

**van Laer, T., Visconti, L.M., & Feiereisen, S. (2018). Need for Narrative. *Journal of Marketing Management*.**

(SPEECH)

[00:00:00.00] [CLASSICAL MUSIC]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:00:00.10] Text, Travelling - it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller. Ibn Battuta (1304-1368)

[00:00:09.93] At a train station, scooters are lined up on a rack.

[00:00:14.00] A view of the extensive train tracks.

[00:00:19.38] A train bears the logo, Eurostar.

[00:00:22.70] An aerial view of escalators. Text, Need for narrative.

[00:00:29.82] People sit on curved purple benches in a terminal with their luggage beside them.

[00:00:44.73] A woman wearing a scarf reads a book. Text, Defining what is a story.

[00:00:51.69] Text, Scholars offer various but clear definitions of stories. They also identify different types of stories. For example, Sidney Levy groups stories into family myths, edification stories, and foundation stories. However, all these definitions and types of stories are etic since they reflect what scholars think of stories. What is a story, then, from the perspective of its consumers?

[00:01:17.04] Through semi-structured interviews with 55 Eurostar passengers from Argentina, Australia, Belgium, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Jamaica, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, the U.K., and the U.S., this film first documents the extent to which consumers can define stories and do so in similar ways.

(SPEECH)

[00:01:39.05] SPEAKER 1: How do you define the word "story"?

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:01:41.27] People are interviewed.

(SPEECH)

[00:01:42.50] SPEAKER 2: Well--

[00:01:44.23] SPEAKER 3: [SPEAKING FRENCH]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:01:45.10] Subtitles, You mean stories in books?

(SPEECH)

[00:01:47.82] SPEAKER 4: Stories in books? Or movies? Or?

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:01:51.66] A man scratches his chin.

(SPEECH)

[00:01:54.60] SPEAKER 2: Are you speaking, say, of books that I've read? Or stories that people tell?

[00:02:00.94] SPEAKER 5: Mostly, I enjoy biographies. But that's not stories, I suppose.

[00:02:06.42] INTERVIEWER: It could be.

[00:02:08.27] SPEAKER 5: Yeah, well, it is stories.

[00:02:10.69] [CLASSICAL MUSIC]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:02:10.99] People lug their suitcases through the terminal as others sit at a long table.

(SPEECH)

[00:02:16.80] SPEAKER 7: [SPEAKING FRENCH]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:02:18.75] Subtitles, The entire history of painting is narrative anyway. For centuries painters have painted biblical themes, or themes of society, or historical themes, there you go, it's a narrative.

[00:02:32.24] Someone flips through the pages of a book.

(SPEECH)

[00:02:37.06] SPEAKER 8: Music-- music is. It's stories. Every song has a story. And I think you visualise it. When you listen to a song, you always have your interpretation of it. And when you go-- when you listen to one song, and you've experienced something in your life, you hear it in one way. And if you hear it another time, you hear it, like, you have to interpret it differently.

[00:02:57.00] [CLASSICAL MUSIC]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:02:58.48] Text, From an emic perspective, story consumers, though hesitant to define "story", are creative and comprehensive in their categorization (e.g., they include paintings, music, and other preferred media).

[00:03:13.86] Vinyl benches and brick walls. Text, Types of need for narrative.

[00:03:21.30] The prevailing viewpoint in consumer psychology may be characterized as follows: Consumers have a need for narrative because they have a need for the hedonic - the seeking of pleasure, amusement, and entertainment. Enormous social resources are spent, in Western cultures at least, in creating a vast array of stories to satisfy such needs. Interpretive consumer researchers emphasize the instrumentality of need for narrative. They provide many linkages to consumers' identity projects. However, do story consumers distinguish

between hedonic and instrumental reasons to need narrative? Need for understanding the outer world.

(SPEECH)

[00:04:00.59] SPEAKER 5: It's a need for people to have an insight into other people's lives.

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:04:09.10] An elderly man reads a newspaper.

(SPEECH)

[00:04:11.84] SPEAKER 9: You don't need to be-- I don't think you need to be a sort of person to enjoy great stories, other than be a person who enjoy stories. And I don't think there's any other connotation.

[00:04:22.23] [CLASSICAL MUSIC]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:04:23.69] Text, Need for understanding the inner world.

(SPEECH)

[00:04:27.11] SPEAKER 10: [SPEAKING FRENCH]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:04:29.06] Subtitles, I like stories I can relate to. Like everyone else I think when it affects us personally or somehow we have a story that is close to ours it's true that that makes it easier to enjoy a story.

(SPEECH)

[00:04:42.79] SPEAKER 11: Personally, I enjoy stories because it's something that-- the story has to be about something that interests me.

[00:04:47.70] [CLASSICAL MUSIC]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:04:47.70] Text, Need for investigating the outer world.

(SPEECH)

[00:04:53.55] SPEAKER 12: I'm big on documentaries, like true stories. So I like facts and something you can learn from.

[00:05:03.61] SPEAKER 13: I like Sandra Bullock. Whatever she's in, I like it.

[00:05:07.62] SPEAKER 14 : I love Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice, Wuthering Heights and the Twilight series.

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:05:15.00] She holds a book.

(SPEECH)

[00:05:16.17] So there's stuff like that, really. Any series when it's romantic. Or if it's from the past, as well. Romance. That's what I read.

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:05:23.62] Text, Need for forgetting the inner world.

(SPEECH)

[00:05:26.74] SPEAKER 9: If I'm-- well, if I'm tired and stressed, I kind would like a story to kind of relax my brain. Otherwise, I have my own stories that I make up.

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:05:36.55] Subtitles, I think a person who has problems in life is going to want to escape and therefore read and use this to perhaps protect herself and lock herself up in a world.

(SPEECH)

[00:05:37.72] SPEAKER 15: [SPEAKING FRENCH]

[00:05:46.98] SPEAKER 9: I guess people need an escape. And much for the same reason that people like me go on holidays, to get away from the everyday. A very short escape can be through a story, through a reading of a novel.

[00:06:01.66] SPEAKER 16: I think that there are moments when you think, I just don't want to think about my things anymore and want something completely different, and something entertaining, or very, very interesting. So yes, there's a time when you think, I really need to stop and look at something completely different.

[00:06:19.69] SPEAKER 15:

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:06:20.14] Subtitles, Because when you read it allows you to escape, but it cuts us off from the world too. When we read it is like saying I do not want to talk, so leave me alone. It's a bit putting your issues aside and keeping them for later, as a result, they do not get resolved.

(SPEECH)

[00:06:20.19] [SPEAKING FRENCH]

[00:06:36.07] SPEAKER 17: [SPEAKING FRENCH]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:06:37.99] Subtitles, I can watch the same series, I mean, the same episode ten times a day; So let's say I return to it, I imagine I have not seen it and then I watch it again; It has to be a horror movie; Since I was little let's say, from the age of twelve; My family has been struggling to understand how it is that I only like horror movies but you cannot do anything about it; I am social, yes, but I do not really like to hang out with people let's say; I'd rather be in my corner and I'm not too interested in what they do; I think more about my own person let's say; I try to go to the movies a bit, when there are horror movies, but when there are no horror movies I'm not going because I cannot stand action movies at all; I tend to fall asleep

let's say; When I think too much I tell myself OK I'm going to watch a movie; I often lose myself in them on weekends and I immediately forget about my problems.

(SPEECH)

[00:07:31.31] [MUSIC PLAYING]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:07:32.43] Need for looking after a lonely and suffering self.

[00:07:36.24] Subtitles, Now I need it more than before because before what happened is that I tended to drink alcohol on weekends, it's been a year since I stopped, and so I often get cravings on weekends and I... I lose myself in movies and then I want more. I can rent about six...

(SPEECH)

[00:07:36.59] SPEAKER 17: [SPEAKING FRENCH]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:07:53.29] Subtitles, It's a substitute; It's a substitute; There's that and then there's trips to London; Otherwise it is a direct alcohol relapse; You try to compensate in another way.

(SPEECH)

[00:07:53.44] INTERVIEWER: [SPEAKING FRENCH]

[00:07:56.44] SPEAKER 17: [SPEAKING FRENCH]

[00:07:59.40] INTERVIEWER: [SPEAKING FRENCH]

[00:08:00.57] SPEAKER 17: [SPEAKING FRENCH]

[00:08:06.47] SPEAKER 14: When I left home at 18, I think because I was out-- I come from quite a large family, so you got in other people's lives. And then you come away, and you live by yourself, and you go, OK, what do I do now? Oh, you read a book. You read more stories. You get involved in other things.

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:08:22.43] People sitting in the terminal read.

(SPEECH)

[00:08:26.16] SPEAKER 19: My father collects movies. So when I am at home, which is pretty rare these days, the way of connecting with him as a team is we'll sit down and watch a movie together in particular. It has always been that way. That's just how he bonds with me. So I learn. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy it. But--

[00:08:44.27] SPEAKER 20: Yes, I would say that now, or after I left Argentina, I have more of a stronger need for distraction with movies and so on. But I don't know if it's related, because I'm overseas, not surrounded with too many friends and so on. So that might--

[00:09:04.41] SPEAKER 21: Yeah, I think, at certain times in your life, you read a certain type of story, which focuses you back on things that are positive, and that there are people out there doing it harder than you. I think-- yeah, I think that can be therapeutic.

[00:09:17.88] SPEAKER 22: I think it could be used as a tool to help them, in terms of if people were struggling with issues or something and they found this story or a fictional-- a fictional event that they could associate with, it might help them through what they're going through. So I suppose it could be a way out.

[00:09:34.22] SPEAKER 23: Or you might want to hear the story that reflects what you're going through. I think, for example, when I was in America, actually, I was in a bad situation, and I needed-- I wanted to read an American author. Actually, I was reading their, their diary. And it was like, OK, that's-- they're working on it, and they were an author, and they were a high intellectual,

[00:09:54.77] So they weren't going through the same thing I was going through, but it was nice to hear someone get into trouble who then was successful. So absolutely, it's almost like medicine.

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:10:03.08] A woman reads a novel.

(SPEECH)

[00:10:05.03] SPEAKER 24: Yes. I think that, in some cases, it would help. I have an example. My mother died when I was 13. And I can remember feeling very guilty, coming down the stairs after she died. And somebody, a next door neighbour, held her arms out and said, my poor orphan. And just at that moment, I glanced at myself in the mirror. And saw how dreadful I looked.

[00:10:42.30] And I also felt really guilty that at that particular moment, I was concerned more with how I looked than in fact the fact that my mother had died, and a neighbour was consoling me.

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:10:57.23] A man sits at a table reading a newspaper. Two men sit side by side reading books.

(SPEECH)

[00:10:58.67] [MUSIC PLAYING]

[00:11:05.38] And very shortly afterwards, I read that David Copperfield had done exactly the same thing when his mother had died. He climbed onto a stool and looked himself-- looked at himself in the mirror. And I thought, I'm not the only one. I'm not to blame.

[00:11:24.23] INTERVIEWER: So it helped.

[00:11:24.82] SPEAKER 24: Yeah, it does. It helped a lot.

[00:11:27.55] [MUSIC PLAYING]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:11:27.65] Text, Consumers do not make a distinction between hedonic and instrumental needs for narrative. To them, a story always has considerable instrumental importance. Yet, in order to serve its instrumental purpose, a story has to be entertaining. Thus, finding entertainment is a prerequisite for satisfying consumers' instrumental need for narrative. In other words, no story can be instrumental unless it is first and foremost pleasurable.

[00:11:56.49] When stories are deemed pleasurable, the instrumental need for narrative can take different forms. First, a story may gratify a consumer's need for understanding their inner and outer worlds. Second, a story may satisfy a consumer's need for testing, forgetting, or healing the self.

[00:12:16.45] A woman reads a book. Nearby, a man talks on the phone while making hand gestures.

[00:12:23.44] We go down an elevator. Text, effects of need for narrative.

[00:12:29.42] Whether a chronic condition of consumers' personality or a situation-induced temporal state, need for narrative is generally conceptualized as a need for, not against. In other words, a story captures consumers' attention; consumers do not attempt to escape from a story.

[00:12:48.89] However, are the effects of need for narrative indeed that black-and-white according to story consumers?

[00:12:55.37] Positive effects of need for narrative.

[00:13:00.86] A man opens a folder-like picture frame containing a black-and-white photo of a man.

(SPEECH)

[00:13:06.36] SPEAKER 4: Yeah, but it's going to be a really strange answer, again.

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:13:12.88] He blinks in thought.

(SPEECH)

[00:13:16.30] Yeah, yeah. OK. No, yeah. With-- so with my girlfriend, sometimes we have periods where we try to eat a bit less, or go on a diet. And I find that watching a movie kind of keeps me distracted and not feel so hungry anymore. So I don't know if that's what you were expecting, but yeah. Yeah, so there were times when I need to do something. So I'll just go to a movie, and I'll be fine. I can forget about food.

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:13:43.45] An elderly man grips a book as his hands make gestures.

(SPEECH)

[00:13:50.73] SPEAKER 26: I started, in the place where we live, what we call a "book club." And if I say, it's the anti-Alzheimer' book club.

[00:14:00.14] INTERVIEWER: The anti-Alzheimer's book club.

[00:14:03.17] SPEAKER 26: That's to stop-- Alzheimer's is a disease of old people. So it's to keep your brain active.

[00:14:15.20] SPEAKER 14: I find it hard, because I'm dyslexic. So it's taken me a long time to be able to read books properly. So I think-- or I've had to do extra reading to be able to just do the basic stuff. So I think that's probably the reason why I read so much, because it helps me just like write anything else as well. And it informs me of new grammar and new language and stuff that I wouldn't get if I just didn't read.

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:14:39.82] A woman holds up a book titled, Art Therapy.

(SPEECH)

[00:14:40.79] [MUSIC PLAYING]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:14:44.18] Text, Mixed effects of need for narrative.

(SPEECH)

[00:14:49.03] SPEAKER 28: Because I used to be a lot more-- like psychological issues. And I think stories also help me get over certain stuff, definitely. The escape aspect of stories. Or like, if there are people who aren't very much in contact with other people, they can read stories and not feel as alone.

[00:15:12.03] I remember reading certain stories at a younger age, that I wasn't able to enjoy. I think like darker stories with a lot more pathos in them, I definitely wasn't able to enjoy those at a younger age. Maybe because I was in a darker state of mind, as well, as a younger person. But then I matured, and I managed to get over it. And now I can-- I won't be so-- I won't say depressed, but feeling down, reading them or experiencing them.

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:15:42.63] Someone reads a newspaper article titled, Security checks leave mourners stranded miles from Mandela.

(SPEECH)

[00:15:51.66] SPEAKER 29: When I was doing research for my most recent book, part of the research included having to interview people who had been tortured or had been in prison. And so when I would come home, I would have an insatiable desire for short television shows, one hour television shows, which were police procedurals which had a resolution.

[00:16:17.68] And I couldn't watch anything else. I couldn't watch anything that had suspense. I couldn't watch profound films. I wanted a show that was shallow, and that it ended in an hour, and that at the end of the hour, everything was resolved. And I've talked to a lot of people about that. And I had to do it. I had to watch that stuff.

[00:16:35.24] And a lot of people said to me that this is a function of having spent your day listening to people who have been through unbelievable suffering. You want closure. You want a way to understand the stories, and in a way that has a resolution.

[00:16:49.11] And so that was a response. That's probably the most intense and most recent instance of wanting, desiring, needing, feeling like I can't live without a particular kind of story.

[00:17:00.08] INTERVIEWER: Which shows were those?

[00:17:02.35] SPEAKER 29: Embarrassingly enough, Law and Order, CSI, that sort of thing.

[00:17:06.98] INTERVIEWER: Key works. [INAUDIBLE]

[00:17:08.53] SPEAKER 29: They end in an hour. They resolve everything.

[00:17:12.76] [MUSIC PLAYING]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:17:13.68] Our view ascends above escalators.

(SPEECH)

[00:17:17.35] SPEAKER 9: If we didn't read, if we didn't watch movies, if we didn't get opposing views, or different views on life, to think a bit, consider. We'd go through life down a single path, and nothing would change. Nothing-- no one would ever stop to appreciate the beauty of things.

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:17:38.26] People ride the escalators.

(SPEECH)

[00:17:40.06] [MUSIC PLAYING]

(DESCRIPTION)

[00:17:40.96] Text, The behavior of story consumption can result from reliance on need for narrative or from careful evaluation of the level of emotional risk-taking that certain stories require. Whether consumers scrutinize a story depends on the extent to which they perceive an approach-avoidance conflict. If this perception is confessed, consumers tend to exclude certain stories despite their need for narrative.

[00:18:07.36] Our view descends from a skylight to the Eurostar train.

[00:18:13.96] People walk about the terminal.

[00:18:16.37] They ride the escalators.

[00:18:31.06] On the escalators, people wear coats, carry luggage, and hold beverages.

[00:18:37.06] Close-up of a book on someone's lap. Text, Stories seem to empower people.

[00:18:42.46] Our view rises to find the elderly woman smiling.

[00:18:47.13] Text, to self-prescribe narrative therapy.

[00:18:50.98] The people from earlier being interviewed.

[00:18:54.16] Text, Not only do story consumers know which narrative they like,

[00:19:02.86] but they also know which narrative they need

[00:19:13.36] in order to escape from reality

[00:19:23.56] as well as transform it.

[00:19:32.26] People ride on a moving walkway.

[00:19:37.36] Passengers begin to board the train, all hauling luggage.

[00:19:50.86] Text, Need for narrative.

[00:19:55.06] A film by Tom van Laer, Luca M. Visconti, & Stephanie Feiereisen; Director Tom van Laer; Writer Luca M. Visconti; Interviewer Stephanie Feiereisen; Cinematographer and editor Flavie Trichet Lespagnol; Art director Chris Aldhous; Production manager Pierre Humeau; Transcribers Christine Duchemin & Alkmini Gritzali; original music Antonín Dvořák; Thanks to City University London, ESCP Europe Business School, Eurostar, RE-UP & St Pancras international. Special thanks to every traveler who agreed to be interviewed; Your story left us speechless.