected by consumers' political ideologies (McCammon, 2020). For example, in the same NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll (2020), 41% Republicans think Trump actually decreases racial tension in the U.S., while 90% of Democrats and African Americans believe otherwise (McCammon, 2020). Another survey reports that ethnicity and age influence support of these issues. Although 65% of adult Americans support these racial injustice protests around the country, Black (92%) and young (18-29 years old) (72%) demographics are the strongest supporters (Saad, 2020). Additionally, about half of them feel very and somewhat connected with the causes for social justice (Long & McCarthy, 2020). The percentage is highest among Black (84%), 18-29 years old adults (72%), and Democrats (78%) (Saad, 2020). Overall, 53% adult Americans support that these movements can enhance public support for racial equality and social justice in society (Long & McCarthy, 2020). It is likely that, once consumers perceive the Pepsi campaign to be incongruent with their schemas, a high level of narrative transportation could result in intense cognitive processing to generate either positive or negative responses to the ad (Yoon, 2013). Additionally, other demographic variables are likely to influence how they will perceive the nature and the extent of controversies in a controversial campaign.

Combining both controversial advertising and narrative transportation research, we reason that consumer demographics are likely to interact with antecedents in the narrative transportation process (Laer et al., 2014). This postulation may help explain how consumers will respond differently to storytellers' chosen characters, temporal sequence of a plot, fictional and non-fictional stories in a racially-themed campaign, when their own demographics influence how they respond to and interact with these message elements. For example, an educated consumer who is concerned about racial inequalities in society is more likely to perceive Pepsi's Kendall Jenner campaign to be controversial, resulting in a different path of narrative transportation on related issues and subsequent persuasive outcomes. Therefore, we propose our third research question:

Research Question 3: Will consumers' demographics (such as age, gender, and ethnicity) affect the relationships stated in RQ1 and RQ2?

3.   Research Method

We employed a one-shot pre-experiment design that has been commonly used to test television commercials because it is "relatively simple and inexpensive" (Volchok, 2015, n.p.). Although

previous narrative advertising research has often used altered advertising messages to test the narrative transportation effects (Chiu, Hsieh, & Kuo, 2012; Escalas, 2004; Lien & Chen, 2013), we decided to use a professionally produced Pepsi campaign that was withdrawn due to controversies. This approach of using a real-world campaign as an experimental stimulus has been previously adopted by Escalas (2004) to study similar transportation effects.

A group of conveniently recruited participants were prompted to watch Pepsi's Kendall Jenner campaign after they read and signed the IRB-approved consent form. It took participants about 20 minutes to complete this post-test only study. After participants watched the campaign, they were asked to respond to the following open-ended question that is hosted in Question Pro: "Please share your experience after seeing the ad. Write down how you feel and what you think after seeing the ad below:". As a larger study that also includes other study variables, this paper reports text mining analyses of narratives when participants were asked to share what they think about this campaign after they saw the campaign as above. The questionnaire also includes a list of demographic questions.

4.   Sampling Method and Sample Characteristics

A total of 61 participants from the southwestern part of the U.S. were included in this study after removing non-valid cases. This location allows us to recruit non-White participants who are more sensitive to a racially-themed advertising campaign and issues related to racial equality and social justice. In our sample, 90.2% are Hispanics (N=55), while 9.8% are Whites (N=6).The lack of Black participants might be considered an advantage, due to their close affinity and strong support to BLM. Our sample is made up of 18 male (29.5%) and 43 female (70.5%) participants. The average age of our participants is 23.77years old (SD=5.92). These participants came from three generations on the basis of their age brackets: 41 Generation Zers (born after 1994), 19 Generation Yers (born between 1981 and 1994), and Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964). The majority of our sample has received college or post-graduate education (N=54, 96.4%) and hold either a full-time or part-time job (N=46, 82.2%) (Refer to Table 1).

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	18	29.5%
	Female	43	70.5%
Generation	Baby Boomers	1	1.6%
	Generation Y	19	31.1%
	Generation Z	41	67.2%
Race/Ethnicity	Hispanics	55	90.2%
	Whites	6	9.8%
Marital Status	Single	55	90.2%
	Married	6	9.8%
Employment	Full-Time	15	26.8%

Status	Part-Time	31	55.4%
	Not Employed	9	16.1%
	Retired	1	1.6%
Educational Level	High School Graduates	2	3.6%
	Some College	48	85.7%
	College and Above	6	10.7%

4.1   Using Text Mining to Analyze Post-Exposure Narratives

We employed a text mining method to analyze participants' post-exposure narratives. We relied on *QDA Miner* and its affiliated *WordStat 7* programs to identify recurrent words, phrases, and thematic topics. This computational text mining technique enables researchers to conduct discourse-based analysis to "induce some constructions from large unannotated corpora" (Touileb & Salaway, 2014, p. 634).

Among many text mining techniques, the identification of keywords, key phrases, and topics is mostly commonly employed. For example, Touri and Koteyko (2015) use both keywords and concordances techniques to examine repetitive patterns in discourses "that exhibit deeper cultural values and are more likely to shape the receivers' interpretations" (p. 601). For example, *QDA Miner* and *WordStat 7* allow the identification of keywords with the highest number of frequencies to reflect the most important and salient and noticeable linguistic patterns to "help 'diagnose' and 'nominate' central ideas" found in the discourses (p. 605) (Touri & Koteyko, 2015).

5.   Findings

5.1.   Findings from Keyword Analysis

Using *QDA Miner* and its affiliated content analysis program, *WordStat 7*, we have generated over 100 keywords from participants' post-exposure narratives. These keywords represent their emotional responses after watching Pepsi's Kendall Jenner campaign. For example, keywords such as "good" (22.95% of the cases in the corpus, TF-IDF=8.9), "protest" (19.67%, TF-IDF=9.2), "enjoy" (9.84%, TF-IDF=7.1%), "great" (9.84%, TF-IDF=6.0), "controversy" (8.2%, TF-IDF=5.4), "cool" (4.92%, TF-IDF=6.5), "fun" (4.92%, TF-IDF=3.9), "happy" (3.28%, TF-IDF=4.5%), and "strong" (4.92%, TF-IDF=3.9) (Refer to Table 2). According to Rajaraman and Ullman (2011), TF-IDF is a metric to measure the importance of the extracted word in the set of documents in the narrative corpus. Therefore, these extracted keywords have shown that both positive and negative sentiments can be evoked by watching a controversial Pepsi campaign.

Table 2. List of Selected Keywords Extracted from the Corpus

Extracted Keywords	Frequency	Number of Cases	% of Cases	TF-IDF
Feel	35	21	34.43%	16.2
Good	14	14	22.95%	8.9
Protest	13	12	19.67%	9.2

Enjoy	7	6	9.84%	7.1
Unity	7	6	9.84%	7.1
Great	6	6	9.84%	6.0
Controversy	5	5	8.20%	5.4
Cool	5	3	4.92%	6.5
Gender	5	4	6.56%	5.9
Honestly	5	5	8.20%	5.4
Controversial	4	4	6.56%	4.7
Fight	4	4	6.56%	4.7
Unite	4	4	6.56%	4.7
Easy	3	3	4.92%	3.9
Fun	3	3	4.92%	3.9
Happy	3	2	3.28%	4.5
Honest	3	3	4.92%	3.9
Inspire	3	2	3.28%	4.5
Strong	3	3	4.92%	3.9

These extracted keywords demonstrate a variety of emotional responses to Pepsi's controversial campaign. While the keywords, "controversy" (TF-IDF=5.4), "controversial" (TF-IDF=4.7), and "protest" (TF-IDF=9.2) have appeared in these post-exposure narratives, we have also observed positive keywords, "good" (TF-IDF=8.9), "cool" (TF-IDF=6.5), "great" (TF-IDF=6.0), "fun" (TF-IDF=3.9), "happy" (TF-IDF=4.5), and "strong" (TF-IDF=3.9), suggesting positive emotional responses can be generated by even a controversial campaign. The following Word Cloud figure visualizes these findings (Refer to Figure 1).

Figure 1. Word Cloud of Most Salient Keywords (after Removing "Ad", "Pepsi", and "Commercial")

5.2   Results from Key Phrases Analysis

One of the techniques in text mining is to extract recurring key phases from consumers' post-exposure narratives. According to the user manual (Provalis Research, 1989-2004), the phrase extraction function can provide a different perspective from what keyword extraction is unable to accomplish. The identification of idioms and phrases can be carefully examined to accurately represent what these repetitive key phrases in the narratives mean. In the *WordStat 7* program,

the phrase extraction function allows researchers to perform co-occurrence and comparison analysis (Provalis Research, 1989-2004). As demonstrated in Table 3 below, some of the recurring phrases include "Good Intention" (6.56% of the cases in the corpus, TF-IDF=4.7), "[Lot] Have Controversy" (6.56%, TF-IDF=4.7), "Brave Enough to Unite" (3.28%, TF-IDF=3.0), "Bring Attention" (3.28%, TF-IDF=3.0), "Good Message" (3.28%, TF-IDF=3.0%), "Miss the Mark" (3.28%, TF-IDF=3.0), suggesting consumers are fully aware of the persuasive intent of this campaign (i.e., "good intention", "bring attention", "achieve some kind [have] victory"). While consumers are overall positive about Pepsi's campaign, they are also aware of its controversies and feel the campaign "miss[es] the mark." Additionally, on the basis of the narrative transportation theory, we observe a controversial campaign can cause consumers to elaborate on the advertising message. For example, key phrases such as "spread peace", "united and fight", "message have unity", "achieve some kind [have] victory" imply that consumers do think about what this controversial campaign aims to communicate (Refer to Table 3). The following Word Cloud figure visualizes these findings (Refer to Figure 2).

Extracted Key Phrases	Frequency	Number of Cases	% of Cases	TF-IDF
Good Intention	4	4	6.56%	4.7
[Lot] Have Controversy	4	4	6.56%	4.7
Achieve Some Kind [Have]Victory	2	2	3.28%	3.0
Brave Enough to Unite	2	2	3.28%	3.0
Bring Attention	2	2	3.28%	3.0
Civil Unrest	2	2	3.28%	3.0
Classical Beautiful	2	2	3.28%	3.0
Cool Drink	2	1	1.64%	3.6
Good Message	2	2	3.28%	3.0
Message Have Unity	2	2	3.28%	3.0
Miss the Mark	2	2	3.28%	3.0
Protester Have Achieve Some Kind	2	2	3.28%	3.0
Spread Peace	2	1	1.64%	3.6
Unite and Fight	2	2	3.28%	3.0

Figure 2. Word Cloud of Most Salient Key Phrases

5.3   Findings from Topic Modeling Analysis

WordStat 7 also enables us to discover hidden thematic/topical structure of participants' narratives by using both natural language processing and factor analysis with Varimax rotation (Provalis Research, 1989-2014). This function generates a word frequency matrix and then conducts Varimax rotation to generate a list of topics (Provalis Research, 1989-2014). We relied on a widely used Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) technique (Lavenir & Bourgeois, 2017) to identify a set of words that semantically converge and cluster to form a salient topic. Compared with the conventional content analysis method of manual human coding and topic identification, computational and automatic topic modeling techniques enable researchers to avoid the problems of "poor quality topics" (Mimno, Talley, Leenders, Wallach, & McCallum, 2011, p. 262). We extracted three topics from participants' narratives after they had watched the Pepsi's campaign. These topics include "Positive Sentiments (toward the Pepsi campaign)" (Coherence=.622, 24.23% of the total cases), "Racial Equality Issues" (Coherence=.551, 26.3% of the total cases), and "Negative Sentiments (toward the Pepsi campaign) (Coherence=.520, 14.75% of the total cases) (Refer to Table 4 below).

Table 4. Result of Topic Modeling Analysis

Extracted Topic	Keywords	Coherence	Frequency	% of Cases
Positive Sentiments (toward the Pepsi campaign)	current; happy; big; strong; cool; interest; fun; honestly; overwhelming; good; great; happy	.622	43	26.23%
Racial Equality Issues	race; unite; ethnicity; protest; revelation; officer; movement	.551	37	26.23%
Negative Sentiments (toward the Pepsi campaign)	controversy; controversial; angry; insensitive; struggle; confusing; poorly; dislike	.520	13	14.75%

5.3.1   Variations in Topic Modelling and Consumer Demographics

Previous controversial advertising research has studied the roles of consumer demographics on their responses to these offensive messages (Christy, 2006), even though their effects seem inconclusive (Huhmann & Mott-Stenerson, 2008). Using Chi-square statistics, we observe participants' gender, race/ethnicity, and generation can explain how they will respond to a controversial storytelling advertising campaign. Female consumers hold more negative attitudes toward the controversial Pepsi campaign (Mean $_{male}$=542.30 vs. Mean $_{female}$=308.48, χ^2=105.072***) and are more concerned about racial equality issues described in the Pepsi campaign (Mean $_{male}$=249.46 vs. Mean $_{female}$=341.54, χ^2=73.081***). Our empirical data also confirm our speculation that minority consumers will be more be more negative about a controversial campaign (Mean $_{Hispanics}$=133.13 vs. Mean $_{Whites}$=117.65, χ^2=22.490***) and feel

more strongly about racial equality issues (Mean $_{Hispanics}$=335.85 vs. Mean $_{Whites}$=147.06, χ^2=76.521***). Interestingly, we noted that Hispanic consumers hold tremendously positive sentiments toward this racially-themed storytelling campaign (Mean $_{Hispanics}$=396.37 vs. Mean $_{Whites}$=88.24, χ^2=100.156***). In terms of the effects of participants' age/generation, Gen Y consumers hold overwhelmingly positive sentiments toward Pepsi's campaign (Mean $_{Gen\ Y}$=707.89 vs. Mean $_{Gen\ Z}$=217.91, χ^2=192.316***). Younger consumers (such as Gen Z) hold more negative sentiments toward the campaign, as expected (Mean $_{Gen\ Y}$=116.49 vs. Mean $_{Gen\ Z}$=138.67, χ^2=23.074***) (Refer to Table 5).

Table 5. Variations in Consumers' Responses to the Pepsi Campaign among Different Demographic Segments

Gender	Female [b c]	Male [b c]	Chi-Square Value [a]
Negative Sentiments (toward the Pepsi campaign)	132.21	130.15	22.384***
Positive Sentiments (toward the Pepsi campaign)	308.48	542.30	105.072***
Racial Equality Issues	341.54	249.46	73.081***

Race/Ethnicity	Hispanics [b c]	Whites [b c]	Chi-Square Value [a]
Negative Sentiments (toward the Pepsi campaign)	133.13	117.65	22.490***
Positive Sentiments (toward the Pepsi campaign)	396.37	88.24	100.156***
Racial Equality Issues	335.85	147.06	76.521***

Generation	Baby Boomers [b c]	Gen Y [b c]	Gen Z [b c]	Chi-Square Value [a]
Negative Sentiments (toward the Pepsi campaign)	0	116.49	138.67	23.074***
Positive Sentiments (toward the Pepsi campaign)	0	707.89	217.91	192.316***
Racial Equality Issues	0	322.58	316.96	69.535***

Notes:

[a] * p<.05   ** p<.01   *** p<.001

[b] Rate per 10,000 words

[c] Minimum Frequency=2

6.   Discussion

Controversial advertising has been a well-researched area (Crosier & Erdogan, 2001; Huhmann & Mott-Stenerson, 2008; Prendergast et al., 2002), with topics ranging from consumers' complaint behaviors (Crosier & Erdogan, 2001), media contextual factors (Prendergast et al., 2002) and advertising messages (Huhmann & Mott-Stenerson, 2008). Despite many intriguing findings of these studies, the rapid ascent of video storytelling campaigns in social media platforms has empowered advertisers to tell their brand stories with a long form format. Long form videos have become common in the digital advertising landscape and are characterized by the ability to tell a complete brand story with "a beginning, middle, and end" (IAB, 2009, p. 5). As a result, this study proposes that controversial advertising should also be examined by understanding the mechanisms of the narrative transportation construct on the causes, processes, and outcomes of narrative persuasion in these storytelling campaigns. In the following discussions, we will interpret our findings by answering what consumers' emotional responses are after participants watched a racially-themed controversial storytelling campaign (RQ1), what consumers think of racial equality issues after they are exposed a racially-themed controversial storytelling campaign when they are transported into the campaign to elaborate on racial equality issues (RQ2), and whether their demographics can account for how consumers respond to RQ1 and RQ2 above (RQ3).

7.   The Effects of Racially-Themed Controversial Campaigns on Narrative
        Transportation

This empirical text mining study aims to understand consumers' responses to a controversial storytelling advertising campaign and examines how this type of campaign continues to generate narrative transportation effects as demonstrated in their post-exposure narratives. Digressing from traditional controversial advertising research, contributions of this study lie in the inclusion of the narrative transportation construct in controversial advertising research. Extant research in this area has mainly explored the effects of different controversial appeals on consumers' attitudes and emotions (Arnaud et al., 2018) and elaboration after exposure (Huhmann & Mott-Stenerson, 2008). However, most of these studies rely on print ads without considering the advent of long form video storytelling ads. Findings from our study show that, when consumers are exposed to a controversial Pepsi campaign that tells a brand story about the brand's role in a BLM protest, both positive and negative effects can be evoked once consumers are transported to the fictional circumstance in the ad. We speculate that, once consumers are fully immersed in the controversial racially-themed contents, they are provided with an opportunity to elaborate on

these important social issues. Unlike previous controversial advertising research that claims only negative impacts on advertising effectiveness (Bellman et al., 2018; Dens et al., 2008), a controversial campaign with its long form storytelling capabilities can elicit positive sentiments toward the campaign as demonstrated in our lists of extracted keywords, key phrases, and topics. In other words, a controversial advertising campaign may not be completely detrimental to an advertiser.

To answer our second research question, we observe that a controversial campaign does not mean that consumers will not be transported into branded narratives. The assumption that controversial campaigns are bad for a brand seems to be deducted from past storytelling advertising research that often relies on entertaining branded contents to persuade consumers by transporting them to an enjoyable fictional world where the advertised brand is used. For most advertisers, this is the persuasive intent Pepsi had in mind when creating its Kendall Jenner campaign. Borrowing from the propositions from the Entertainment Overcoming Resistance Model (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010), a controversial advertising campaign is likely to generate more counter-arguments to explain the narrative persuasion process in a health campaign. Our text mining of participants' post-exposure narratives confirm that consumers conduct more elaboration on important racial equality issues. Despite its seeming anomaly in the narrative advertising literature, Huhmann and Mott-Stenerson's (2008) print-ad-only experiment found that a controversial ad does increase the number of cognitive responses and ratings of elaborate processing when compared with a non-controversial ad. It is likely that exposure to a thought-provoking controversial storytelling Pepsi campaign can provoke consumers to think about racial inequality and social injustice problems.

8.   The Explanatory Roles of Consumer Demographics

Demographics have been found to be important predictors of how consumers will respond to controversial advertising. Our empirical findings confirm that gender, race/ethnicity, and generation provide a consistent explanation of these variations in their post-exposure narratives. In line with past controversial advertising literature (Christy, 2006; Dens et al., 2008; Waller et al., 2013), female participants are more likely to be offended and are more negative about a racially-themed controversial storytelling campaign. However, women are more likely to generate thoughts on racial equality and civil protest issues than men.

Race/ethnicity is an important demographic variable in understanding whether participants will respond to a racially-themed campaign differently. Our text mining data observe that non-Hispanic White participants are more lukewarm to a racially-themed campaign, when compared with their Hispanic counterparts. Non-Hispanic Whites have lower negative and positive sentiments toward the Pepsi campaign. However, positive sentiments toward the Pepsi campaign do not mean that, when consumers are fully transported into racially-themed contents, they will not elaborate on racial equality issues. Hispanic participants continue to elaborate on racial equality issues after their exposure, in spite of their positive sentiments. Furthermore, younger Gen Z consumers are less positive about Pepsi's ad when compared with Gen Yers. However, exposure to the campaign leads to their elaboration on racial equality issues, regardless of their sentiments toward the campaign. Our findings contradict the lack of ethnic identification and generation effects in Huhmann and Mott-Stenerson's (2008) study that uses two nude male print ad images to elicit consumer responses. We speculate that it is likely that the long form

storytelling advertising offers consumers a different exposure experience to evoke their emotional responses. Additionally, racially-themed messages particularly resonate with participants with different race and generational backgrounds.

9.   Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical contributions to this study lie in our digression from existing narrative and controversial advertising research by investigating the effects of controversial branded narratives using a long form storytelling format on consumers with different demographic background. First, many of the studies on narrative transportation have often focused on the favorable emotional benefits that connect consumers to the brand. These studies, however, often ignored that narrative transportation may also be generated when consumers are exposed to racially-themed controversial branded contents. Moyer-Gusé and Nabi (2010) report that successful transportation into a health message can result in generating more counter-arguments, suggesting that the relationship between narrative transportation and cognitive responses relies on the nature of messages. This gap in the literature has often ignored whether a controversial video storytelling campaign could generate a high level of transportation in provoking cognitive activities to elaborate on controversial racial contents. The text mining of participants' post-exposure narratives support these relationships.

Second, our study has also benefited from the exploration and inclusion of consumer demographics as antecedents in the narrative persuasion process in two areas. First, the controversies caused by the Kendall Jenner campaign suggest that while consumers generally respond to a controversial advertising campaign, different types of sentiments are evoked among different demographic characteristics. Additionally, although transportation into the controversial Pepsi campaign is successful, female, Hispanic, and younger consumers conduct more cognitive processing to elaborate on racial equality issues. Our study helps advance the understanding of how the narrative transportation mechanism works in a controversial branded contents situation.

Third, past narrative advertising often relies on emotionally charged advertising that depict a product in a favorable and positive light to enhance the level of narrative transportation experienced by story-receivers/consumers (Lares et al., 2014). However, contrary to what existing literature may expect, a controversial advertising campaign may similarly transport consumers into the fictional BLM protest depicted in Pepsi's campaign, yet such a transportation may end up by generating more counterarguments.

10.   Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations should be acknowledged and considered when interpreting results in this study. First of all, the study results should not be over-generalized to other product types with different involvement levels (Huhmann & Mott-Stenerson, 2008) and other advertising platforms (Prendergast et al., 2002) in different countries. We have limited our study to examine the traditionally low-involvement product (i.e., soft drink) in a controversial context in a U.S. context.

Second, we have limited our analyses to use consumers' demographics as explanatory variables. Additionally, our sample is heavily tilted toward Hispanic participants. However, their prior exposure to this Pepsi campaign, existing attitudes toward BLM and racial inequality

issues, political ideology, among others may also influence their responses to this campaign. Future research should examine the moderation or mediation effects of these important variables.

Third, we have only examined ad-induced emotional responses (Lien & Chen, 2013) and elaboration on racial equality issues in this study. However, variables such as self-brand connection (Lien & Chen, 2013), the level of story elements (Chiu et al., 2012), perceived persuasive intents, parasocial interaction, and personal relevance (Nabi & Green, 2015), purchase intention of the advertised product after ad exposure (Brechman & Purvis, 2015; Chiu et al., 2012), may account for the relationships examined in this study.

Fourth, we have intentionally selected a controversial campaign launched in 2017, instead of more recent campaigns. We reason that the lag of time may allow our participants to respond to the campaign on its contents only, without being affected by on-going negative media publicity associated with a current campaign.

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