

Phenomenological Exploration of Consumer Experiences and Perceptions of University Branding Through Media Advertising in Sarawak

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Abstract: *This phenomenological study explores consumer experiences and perceptions of university branding through media advertising in Sarawak. With increasing competition in the higher education sector, universities rely on media advertising to enhance brand image and attract prospective students. However, little is known about how consumers interpret these messages within Sarawak's unique cultural and socio-economic landscape. Using a phenomenological approach, this research examines the lived experiences of consumers and their perceptions of media advertising for university branding. Focus group interviews and thematic analysis uncover the emotions, motivations, and interpretations associated with these advertisements. The findings reveal varying levels of engagement, ranging from alignment and appropriation to alienation and critique. Emotional attachment to advertisements is contingent upon their resonance with personal values and cultural expectations. Participants rejected elements that contradicted societal norms, emphasizing the need for cultural sensitivity in university branding. This study contributes to consumer behavior and advertising literature by providing insights into media advertising for university branding in Sarawak. The findings offer valuable implications for universities and marketers seeking to optimize their advertising strategies and connect with target audiences effectively.*

Keywords: consumer experiences, media advertising, phenomenological study, Sarawak, university branding

1. Introduction

The interpretation of media content plays a critical role in various disciplines, particularly in education and marketing (Bransford et al., 2000; Solomon et al., 2019). Early research on media interpretation emphasized the active role of audiences in constructing meaning (Iser, 1978; Morley, 1980; Silverstone, 1994; Ang, 1985). However, these studies often overlooked the cognitive mechanisms involved in comprehension. More recent research integrates cognitive processes into media interpretation, highlighting the importance of selective attention, comprehension, and memory in shaping consumer responses (Zillmann & Brosius, 2000).

Heideggerian phenomenology provides a valuable theoretical framework for examining how individuals engage with and interpret media messages (Heidegger, 1962; Gadamer, 1975). This approach underscores the active involvement of individuals in constructing meaning, shaped by their cultural background, lived experiences, and cognitive processes (Silverstone, 1994;

Ang, 1985). Furthermore, Heideggerian phenomenology recognizes the reciprocal relationship between individuals and their socio-cultural environment, reinforcing the concept of the hermeneutic circle of understanding.

In marketing, consumer interpretations of advertisements significantly influence the effectiveness of branding strategies (Stern, 1993; Scott, 1994; Thompson, 1997; Wilson et al., 2003). Research has explored consumer engagement with marketing media across different platforms, including print advertising, digital marketing, and physical retail spaces (Wilson, 2011; Wilson et al., 2003; Wilson et al., 2014). Findings indicate that socio-cultural factors play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions, reinforcing the need for culturally aligned marketing campaigns (Deighton & Grayson, 1995; Holt, 2004).

Despite extensive research on consumer behavior and media interpretation, studies on university branding advertisements, particularly within the Malaysian context, remain scarce. In Sarawak, a unique socio-cultural landscape presents distinct challenges and opportunities for university branding efforts. However, little is known about how prospective students interpret and engage with branding messages disseminated through digital platforms such as YouTube. A phenomenological approach offers an opportunity to explore these interpretations by examining the lived experiences of audiences interacting with university branding advertisements (Solomon et al., 2019; Bransford et al., 2000).

By building upon existing research and integrating Heideggerian phenomenology, this study aims to deepen the understanding of consumer engagement with university branding advertisements. Specifically, it investigates the underlying meanings, emotions, and motivations associated with these advertisements, as well as the socio-cultural factors influencing audience interpretations. This research contributes to the broader discourse on media advertising and consumer psychology, offering insights that can inform more effective university branding strategies.

2. Methodology

This study employed a conceptual framework based on Wilson's (2009) model (see Figure 1), which delineates the cognitive stages involved in audience interpretation of media. The framework comprises five key stages: absorption, anticipation, articulation, alignment, and alienation. By integrating this framework, the study sought to elucidate participants' tacit knowledge and reactions to marketing narratives, thereby shedding light on their levels of understanding, alignment, appropriation, or alienation with the media content.

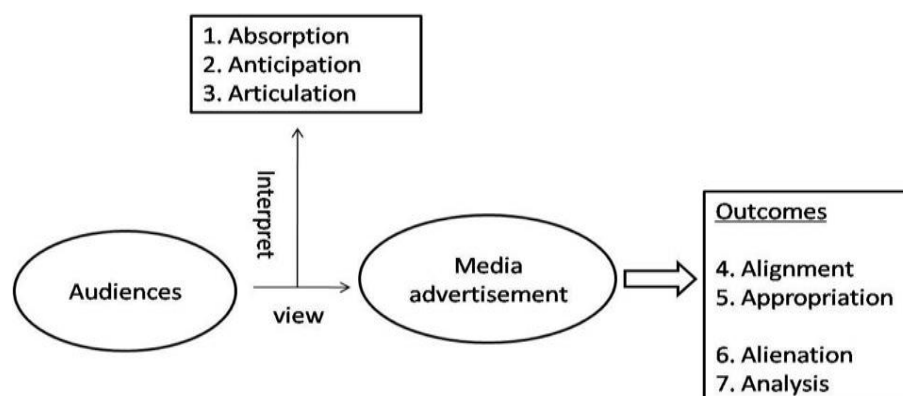


Figure 1: Preliminary conceptual model to interpret Audience's Cognitive Activity when viewing media advertisement by Wilson (2009)

To examine these cognitive responses, interpretive phenomenology was adopted as the research methodology (Solomon et al., 2019; Bransford et al., 2000). The phenomenological approach enables researchers to explore the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals in their interactions with university branding advertisements. This approach extends beyond surface-level analysis by uncovering the underlying meanings, emotions, and interpretations attributed to these advertisements. A deeper understanding of participants' lived experiences and cognitive processes provides valuable insights for marketers and advertisers seeking to enhance audience engagement and refine branding strategies.

The data collection methodology adhered to the interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) framework proposed by Smith et al. (2021). Focus groups were selected as the primary research method due to their effectiveness in eliciting immediate responses and capturing collective perceptions. The target population comprised Form 5 students or SPM leavers intending to pursue higher education in Sarawak. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure participant relevance and exposure to corporate videos and advertisements of universities, thereby enhancing the validity of findings.

The research instruments consisted of structured interview guides and focus group questions designed to capture the depth and complexity of participants' experiences with university branding advertisements. The selection of video materials followed a rigorous curation process, with advertisements sourced from the official YouTube channels of three reputable private universities in Sarawak: University of Technology Sarawak (UTS), Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak (SWINBURNE), and Curtin University Malaysia (CURTIN). This selection criterion aimed to ensure the relevance of media content and accurately reflect the branding elements and strategic messaging employed by these institutions.

The data analysis process followed the seven-stage IPA procedure outlined by Smith et al. (2021), which includes transcription, reading and rereading, initial noting, development of emergent themes, identification of thematic connections, case-by-case analysis, and cross-case pattern identification. To ensure reliability, inter-rater reliability measures were implemented, whereby both the researcher and supervisor independently analyzed the transcripts. Any discrepancies in thematic interpretation were resolved through discussions grounded in the conceptual framework. Content validity was maintained by deriving interview questions from the theoretical framework and subjecting them to expert review, ensuring methodological rigor and alignment with established research paradigms.

3. Findings

Analysis of the focus group transcripts led to the identification of fifteen master themes, illustrating the diverse ways in which participants engaged with media advertising. These themes spanned a spectrum of audience experiences, ranging from complete immersion—where participants were fully absorbed in the content—to partial engagement and disengagement, where individuals connected with only specific aspects of the narrative or exhibited a lack of interest (Figure 2). The findings underscore the dynamic nature of audience responses to media advertising and emphasize the significance of accounting for individual differences in engagement levels (Figure 3).

The analysis further uncovered themes related to participants' interactions with the hermeneutic circle of understanding. While some participants successfully connected various narrative elements and articulated a coherent interpretation of the advertising messages, others

encountered difficulties in synthesizing the storyline and extracting meaningful insights (Figure 4).

The study also identified moments of alignment (Figure 5), wherein participants either fully or partially resonated with the advertisement's narrative, finding it reflective of their personal experiences, values, or lifestyle (Figure 6). Conversely, instances of alienation emerged, as some participants felt disconnected from the content (Table 1) and provided critical feedback or recommendations for improvement (Table 2). These findings highlight the nuanced and subjective nature of audience engagement with university branding advertisements, offering valuable implications for advertisers seeking to optimize their messaging strategies.

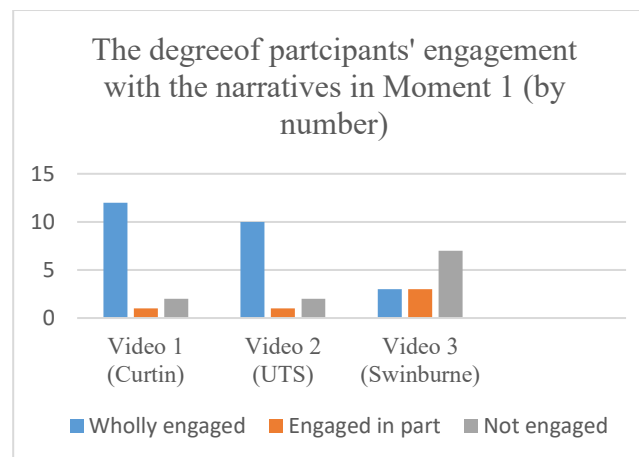


Figure 2: Degrees of engagement with the narratives in Moment 1

Figure 2 illustrates participants' cognitive engagement with the three university branding videos, representing the initial phase of meaning interpretation. Engagement levels were categorized into three distinct master themes: wholly engaged, engaged in part, and not engaged at all.

The first master theme, "Wholly Engaged," captures participants who exhibited full immersion in the video content. These individuals sought an escape from reality, projecting themselves into the world portrayed on screen. This deep engagement was driven by captivating narrative elements, visual appeal, and emotional resonance. The analysis revealed that 12 participants were wholly engaged with the Curtin video, 10 with the UTS video, and 3 with the Swinburne video.

The second master theme, "Engaged in Part," reflects participants who connected with specific elements of the videos but did not experience full immersion. While they displayed interest in certain aspects, their engagement was not sustained throughout the entire narrative. The study found that one participant was partially engaged with the Curtin video, one with the UTS video, and three with the Swinburne video.

The third master theme, "Not Engaged at All," pertains to participants who did not engage meaningfully with the advertised content. This disengagement stemmed from various factors, including lack of relevance, weak narrative appeal, or limited personal connection to the branding message. A total of 11 participants fell into this category, with two disengaged from the Curtin video, two from the UTS video, and seven from the Swinburne video.

These findings underscore the varying degrees of audience engagement with university branding advertisements and highlight the importance of crafting compelling, culturally resonant, and emotionally engaging content to maximize audience connection.

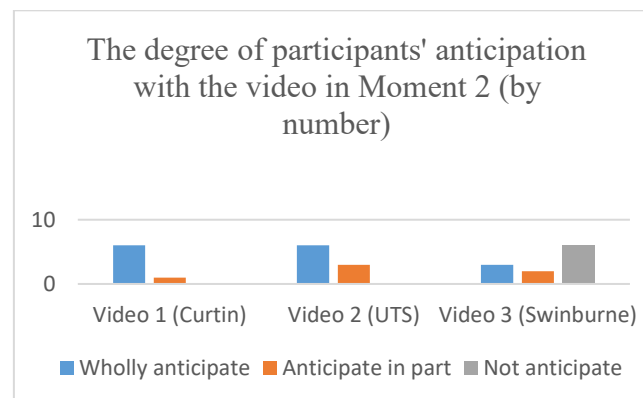


Figure 3: Degrees of anticipation with the narratives in Moment 2

When consumers engage with advertised content, they undergo a complex process of meaning construction and interpretation, influenced by their expectations and prior knowledge. This process involves assessing whether the content aligns with their anticipated narrative structure and thematic elements. Wilson (2011) emphasizes the significance of spatio-temporal factors in shaping audience understanding. In this study, participants' expectations of university branding advertisements were shaped by their familiarity with the genre. These expectations were categorized into three levels: content wholly meeting expectations, content partially meeting expectations, and content not meeting expectations at all. Figure 3 visually represents these levels of anticipation, classified into three master themes: wholly anticipate, anticipate in part, and not anticipate at all.

The first master theme, "Content Wholly Met Expectations," refers to cases where participants' expectations were fully met. Participants expressed satisfaction, indicating a strong alignment between their anticipated narrative and the actual content presented. This alignment suggests that the advertisements effectively conveyed messages consistent with audience expectations. In the Curtin group, six participants reported that the content wholly met their expectations, while a similar response was observed among six participants in the UTS group and three in the Swinburne group. These findings highlight the effectiveness of advertisements in reinforcing pre-existing notions, successfully capturing audience interest, and fostering engagement.

The second master theme, "Content Partially Met Expectations," reflects instances where advertisements fulfilled some but not all of the participants' expectations. In these cases, while certain aspects of the content resonated with participants, other elements failed to align with their anticipated narrative structure. This nuanced response illustrates the complexity of audience interpretations. In the Curtin group, one participant reported partial fulfillment of expectations, while three participants in the UTS group and two in the Swinburne group shared a similar sentiment. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of consumer engagement, highlighting the importance of designing advertisements that address diverse audience expectations.

The third master theme, "Content Did Not Meet Expectations at All," pertains to participants who found a significant mismatch between their anticipated and actual experiences.

Expectations are often shaped by prior exposure, cultural influences, and societal norms. Research suggests that when advertisements align with consumers' values and aspirations, they foster a sense of connection and resonance (Krishna, 2012; Holt, 2016). However, when this alignment is absent, engagement diminishes. Within the Swinburne group, six participants indicated that the advertisement did not meet their expectations, citing discrepancies between anticipated and presented content. This misalignment resulted in reduced engagement and a weakened connection with the advertisement. These findings underscore the necessity for advertisers to recognize and integrate audience expectations into campaign development. Failure to do so can limit the effectiveness of messaging and reduce consumer receptivity. Aligning advertising narratives with audience expectations and cultural contexts is therefore crucial for maximizing impact and fostering meaningful engagement.

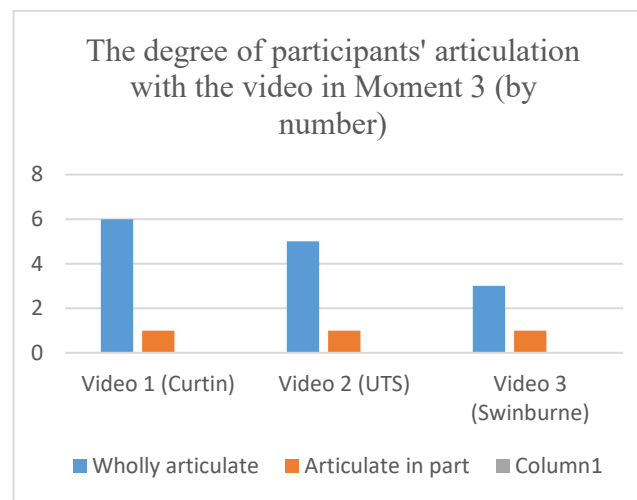


Figure 4: Degrees of articulation with the narratives in Moment 3

After anticipating the content of the narratives, participants engaged in the process of articulating the story by connecting various narrative elements to construct meaning. This cognitive engagement aligns with the "hermeneutic circle of understanding," as conceptualized by Gadamer (1975). Through this process, participants actively interpreted the narratives by integrating their personal perspectives, experiences, and knowledge. The findings suggest that participants demonstrated varying levels of engagement, with some deriving profound insights and achieving a comprehensive understanding of the narratives. Figure 4 visually represents the degree of articulation among participants, categorized into two master themes: "thinking through the hermeneutic circle of understanding" and "facing difficulties in connecting the narrative parts." Notably, all participants were able to articulate at least some aspects of the narratives, indicating active engagement with meaning construction.

In terms of depth of articulation, the findings in Figure 4 reveal that a significant number of participants demonstrated a high level of comprehension, successfully integrating various narrative elements into a coherent storyline. Specifically, six participants fully articulated their understanding of Video 1 (Curtin), five participants of Video 2 (UTS), and three participants of Video 3 (Swinburne). This suggests that these participants effectively engaged with the narrative content, resulting in a comprehensive interpretation. Research on narrative persuasion supports the notion that individuals are more likely to be absorbed by and influenced by narratives that align with their personal beliefs, goals, or identities (Slater & Rouner, 2002). The strong connection between personal relevance and cognitive engagement could explain why certain participants demonstrated a higher level of articulation and immersion in the videos.

However, some participants faced challenges in fully integrating all narrative components, suggesting that certain aspects of the advertisements were not entirely clear or easily comprehensible. These difficulties may be attributed to various factors, including unfamiliarity with specific cultural references, limited prior knowledge about the featured educational institutions, or inadequate contextual information provided in the videos. Such limitations hindered the ability of these participants to construct a coherent narrative and fully engage with the content. Additionally, partial articulation may have been influenced by participants' expectations and biases. Their preconceived notions regarding university education, specific program offerings, or campus life may have shaped their interpretation, leading them to focus on certain aspects while overlooking others. This selective perception restricted their holistic understanding and impeded their ability to establish meaningful connections across all narrative elements.

Heidegger's concept of 'engagement'—where individuals selectively connect with specific aspects of a media experience while distancing themselves from others—can be linked to theories of selective attention and cognitive processing. According to attentional models, individuals allocate cognitive resources selectively to relevant information while filtering out stimuli perceived as less meaningful (Itti & Koch, 2001). This cognitive filtering process is guided by an individual's goals, interests, and prior knowledge, which influence their attentional focus. In the present study, participants who fully articulated their understanding likely concentrated on personally salient aspects of the videos, whereas those who struggled with articulation may have encountered difficulties in filtering and processing information effectively. These findings highlight the role of selective attention in shaping audience engagement and underscore the importance of crafting narratives that facilitate clear and inclusive meaning-making processes.

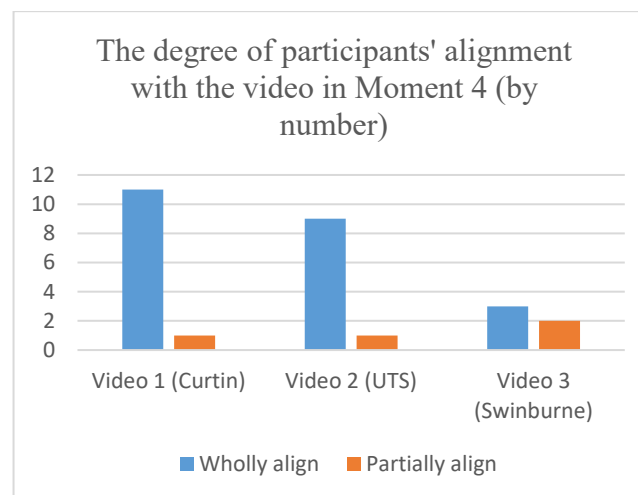


Figure 5: Degrees of alignment with the narratives in Moment 4

Throughout the process of viewing the videos, participants exhibited varying degrees of alignment with the content, reflecting their level of identification and connection with the narratives (Figure 5). This alignment, or lack thereof, occurred across different sections of the advertisements, underscoring the nuanced nature of audience responses. Additionally, some participants experienced apathy or boredom toward the content, indicative of disengagement. Understanding these varying levels of alignment is essential, as it directly influences overall audience engagement and the effectiveness of message delivery. By analyzing participants' alignment patterns, content creators can refine their strategies to develop more compelling and relatable narratives.

The findings revealed two primary themes regarding participants' alignment with the narratives: "fully agreed with the narrative" and "partially agreed with the narrative." Figure 5 illustrates that a significant number of participants demonstrated strong resonance with the content. Specifically, 11 participants fully aligned with Video 1 (Curtin), 9 with Video 2 (UTS), and 3 with Video 3 (Swinburne). This high level of alignment suggests that these participants connected with and identified with the overarching message and storytelling techniques employed in the advertisements. According to Gadamer (1975), audiences who align with a branding narrative tend to appropriate its content in shaping their self-identity. Similarly, Belk (1989) posits that consumers perceive themselves as the sum of their possessions, attributing meaning to these affiliations. In the context of this study, the university branding narratives appeared to align with participants' self-perceptions and aspirations, reinforcing their personal identity and lifestyle choices.

Furthermore, the study identified instances of selective identification, where participants resonated with specific aspects of the videos rather than embracing the entire narrative. This demonstrates their ability to engage critically and discern key elements of interest. Factors such as personal relevance, cultural familiarity, and perceived value influenced this selective identification. For instance, participants may have aligned with a particular academic program, cultural reference, or location depicted in the video, reinforcing the importance of culturally and personally resonant branding strategies. However, some participants only partially agreed with the narrative, indicating that while certain elements resonated with them, other aspects remained unengaging or misaligned with their expectations. This partial agreement may be attributed to factors such as personal preferences, conflicting perspectives, or a lack of relatability with specific narrative components.

These findings highlight the importance of crafting university branding advertisements that not only appeal to broad audience segments but also cater to individual preferences and socio-cultural contexts. By understanding the mechanisms of audience alignment and selective identification, marketers can enhance the effectiveness of their advertising strategies, fostering stronger emotional connections and engagement with prospective students.

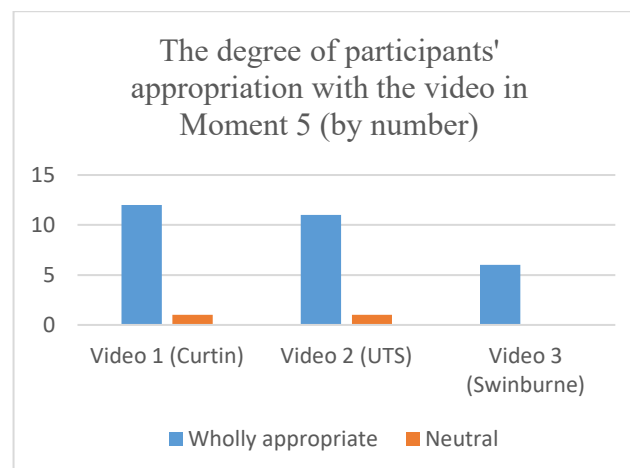


Figure 6: The degree of appropriation with the videos in Moment 5

Alignment with a narrative fosters a sense of appropriation among audiences, wherein they develop a desire to associate with the represented university and its lifestyle. This aspiration to share the experiences depicted in the videos can significantly influence participants' attitudes toward the institution and their intent to enroll. The connection between narrative engagement

and self-identity is a critical component of marketing, as effective branding seeks to establish a relationship between the institution's image and the aspirational lifestyle of its target audience. However, it is important to distinguish between appropriation and purchase intent. While individuals may perceive a brand as aligning with their self-concept, this does not necessarily result in enrollment or direct action. Financial constraints, personal circumstances, or competing preferences may prevent an individual from acting on this alignment. In this context, appropriation refers to the psychological association with a brand or institution, whereas purchasing involves the actual decision to enroll or invest in the product.

Figure 5 summarizes participants' degrees of appropriation in response to the three videos. The findings indicate that a substantial number of participants identified with the portrayed university lifestyle, with 12 participants expressing appropriation for Video 1 (Curtin), 11 participants for Video 2 (UTS), and 6 participants for Video 3 (Swinburne). This suggests that these individuals mentally aligned with the values and experiences depicted in the videos and envisioned themselves as part of the university community. However, some participants exhibited neutral or disengaged responses, indicating a lack of strong emotional connection or resonance with the narratives. These individuals did not display a significant inclination toward appropriation, suggesting that the advertisements failed to evoke a meaningful personal association or align with their aspirational identity.

These findings highlight the critical role of emotional and identity-based branding in university marketing strategies. Advertisements that effectively foster a sense of belonging and personal identification are more likely to resonate with prospective students, ultimately influencing their perception of the institution and shaping their decision-making process.

Table 1: Super-ordinate themes for distancing from the narratives in Moment 6

Alienation (Super-ordinate themes)	Video 1 (Curtin)	Video 2 (UTS)	Video 3 (Swinburne)
University is not the focus	0	0	3
Not enjoying the video aesthetics	0	0	2
Total	0	0	5

Participants categorized under "Alienation" exhibited a complete disengagement from the advertised content and characters in the videos. This stage of alienation aligns with Ricoeur's (1981) concept of "moments of distancing," in which individuals experience detachment from a text. At this stage, consumers adopt a critical stance, articulating their criticisms and perspectives on the narratives presented. This process reflects Ricoeur's "depth hermeneutics" (1981), wherein audiences challenge and deconstruct media messages. Wilson (2011) further explains that during this phase, participants encounter difficulties in fully engaging with the hermeneutic circle of understanding, which inhibits meaning-making and narrative immersion.

In the case of the Swinburne video, five participants reported a strong sense of alienation (Table 1). They perceived the content as irrelevant and misaligned with their expectations. One participant, PB1, anticipated a broader representation of the university, including its campus image and overall identity. However, they felt that the video focused exclusively on technological aspects, particularly the laboratory, creating a disconnect. This misalignment resulted in PB1 stating: *"I'll distance myself. I was expecting something about the university, how it looks and so on, but it turns out to be nothing about that... just the laboratory. So, I'll distance myself."*

Additionally, participants reported disengagement due to a lack of aesthetic appeal in the Swinburne video. PB3, for instance, stated that the advertisement failed to capture their attention or generate interest in the institution. This participant expressed dissatisfaction, remarking: *"If the purpose of the advertisement is to convince me to study in Swinburne, it is doing the job poorly. I'm looking for something that can catch my attention, but it turns out to be nothing about that, so I think I'd rather distance myself. It did not create any desire for me to look further into the product."*

These responses highlight participants' feelings of disconnection and disinterest toward the Swinburne video. The perceived irrelevance of the content, combined with weak narrative and aesthetic engagement, contributed to their sense of alienation. Understanding the factors that lead to audience alienation is critical for marketers and content creators, as it informs the refinement of advertising strategies. By addressing audience expectations and ensuring alignment with their preferences, advertisers can create more compelling and resonant narratives that minimize disengagement and enhance audience connection.

Table 2: Super-ordinate themes for criticisms of and suggestion for the narratives in Moment 7

Criticism	Video 3 (Swinburne)	Suggestions (UTS)	Video 3 (Swinburne)
Focus on the wrong aspect	2	Focus on university image	3
No emphasis on the university's appearance	1	Focus on the appearance	2
Pace of the video	2	Slow down the speed	
Total	5		5

At this stage of analysis, focus group responses provided critical feedback and constructive suggestions regarding the three university branding videos (Table 2). These insights offer valuable perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the advertisements as perceived by participants. By integrating these perspectives, marketers can refine branding strategies, enhance the effectiveness of video advertisements, and develop more engaging and persuasive content that resonates with the target audience. Addressing these concerns and recommendations can ultimately improve brand perception and drive greater interest and conversion.

One prominent theme that emerged from the analysis was the misplaced focus in the Swinburne video. Participants PB1 and PA1 expressed concerns that the advertisement primarily emphasized technology, creating the impression that the university caters exclusively to students interested in this field. They suggested that the video should have presented a broader representation of the institution, incorporating aspects beyond technology to appeal to a wider audience. Another key critique, highlighted by PB2, was the lack of emphasis on the university's physical presence. PB2 argued that the advertisement did not showcase the university's campus, facilities, or overall environment, thereby failing to provide prospective students with a comprehensive understanding of the institution's appeal.

Additionally, the pacing of the Swinburne video emerged as a critical issue. Participants PB3 and PB5 reported a sense of alienation due to the video's fast pace, which made it challenging to fully absorb the content upon first viewing. They suggested that slowing down the video's speed would enhance clarity and comprehension, making it easier for viewers to engage with the information presented.

Participants also provided specific recommendations for improvement. PB1, PA1, and PB2 emphasized the importance of showcasing the university's overall image, including its campus, classrooms, and surrounding environment, as well as providing key information about fees and course offerings. Additionally, PB3 and PB5 reiterated the need to slow down the video's pacing for better accessibility and comprehension. PB5 also suggested incorporating a broader range of elements beyond technology, ensuring that the advertisement appeals to a more diverse group of prospective students.

These findings demonstrate the participants' critical engagement with the videos and provide actionable insights for improving branding strategies. By addressing these concerns and integrating participant feedback, marketers can develop more compelling and inclusive video advertisements that effectively communicate the university's brand identity and values. Such refinements will enhance audience connection and strengthen the overall impact of university branding efforts.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal four key insights into audience engagement with media advertising for university branding in Sarawak.

Firstly, the process of interpreting media advertising was found to involve seven distinct stages, highlighting a multi-step cognitive and emotional journey undertaken by participants. This finding enhances our understanding of audience engagement and message interpretation, demonstrating the complexity of consumer responses to advertising content.

Secondly, participants exhibited a diverse range of emotional reactions while viewing the videos, underscoring the affective impact of advertising. This emphasizes the importance of eliciting emotional responses to create memorable and persuasive advertisements, as emotions play a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes and decision-making.

Thirdly, the acceptability of the advertisements was strongly tied to their alignment with societal values, reinforcing the necessity of cultural sensitivity in advertising. Advertisements that resonated with the audience's beliefs and norms were more likely to be accepted and positively received. This underscores the significance of integrating cultural considerations into advertising campaigns to enhance audience connection and receptivity.

Lastly, participants' interpretations of the videos were influenced by their recognition of genre conventions, indicating that familiar storytelling frameworks play a pivotal role in shaping audience responses. Advertisements that leveraged established narrative structures were more effective in engaging viewers and fostering a sense of connection. This finding highlights the potential of strategic storytelling in enhancing the effectiveness of university branding efforts and optimizing audience engagement.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the varied ways in which audiences engage with media advertising for university branding in Sarawak. From a practical perspective, these findings have significant implications for both universities and marketers in the region. Understanding how consumers interpret and respond to media advertising enables universities to develop more effective branding strategies that resonate with their target

audience. By aligning advertising narratives, visuals, and messaging with the values, cultural norms, and socio-economic dynamics of Sarawak, universities can enhance their brand image and effectively communicate their unique value propositions.

This research also contributes to the literature by employing a phenomenological approach, offering a deeper exploration of consumer experiences and perceptions of media advertising in university branding. The findings have practical implications for the design and execution of advertising campaigns, enabling universities and marketers to create more engaging and impactful advertisements.

Furthermore, the study's focus on Sarawak's distinct socio-cultural landscape represents a novel contribution. By addressing the lack of research on consumer perceptions of media advertising for university branding in Sarawak, this study fills a critical gap in the literature. Given the region's cultural diversity, rich heritage, and unique socio-economic dynamics, understanding consumer behavior in this context is essential for developing effective advertising strategies. The insights gained from this study are therefore highly relevant and applicable to universities and marketers seeking to enhance audience engagement and optimize branding efforts in Sarawak.

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