

Department of Marketing



Research Seminars Series | January 16th, 1-3 pm | AD 0.090

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Significant Objects:

How Meaningful Narratives Enhance Symbolic Value through Eudaimonic Appreciation

Abstract: The consumption of fictional narratives is a sought after, pleasurable experience, as evidenced by the multibillion-dollar narrative-based entertainment industry. Narratives range in the extent to which they feature meaningful thematic content, or the degree to which they explore questions pertaining to broader life themes such as significant human relationships and personal challenge. Such story content is prevalent but has been underexplored. The current work examines how narratives featuring meaningful themes create value for objects depicted in the narrative. Across five studies, we demonstrate that transportation into a meaningful narrative evokes eudaimonic appreciation, defined as feelings associated with well-being and contemplation of significant ideas. As a result, the object depicted in the story is transformed into a symbol or representation of the meaningful idea communicated by the narrative, enhancing its value. We also show that this effect is stronger for objects that are central to the narrative plot and those purchased for the self as opposed to as a gift.