Unwrapping Christmas: How Retail Brands Use Storytelling to Engage Consumers During the Holidays

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Candidate Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Digital Communications, is all only my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not used any form of 'artificial intelligence' or related software, nor copied in part or whole, or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

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Date:

Dedication

For my family, and especially Quoc Anh, my life partner, who has believed in me and wholeheartedly supported me through ups and downs.

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First, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Alessandra Vecchi, for all the support, encouragement, and helpful guidance during this fascinating journey.

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Finally, I appreciated all the warm care and support from my family members and close friends. Thanks to them, I have gained the motivation to complete this study.

I would like to wish all the aforementioned people good health and occupational success in the future.

Abstract

The aim of this research is to explore emotional appeals and narrative structure in contemporary Christmas advertisements, focusing on how retailers evoke emotional resonance to engage audiences. Embracing a mixed-method approach, the study assessed fifteen advertisements (2020-2024) from renowned retail brands like John Lewis, Amazon, Apple, Coca-Cola, and Doc Morris by using quantitative coding of emotional appeals (nostalgia, joy, empathy) alongside qualitative narrative analysis guided by Fisher's Narrative Paradigm Theory.

Findings reveal empathy as the dominant emotional appeal, fundamentally delivered through visual storytelling while supported by coherent and culturally truthful narratives that foster audience connection. All in all, the study introduces a new theoretical framework for effective festive advertising campaigns but requires broader validation regarding cultural context and audience demographics to achieve thorough narrative strategies.

List of Figures

Figure 1: The core of the Narrative Paradigm (Warnick, 1987)

Figure 2: Narrative and Emotional Appeals Integrated Framework

Figure 3: Adapted from “Research Onion” model (Saunders *et al*., 2009).

Figure 4: Percentage of each appeal across all advertisements

Figure 5: Percentage of medium across all advertisements

Figure 6: Proposed Framework for Effective Storytelling in Christmas Advertisements

List of Tables

Table 1: Main characteristics of the four research philosophies (Saunders et al., 2009; Muhaise et al., 2020)

Table 2: Mapping Research Objectives to Analysis Techniques

Table 3: Quantitative Coding Categories

Table 4: Qualitative Coding Categories

Table 5: Percentage of medium used for each appeal (across all advertisements)

Table of Contents

Candidate Declaration II

Dedication III

Acknowledgements IV

Abstract V

List of Figures VI

1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Overview 1

1.2 Research Purpose 1

1.3 Significance of the Study 3

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives 4

1.5 Methodology 5

1.6 Structure of the Study 6

2 LITERATURE REVIEW 6

2.1 Overview 6

2.2 A Theoretical Foundation of Storytelling in Advertising 7

2.2.1 Storytelling in Advertising 7

2.2.2 Narrative Paradigm Theory 8

2.2.3 Emotional Marketing 10

2.3 Emotional Storytelling in Retail Christmas Advertising 13

2.4 Audience Response to Emotional Storytelling in Christmas Advertising 15

2.5 Conceptual Framework 16

2.6 Conclusion 18

3 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN 18

3.1 Overview 18

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach 20

3.3 Research Strategy 22

3.4 Collection Primary Data 24

3.4.1 Sources 24

3.4.2 Access and Ethical Issues 25

3.5 Approach to Data Analysis 26

3.6 Conclusion 29

4 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS 30

4.1 Overview 30

4.2 Findings 31

4.2.1 Quantitative Findings 31

4.2.2 Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings 35

4.3 Discussion 46

4.3.1 Empathy as the Emotional Focus in Christmas Narrative *46*
4.3.2 Visual Storytelling as the Dominant Medium *47*
4.3.3 Narrative Coherence and Fidelity in Christmas Advertising *47*
4.4 Conclusion 50
5 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS RESEARCH, ITS LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH 50
5.1 Implications of Findings for the Research Questions 50
5.2 Contributions and Limitations of the Research 51
5.3 Recommendations for Practice 52
5.4 Recommendations for Future Research 53
5.5 Final Conclusion and Reflections 54
Appendices ..... A
Appendix A – Appeals Distribution (for each advertisement) ..... *A*

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Seth Godin, the well-known author and marketer, once said, “Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories you tell.” Storytelling has become an essential strategy in advertising, particularly for retail brands during the most anticipated festive season of the year, like Christmas. Effective storytelling in commercials resonates emotionally with consumers, striking a chord that enhances brand perception and fosters deeper connections (Kotler, 2020; Cartwright et al., 2016).

The Christmas season presents a unique opportunity for retailers to leverage emotional narratives that evoke nostalgia, happiness, and traditional spirit. For example, John Lewis has established itself as a pioneer in emotional storytelling with its annual, carefully crafted Christmas campaigns. These advertisements have become cultural events, eagerly anticipated each year, and often spark lively discussion in public discourse by many audiences. By evoking a sense of nostalgia, which is often pulled out not just by memories but by the act of recalling positive old experiences (Leboe and Ansons, 2006), retailers’ Christmas advertisements tap into a powerful psychological touchpoint that enhances emotional engagement. The combination of love, togetherness, kindness, and generosity presented in those advertisements reflects ideals that many audiences cherish during Christmas, allowing retail brands to become a crucial part of the audience’s holiday experience.

Research indicates that advertisements that evoke these emotions not only raise consumer attention but also foster a strong and deep emotional connection between the product, brand, and consumer (Vrtana and Krizanova, 2023). Furthermore, emotional marketing strategies that incorporate sensory elements, such as music, visuals, and familiar holiday symbols, can enhance these effects by creating immersive experiences for audiences. Considering this dynamic, this research aims to explore how retail brands like John Lewis, Lidl, and Aldi employ storytelling techniques in much-anticipated adverts to foster emotional connections with consumers during the Christmas season.

1.2 Research Purpose

Christmas is a wonderful holiday for many people. For children, Christmas appears in their minds with magical stories of snowmen, Santa Claus and his flying reindeer, and The Nutcracker... Stories have already been there as a memory generator, encouraging children’s

imagination and sense of the world around them. The festive season is not only a crucial occasion for children to learn about traditional customs but also about family bonds, friendships, sharing happiness, and empathy. On the other hand, for adults, Christmas is the tranquil time when they reminisce about their childhood memories: steaming dishes on a well-decorated dining table, shared laughter, binge-watching classic Christmas movies with the family... While children purely see Christmas through the lens of happiness and joy, adults may embrace mixed emotions referred to as nostalgia, including sadness, regret, and remembrance of the good old days.

Throughout history, stories and storytelling have assisted individuals in understanding their experiences and the social world around them. The role of being the central storyteller is now largely performed by mass media like music, radio, film, and television, which deliver societal and cultural ideas (Cooper *et al.*, 2010).

In recent years, the advertising industry has met new challenges in not only attracting but also engaging multiple groups of audiences in contemporary digital environments. Television is no longer the top-of-mind means of media, as social media and streaming platforms are becoming more and more convenient and popular, allowing audiences to have more independence in choosing what content they want to consume. Coupled with the development of ad blocker tools and premium packages that help reduce advertisements, marketers, advertisers, and communication experts are urged to be more creative in making ads that truly draw audiences' attention.

In the modern communication landscape, storytelling techniques can be considered a game-changer when it comes to the success of an advertisement. McErlean (2018) defines interactive narratives as those that enable audience agency and offer consumers choices to influence the story's direction, which can enhance the emotional investment in the narrative. He also discussed the concept of transmedia storytelling, which extends narratives across multiple platforms, creating a rich and immersive experience for audiences. These two concepts are important for understanding how brands can create resonant interaction during the Christmas season through their advertising. The purpose of this research is to critically and systematically examine the strategic role of storytelling in advertising campaigns by renowned retail brands, with a focus on how these narratives are constructed to spark customers' emotional resonance.

While storytelling and emotional marketing are well-studied separately, their intersection in retail Christmas advertisements remains relatively undiscovered. Therefore, this research will perform as an exploratory study, which is valuable to uncover new insights, assess phenomena from fresh perspectives, and encourage discoveries rather than testing a pre-established hypothesis (Saunders et al., 2009).

1.3 Significance of the Study

This dissertation presents both theoretical and practical significance in rapidly evolving media research, particularly within the context of emotionally driven holiday campaigns. While the previous scholarship has established that effective storytelling in commercials resonates emotionally with consumers, striking a chord that enhances brand perception and fosters deeper connections, there exists a gap in studying how narrative coherence and emotional appeals are intentionally and systematically integrated in contemporary Christmas advertising (Kotler, 2020; Cartwright et al., 2016).

The power of storytelling strategies in annual Christmas commercial campaigns is undeniable. A survey conducted among 2000 people in the UK showed that “63% think that Christmas ads help them get in the mood for Christmas,” and 74% of young adults (25-34) examined agree with the statement (Credos, 2023). Especially, this group of respondents has also grown up with John Lewis’s advertising, highlighting the cultural effects of these commercials. It can be seen clearly that Christmas advertising has become a tradition, shaping cultural presentation (for example, Coca-Cola’s role in shaping the modern appearance of Santa Claus) and influencing customers’ emotions and behaviours.

Christmas advertisements have become an integral part of the holiday season, with everyone excitedly awaiting the annual commercials from well-known brands like John Lewis, Marks & Spencer, and Coca-Cola. The visual presence of festive imagery, such as glittering Christmas trees, dining tables with steaming food and drinks, and Santa Claus, coupled with innovative yet heartwarming storytelling, can evoke emotional reactions in audiences, from laughter to tears.

The holiday is not only a time for festive activities, wonderful decorations, and family gatherings, but also a magical opportunity for businesses to leverage the power of Christmas advertising. Changes in consumer behaviour can clearly be observed as people tend to immerse themselves in the spirit of the season, involving gift-giving and intimate celebration. According to an Adobe’s report in 2025, retail spending in the 2024 holiday season hit a new

record of 241.4 billion dollars, up 8.7% from 2023, while the CSO's *2025 Retail Sales Index December 2024 (Provisional) and November 2024 (Final)* announced that the volume of retail sales in Ireland also increased significantly in December 2024. Therefore, by critically assessing the narrative structure and emotional techniques employed in advertisements by three leading retail brands, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how advertising narratives serve as cultural artifacts that influence consumer attitudes during the festive season.

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

This dissertation aims to explore how retail brands craft emotional resonance through storytelling in Christmas advertising campaigns, using the Narrative Paradigm Theory and the Emotional Marketing concepts.

The Narrative Paradigm Theory, developed by Fisher (1984), suggests that every human communication is fundamentally a story that combines both rational and symbolic interpretation to assess the narrative value that urges the audience to act. This theory highlights two crucial criteria for effective storytelling: coherence (structure and logical flow of the story) and fidelity (believability of the story), indicating that effective storytelling resonates emotionally because it feels trustworthy and meaningful to audiences.

Supporting this, the concept of Emotional Marketing focuses on the importance of consumers' emotions, such as nostalgia and joy, to build meaningful connections that impact their attitudes and purchasing decisions.

The objectives of this research are

- To identify the emotional appeals that are most frequently used in Christmas advertising campaigns by selected retail brands.
- To analyse the narrative structures and coherence of Christmas advertisements, based on Narrative Paradigm Theory.
- To assess how the interplay between emotional appeals and narrative coherence contributes to crafting emotional resonance and consumer engagement during the holiday season.

- To develop a theoretical framework that integrates narratives and emotional strategies to guide effective storytelling in Christmas advertising.

- To provide practical recommendations for retail marketers and brands to create effective advertising campaigns and build stronger consumer-brand relationships.

1.5 Methodology

This dissertation adopts a pragmatism research philosophy, which states that the most important determinant of the epistemology, ontology, and axiology adopted is the research question (Saunders et al., 2009). This philosophy empowers researchers to use suitable methods to address the research questions and integrate different perspectives to effectively interpret the data. Pragmatism allows flexibility in combining mixed methods to establish comprehensive insights about storytelling and emotional appeals in Christmas advertising that I wish to explore.

Following this philosophy, the dissertation aims to embrace an inductive approach, given its strength in generating theoretical frameworks from observation, which aligns with my fourth objective. This approach will begin with detailed data collection and analysis to identify patterns and themes, seeking to understand how narrative coherence and emotional resonance are presented in chosen advertising content, making a smaller and more focused sample that is appropriate to the research (Saunders et al., 2009).

Embracing the pragmatism philosophy, mixed methods design is applied, including both quantitative content analysis and qualitative content analysis, which will be integrated to leverage the strengths of each method and thoroughly address all the aforementioned research objectives.

For the first objective (*to identify the emotional appeals that are most frequently used in Christmas advertising campaigns by selected retail brands*), quantitative content analysis (calculating frequencies and percentages) will systematically identify what emotional appeals are present and how often they appear across chosen advertisements from retail brands. Complementing this, for the second objective (*to analyse the narrative structures and coherence of Christmas advertisements, based on Narrative Paradigm Theory),* qualitative content analysis will seek to interpret the narrative structure, deeper meaning, and symbolic elements within the adverts, focusing on coherence and fidelity as outlined in Narrative Paradigm Theory.

This dual method will then provide a comprehensive assessment of both measurable aspects of advertising content and the way stories engage and persuade viewers emotionally, helping to reach other objectives of this dissertation. Data collection and analysis will involve sampling of Christmas advertisements released by John Lewis, Lidl, Aldi, and other retailers over the past five years (2020-2024), sourced primarily from official brand websites, YouTube channels, and social media platforms. Reliability of data integration will be guaranteed through coding schedule, pilot testing, and reliability assessment (Neuendorf, 2017).

1.6 Structure of the Study

The dissertation consists of five chapters. It starts with an introduction part, followed by a critical literature review. The literature review section will thoroughly explain key concepts and definitions related to emotional storytelling in advertising through a theoretical lens. Following that, the third chapter, methodology and research design, is carefully planned and presented, detailing the research strategy, data collection, and data analysis approach. The fourth chapter focuses on the presentation and discussion of findings, including the primary data derived from observation, coding, and interpretation. The final chapter concludes the study by summarising the findings, discussing their limitations and contributions, and emphasising suggestions for further research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This chapter examines the existing theoretical and empirical foundation relevant to understanding how retail brands use storytelling to create emotional resonance in Christmas advertising campaigns. Firstly, section 2.2, “A Theoretical Foundation of Storytelling in Advertising”, aims to explore key concepts and definitions related to storytelling. It then reviews Fisher’s Narrative Paradigm Theory, highlighting the concepts of probability and fidelity as criteria to evaluate narratives. This section also represents the Emotional Marketing concept by mentioning its significance in evoking consumer emotions, particularly in the context of holiday campaigns.

Secondly, Section 2.3 focuses on retail Christmas advertising’s features and trends, analysing the characteristics of holiday advertisement and their reliance on emotional storytelling grounded in cultural values. This section highlights festive narrative leverage shared social meanings to enhance consumer engagement. Next, Section 2.4 addresses audience response

to storytelling in Christmas advertising, reviewing existing research on emotional engagement, consumer behaviours, and narrative transportation. Following that, section 2.5 presents the conceptual framework, which combines the reviewed theories and concepts to guide the dissertation's research design and analysis process. Finally, this chapter comes to an end with section 2.6 summarising key insights and the study's focus.

2.2 A Theoretical Foundation of Storytelling in Advertising

2.2.1 *Storytelling in Advertising*

Since ancient times, storytelling has been one of the oldest ways of communication (Mohamed et al., 2024). Hopkinson and Hogarth-Scott (2001, cited by Paquette *et al.*, n.d.) define a story as a narrative that describes real or fictional events in logical order, using descriptive language to build realism and foster audience empathy. Moreover, Fisher (1984) states that narrative stories are inherently dramatic, building tension through the inclusion of problems and possibilities until reaching a climax, which further enhances audience connection. Effective storytelling organizes facts into a clear, logical progression: introducing the events, developing through complications, and concluding with a solution to the problem. This narrative structure makes things more memorable and easier to understand (Zatwarnicka-Madura and Nowacki, 2018), which has increasingly become the structure of various successful retail advertising campaigns.

Storytelling, particularly in marketing and advertising, serves as a powerful tool for retail brands to build emotional bonds with their audiences and target customers. McErlean (2018) defines interactive narratives as those that enable audience agency and offer consumers choices to influence the story's direction, which can enhance the emotional investment in the narrative. He also discussed the concept of transmedia storytelling, which extends narratives across multiple platforms, creating a rich and immersive experience for audiences. These two concepts are important for understanding how brands can create resonant interaction during the Christmas season through their advertising.

Furthermore, emotional engagement is supported by the work of Cartwright et al (2016), who stated that advertisements evoking nostalgia have a significant impact on consumer attitudes and brand perception. Their findings align with Vrtana and Krizanova (2023), who discuss that using emotional appeal in the advertising space creates an emotional connection with the brand. In their research, Cartwright et al (2016) adapt the foundational framework "The Communication Model" from Holbrook and Batra (1987) to illustrate how emotional responses

mediate attitudes towards advertisements and brands, reinforcing the important role of emotional storytelling.

Additionally, Vrtana and Krizanova (2023) highlight that the primary objective of the emotional advertising campaign is to foster a strong and deep emotional connection between the product, brand, and consumer, thereby strengthening the customer-brand relationship through emotional response. This is especially relevant during the Christmas season when emotional stories can connect with consumers deeply. Yang (2013, cited by Zatwarnicka-Madura and Nowacki, 2018) stated that storytelling is more persuasive than statements or quantitative information, thanks to its ability to trigger an emotional reaction. According to O'g'li (2025), narratives are powerfully impactful to audiences. Stories invite the brain to release chemicals like cortisol (attention), oxytocin (empathy), and dopamine (hope), making them more persuasive. Storytelling activates multiple areas of the brain, sculpting the brand message more deeply in memory. Storytelling is proven to elevate brand recall by up to 55% and enhance conversion rates by 30%.

By combining these theoretical perspectives, this study explores how retail brands utilize storytelling techniques in holiday advertising campaigns to enhance the emotional bonds with audiences.

2.2.2 *Narrative Paradigm Theory*

The Narrative Paradigm Theory, developed by Walter Fisher in 1984, indicates that since the beginning of human history, storytelling has become the fundamental and unique mode of communication (Fisher, 2021). He argues that humans are storytellers and narratives perform as a primary means through which individuals interpret and make sense of the world around them. Unlike the rational world paradigm that prioritises data and empirical evidence, Fisher's narrative paradigm theory suggests that people evaluate messages based on their narrative qualities, rather than through purely logical or rational discussions.

Fundamentally, the Narrative Paradigm Theory states that all meaningful communication can be considered as a form of storytelling. The theory emphasises that narratives are persuasive when they resonate with audiences through two critical criteria: narrative probability (coherence) and narrative fidelity (correspondence). These criteria explain how well a narrative flows logically and resonates with the viewer's values and experiences.

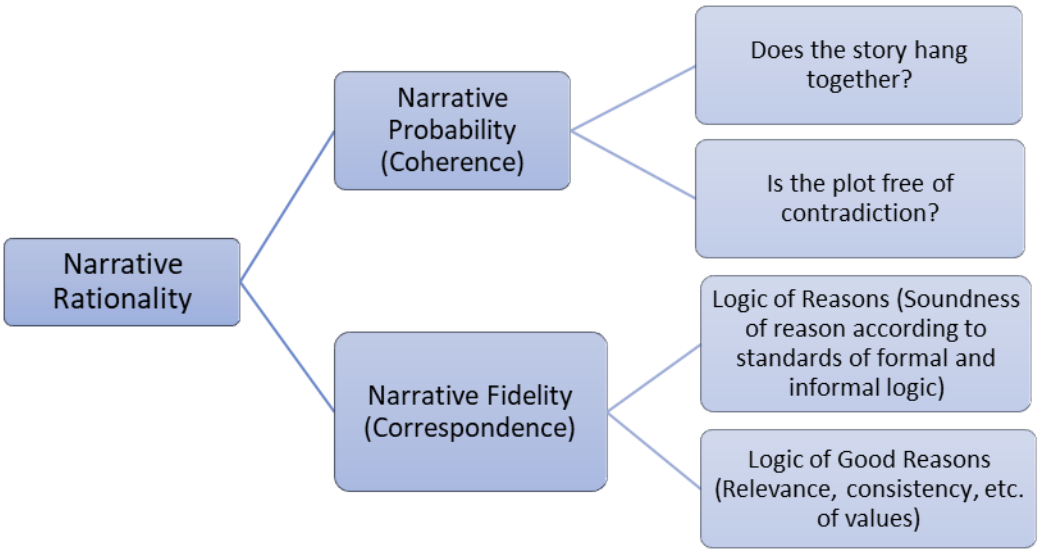

Figure 1. The core of the Narrative Paradigm (Warnick, 1987)

Narrative probability measures a story's structural and logical consistency. Within a coherent narrative, all elements such as characters, plot development, and themes are logically connected and form a believable story. In other words, a coherent story avoids contradictions by maintaining a clear sequence of events and guarantees that the narrative conforms to the audience's expectations and understanding of how stories should unfold (Warnick, 1987). Narrative probability is crucial because audiences have the tendency to accept a story that feels internally consistent and structurally convincing (Fisher, 2021). A narrative lacking coherence may result in losing the audience's trust, as implausible and conflicting elements undermine the credibility of the story.

On the other hand, the second criterion used to assess a story, mentioned by Fisher (1984), is narrative fidelity. This criterion refers to the truthfulness or believability of the story in relation to the audience's previous experiences, values, and cultural context. As depicted in Figure 1, narrative fidelity, also called "correspondence" by Warnick (1987), assesses the "logic of good reasons". This includes the relevance, consistency, and alignment of a narrative with the audience's values. High narrative fidelity helps a story resonate by aligning with what the audiences perceive as reflective or relevant to their living experience. Fidelity is not purely about the accuracy of the story but about whether the narrative "rings true" to the audience's beliefs and moral context. Fisher (1984) argues that fidelity helps audiences to see themselves in the story, allowing it to become a powerful tool for emotional engagement and persuasion. Without this criterion, even a coherent narrative would fail to persuade viewers, as it does not have any connections to their worldview.

Together, narrative probability and narrative fidelity determine the overall effectiveness of a story in persuading and evoking emotion from the audience. A story that lacks probability may confuse and disaffect viewers, while one lacking fidelity may not be able to connect emotionally or be considered inauthentic. Fisher's Narrative Paradigm Theory thus redirects the focus from traditional persuasive techniques based on logical arguments or data-driven evidence to emphasize the importance of stories in shaping attitudes and behaviours through emotional resonance.

In the context of advertising, the Narrative Paradigm serves as an effective framework to evaluate, analyse and understand how brands craft persuasive narratives in advertisements (Wang, 2007). Coherence or fidelity in advertising ensures that the narrative elements, such as narrator, characters, plot, and setting (context), are interrelated in a seamless way to form a compelling story. For instance, Doc Morris's 2020 Christmas advertisement campaign "Matter of the Heart" masterfully delivers a cohesive story with a clear structure about a grandfather's determined daily weightlifting so he can fulfil his wish of lifting his granddaughter to place the star on her Christmas tree. The logical flow of the narrative and the representation of shared values together create a comprehensive and satisfying viewing experience for the audience. However, narrative may face the challenge of becoming overcomplex or changing themes without a clear connection, leading to the audience losing interest, decreased engagement, and emotional impacts.

2.2.3 *Emotional Marketing*

The Concept of Emotional Marketing

An analysis of 1,400 successful marketing advertising campaigns adopted by the IPA Databank revealed that campaigns that purely rely on emotional content performed nearly twice as effectively (31% success rate) compared to those that used only rational content, and slightly outperformed mixed approaches (Deshwal, 2015). Emotions have now become a critical driver that businesses leverage to move customers. According to Consoli (2010), brands transform into the source of emotional energy, fostering a stronger connection with potential customers through their ability to tell exciting stories (emotional branding) and effectively unifying communication, quality, tradition, and identity (brand sensitivity). For business goals, enterprises aim to form with their customers an emotional channel of trust and mutual collaboration. This practice can be seen in the way renowned retailers like John Lewis do with their annual holiday advertisement, which is also much anticipated by their consumers.

Emotional marketing refers to advertising strategies that prioritise evoking specific emotions in consumers to influence their attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours towards a brand or product (Consoli, 2010). As the advertising landscape keeps evolving, emotional marketing, which focuses on leveraging emotions to establish a bond between providers and users, involves using emotional appeals to create a unique connection without repetition. Vrtana and Krizanova (2023) highlight that the primary objective of the emotional advertising campaign is to foster a strong and deep emotional connection between the product, brand, and consumer, thereby strengthening the customer-brand relationship through emotional response.

Unlike traditional marketing, which centers on promoting functional or product features, emotional marketing aims to create meaningful connections by appealing to consumers' feelings, such as nostalgia, joy, or empathy. As customers' pleasure becomes a key focus, unique emotional elements that are added to improve products and services are carefully and ethically crafted and managed. Customers today not only search for products that fulfil their needs and logic. They want items that offer symbolic meaning, psychological and cultural connections, feeling, relationships, and, on top of that, emotions (Deshwal, 2015). In the context of advertising, emotional marketing uses psychological triggers to enhance brand loyalty and encourage purchasing decisions, particularly during festive seasons like Christmas, where emotional resonance aligns with cultural customs and expectations of togetherness and shared generosity.

Key Emotional Appeals in Christmas Advertising

Christmas advertisements often embrace specific emotional appeals to foster resonance with audiences, with nostalgia, joy, and empathy being the most frequent. Nostalgia, derived from the Greek words for "home" and "pain", represents an emotional yearning for or remembrance of a better time and place (Unger et al., 1991). Holbrook and Schindler (1991, cited by Muehling *et al*., 2004) defined nostalgia as a favourable affect toward people, places, or things when a person is younger (in early stages of life or even before birth). It involves positive reflections on past events or experiences, making it a powerful tool in advertising to evoke emotions from customers (Pascal *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, Unger et al (1991) also discuss that the interplay between private and public nostalgia is particularly significant in advertising appeals, as many symbols and images that convey mainstream public nostalgia are rooted in individual private memories.

For the time being, nostalgia has rapidly become a powerful advertising tool in festive campaigns because it invites memories of childhood, family tradition, or the good old days (Leboe and Ansons, 2006). Retail brands like John Lewis or Sainsbury's consistently use nostalgic imagery, such as vintage toys, decorative Christmas trees, and snow-covered cottages, to trigger these memories and create a bridge between the past and present holiday experiences. For example, John Lewis's Christmas advert 2024, "The Gifting Hour," follows the protagonist's journey travelling back to her childhood days to find the perfect gift for her sister, resonating with adults' memories of their childhood excitement. A study conducted by Neeb, Faier, and Unger (1989, cited by Muehling *et al.*, 2004), which investigated how effective nostalgia versus non-nostalgia radio commercials were, showed that advertisements with nostalgic themes might lead to better recall and stronger preference.

While nostalgia serves as the key appeal in Christmas advertising, it has been suggested that it may evoke another dominant emotional appeal: joy (Pascal *et al.*, 2002). Joy is normally conveyed through vibrant visual elements, uplifting music, and general themes of festive celebrations. Retailers' advertising uses bright and festive imagery, such as glittering Christmas trees, family sharing laughter, and a dinner feast, to evoke happiness and shared enjoyment. Happiness makes people want to share because the brain is wired for joy, which can also be a driver of action (Deshwal, 2015). By utilizing joy as the key influencer for social media sharing, advertisers can create Christmas advertising campaigns with great social media engagement and viral content.

Another important emotional appeal that plays a crucial role in Christmas advertising is empathy, which is based on kindness, generosity, and a sense of belonging to a community. According to Horta (2024), since childhood, children have been told Christmas stories, from which they learn not only about symbolic characters such as Santa Claus and Jesus but also about the importance of empathy, of giving and sharing, family, and friendships. These concepts become the emotional foundation of an individual so that they strongly resonate with advertisements that include this touchpoint. Additionally, Rawal and Torres (2017) revealed that emotional appeal has a positive impact on empathy as well as attitude toward the ad, which in turn has a positive impact on engagement.

The combination of these emotional appeals is often amplified by sensory elements, including music and visual storytelling, which create a comprehensively immersive viewing experience. For instance, many iconic Christmas advertising campaigns include the sound of jingling bells and warm colours with soft lighting to create a cozy and warm atmosphere that combines with

the holiday themes. However, a significant challenge appears in balancing the application of these appeals. Overuse of them may lead to emotional overload, diminishing the intended impact and decreasing the advertising's effectiveness.

2.3 Emotional Storytelling in Retail Christmas Advertising

Emotional storytelling techniques are crucial in Christmas advertising. Research showed that nearly 80% of Christmas advertising between 2015 – 2017 employed storytelling, double the average figures for the rest of the year, highlighting the crucial position of narrative advertising in engaging consumers during the holidays (Peña-Taylor, 2018).

One of the most effective elements is the use of nostalgia, which stimulates fond memories associated with past holiday experiences. It involves reflections on past events or experiences, making it a powerful tool in advertising. Cartwright et al. (2016) noticed that the advertisement successfully tapped into nostalgic feelings that can enhance consumer attitudes toward the brand. Horta's study on two television advertising campaigns by John Lewis, Waitrose, and Sainsbury's stated that these brands all used narrative techniques that produced a feeling of nostalgia and cultivated empathy. The effectiveness of these campaigns is considered to come from the storyline that evokes memories and brings back the audience's childhood. This aligns with Unger et al. (1991), who stated that embracing nostalgic elements in advertisements can enhance message retention, as customers are more likely to remember ads that resonate with their personal experiences.

Another critical technique frequently used in emotional storytelling advertising is the use of symbolic characters and imagery. Zatwarnicka-Madura and Nowacki (2018) mentioned that ancient cultures used primitive objects such as animal skins, cave surfaces, and wood to draw, communicate, and preserve their stories with symbols and pictures. It is proven that even in a non-verbal context, pictures, motions, and symbolic signs can effectively convey storytelling power. McErlean (2018) discusses how characters can serve as emotional anchors in narrative storytelling, which enables viewers to be immersed in the story being told. Brands like Coca-Cola have effectively used iconic figures such as Santa Claus to embody the spirit of the Christmas season. Haddon Sundbloom created the Coca-Cola Santa with "brown boots, red suits, and fluffy white beard" which is known today, and reimagined the idea of Santa Claus. According to Weatherford (2019), Coca-Cola company has established a "strong and positive association between the brand, Santa and Christmas". Besides, some famous characters that are featured in advertising during Christmas are Snowmen, reindeer, and Mrs. Claus. These

characters not only enhance the emotional appeal of the advertisement but also create a shared cultural reference that audiences can commonly relate to.

Visual storytelling and the use of sounds play a significant role in delivering emotions. The visual aesthetics of an advertisement, such as colour schemes, lighting, and composition, can set the tone for the narrative and evoke specific feelings. For example, warm colours and soft lighting are often used to create a cozy and warm atmosphere that combines with the holiday themes in Christmas advertising. Another key element of these adverts is the use of song and sound effects, which contribute to the overall emotional impact. In John Lewis's famous Christmas advertisement, covers of existing songs by well-known artists are used as narration of the stories, which help trigger emotional resonance from the audience (Kotler, 2020). Rose (2007) said that sound is crucial to many moving images. Monaco (2000, cited in Rose, 2007)) suggests that sound is categorized as environmental, speech, and music, and they are fundamental to a moving image's expressive content. Sound effects, such as laughter, jingle bells, and the crackling sound of a fireplace, can create an immersive festive atmosphere in Christmas advertising. Tarkovsky (1989, cited by McErlean, 2018) noted that music can be used to "prompt the emotions of the audience in a particular direction, by widening the range of their perception of the visual image". McErlean (2018) also said that music altered how visuals appear and distorted how they are perceived.

Christmas advertising often diverges significantly from typical branding strategies. In fact, only about 10% of Christmas advertising is considered "well-branded", a noticeable contrast to the year-round rate of 30% (Peña-Taylor, 2018). This difference indicates that during the festive season, retail brands prioritise enhancing the emotional bond with consumers over product promotion, leveraging the Christmas advertisements as a cultural event rather than a sales race. The famous retailer John Lewis mastered this concept, and their annual Christmas advertisement campaign successfully became a highly anticipated event in the UK. Furthermore, diversity and inclusivity have increasingly become more popular in Christmas retail advertisements. Brands are incorporating diverse characters and cultural references to reflect broader societal changes and appeal to a wider range of audiences. Recently, Boots' Christmas advert 2024 presented a Black Mrs Claus, sparking conversations and challenging traditional holiday imagery (The Conversation, 2025). From a marketing perspective, Christmas advertisement functions as a powerful brand-building tool, generating social conversations by pushing the creative boundaries and often integrating charitable partnerships (John Lewis's

partnership with Age UK in “The Man on the Moon” to mention the elderly loneliness), which enhances brand equity and amplifies positive social values.

2.4 Audience Response to Emotional Storytelling in Christmas Advertising

Consumer responses to emotional advertising, particularly during the Christmas season, are essential to forming an understanding of how brand storytelling affects brand perception and purchasing behaviours. Several studies show that emotional storytelling significantly impacts consumer attitudes toward advertisements and brands.

Stories have an incredible ability to stick with audiences, especially when they are well-structured and delivered. It is evident in many outstanding examples of Christmas films like It’s a Wonderful Life or Home Alone, which are masters in conveying a sense of “holiday spirit” and “togetherness”. Kent (2015, noted by Hinote, 2020) stated that “Stories that resonate with people are difficult to argue with and can persist over an individual’s lifetime if constructed properly”. This is particularly suitable when it comes to Christmas advertising, where the goal of brands is to evoke strong and lasting emotions. Bagozzi et al (1999, cited by Rigby and Lee, 2024) mentioned that emotional resonance in advertising refers to the power of an advertisement in bringing out a strong emotional response from viewers, resulting in the message being memorized and acted upon. This emotional engagement is considered pivotal in grabbing the audience’s attention, but also in influencing purchase decisions and enhancing brand loyalty (Rigby and Lee, 2024).

Horta (2024) stated that the two advertisements from John Lewis, Waitrose, and Sainsbury’s that embrace storytelling narratives both evoke strong emotional responses from the audience. By combining fantasy and reality rooted in children’s imagination, they explore memorable Christmas experiences: the importance of family and friendship, shared laughter, acts of love, gift-giving, sharing meals, and enjoyment of food.

Vrtana and Krizanova (2023) indicate that advertising with emotional appeal had a significant impact on consumers who belong to Generation Z (young people aged 18-25).

However, variability in customers’ responses to storytelling advertising is noteworthy. Cartwright *et al* (2016) found that while the emotional response toward the adverts is generally positive, customers may still dislike the brand, which indicates that prior brand attitudes do not necessarily affect customers’ attitudes toward the advert.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

This section presents the conceptual framework of the dissertation. The existing literature on storytelling in advertising provides a rich foundation for understanding the narrative structures and emotional appeals. However, there is a gap in the systematic integration of Narrative Paradigm Theory and Emotional Marketing to assess how retail brands craft emotional resonance during the festive season. Existing research on Narrative Paradigm Theory emphasizes narrative probability and fidelity as critical criteria for ensuring effective storytelling (Fisher, 2021). Studies have applied this theory to advertising, turning it into the most effective rhetorical tool for analysing and evaluating storytelling in advertising (Wang, 2008). Similarly, Emotional Marketing studies highlight the role of emotions like nostalgia, joy, and empathy in fostering consumer connection (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Vrtana and Krizanova, 2023). While Narrative Paradigm Theory and Emotional Marketing concepts are well-studied individually, their interplay in the context of Christmas advertising remains underexplored.

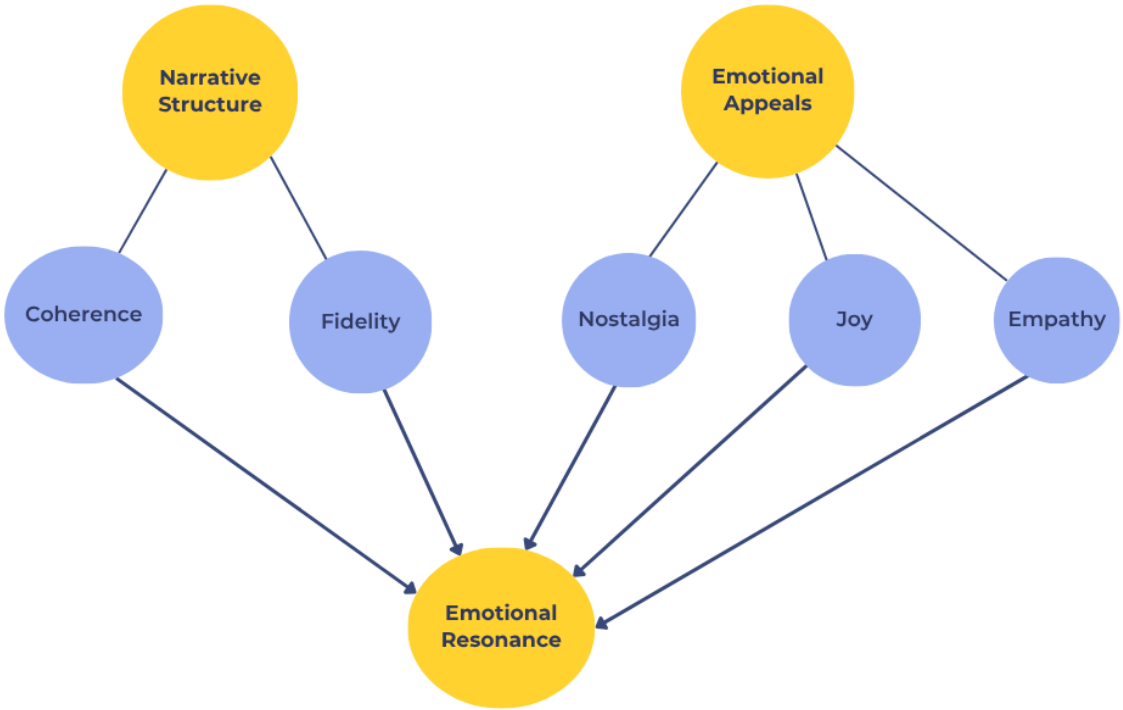

Figure 2. Narrative and Emotional Appeals Integrated Framework

The conceptual framework presented in this section aims to systematically examine how narrative coherence (probability) and fidelity (correspondence) partner with specific emotional appeals to create emotional resonance, particularly in the festive context where cultural and emotional expectations are highly anticipated. This conceptual framework will serve as a guide to analyse a diverse sample of retail advertising in the next chapter, aiming to uncover new insights into narrative emotional intersection, cultural influences in digital dynamics.

The conceptual framework underpinning this research (Figure 2) integrates Fisher's Narrative Paradigm Theory with the principles of Emotional Marketing to explain how storytelling in Christmas advertising succeeds in prompting emotional response. At the core, the framework indicates that narrative probability (coherence) and fidelity (correspondence) are foundational for constructing persuasive advertising narratives (Warnick, 1987). Narrative probability ensures that the story's structure, characters, and events are logically interconnected, which is important to gain the audience's comprehension and trust. However, probability alone is not sufficient. Narrative fidelity, or the alignment of the story with the audience's values and past experiences, is essential for the advertisement to "ring true" and evoke emotional engagement. The interplay between these narrative structure elements serves as a foundation for the performance of emotional appeals (nostalgia, joy, and empathy), which are strategically embedded within the narrative to boost a sense of connection and belonging (Catwright, 2016).

The framework continues with the idea that emotional appeals do not function in isolation but are amplified or weakened by the degree of narrative coherence and fidelity. For instance, nostalgia is most effective when the story's structure is familiar and aligns with shared memories (Muehling *et al.*, 2004). Braun-LaTour and colleagues have stated that memories of childhood, which prompt a nostalgic response, are crucial in evoking emotional resonance (Braun-LaTour et al., 2007). Moreover, as these nostalgic feelings are triggered, consumers tend to develop more favourable attitudes toward the brand due to their higher identification with the advertised message, thereby increasing the ad's persuasiveness (Braun *et al.*, 2002). Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that nostalgia, as an emotional appeal within advertising, actively supports and intertwines with the narrative probability (persuasiveness) in prompting emotional resonance from the audience. Similarly, emotional appeals, such as joy and empathy, are suggested to generate positive influence on advertising, which then has a positive impact on audience engagement (Rawal and Torres, 2017).

Ultimately, the proposed conceptual framework suggests a reciprocal relationship: well-constructed narratives strengthen the effectiveness of emotional appeals, while strategically employed emotional appeals amplify the power of narrative structure, and together they evoke emotional resonance and engagement from audiences. However, the framework also acknowledges potential limitations, such as the risk of emotional manipulation or cultural homogenization, which may in turn affect authenticity and brand trust in the long term.

2.6 Conclusion

The literature review presented in this chapter describes in detail the fundamental concepts of storytelling and recent studies about emotional storytelling in advertising and their ability to evoke emotional response from audiences. The aspects mentioned and discussed consist of the terminology, definitions, and other related information regarding storytelling in advertising and, particularly, in Christmas advertising. The chapter also introduced the Narrative Paradigm Theory and Emotional Marketing concepts, which then assisted in the formation of the conceptual framework that will serve as a guideline to analyse data collected through the content analysis process.

The next chapter will cover the methodological approach and research design that are employed in this dissertation, aiming to achieve the research aim and meet the research objectives mentioned in the Introduction chapter.

3 Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the methodology used to investigate how retail brands use storytelling to foster emotional resonance in Christmas advertising. The methodological approach will be justified and described in detail, guided by the “Research Onion” model designed by Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill in 2018. This model is introduced as a guideline for business and management researchers during their process of creating an effective and reasonable methodology for their studies. The authors proposed six “layers,” including research philosophies, research approaches, research strategies, research choices, time zones, and finally, research techniques and procedures (Saunders et al., 2009).

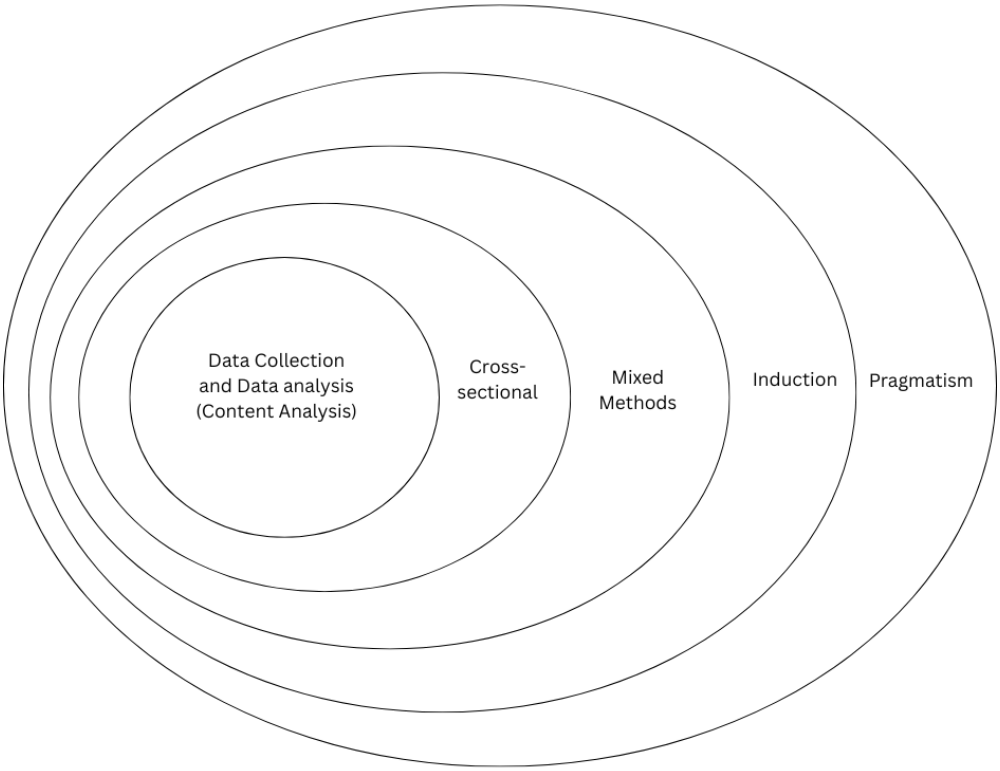

Figure 3. Adapted from "Research Onion" model (Saunders et al., 2009).

Figure 3 illustrates the modified "Research Onion" that is suitable for this dissertation, beginning with the outer layer (the selection of research philosophy) and progressing towards the core layer (data collection and data analysis).

According to Saunders et al (2009), research philosophy represents the researcher's core assumptions about the world, guiding the research strategy and chosen methods. Moreover, this philosophical statement, influenced by researchers' views on knowledge and its development, significantly impacts what and how they investigate. The authors highlighted the four main research philosophies: positivism, realism, pragmatism, and interpretivism. The chosen research philosophy for this dissertation is pragmatism, which will be discussed in more detail in section 3.2. The dissertation embraces an inductive approach, which is rooted in supporting theoretical frameworks from observation of a small sample of subjects (Saunders et al., 2009).

Next, it is crucial to consider the research strategy, which is guided by a combination of research questions, aim and objectives, researcher's existing knowledge, time resources, etc.

Considering the nature of this dissertation, content analysis of Christmas advertisements is most relevant.

Further, following the pragmatism philosophy, mixed-methods design is suitable for the study. By using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis, the dissertation aims to achieve all the objectives mentioned in Chapter 1.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

This study adopted a pragmatism research philosophy, as outlined in section 1.5, which prioritises the research questions as the primary determinant of epistemology, ontology, and axiology (Saunders et al., 2009). Pragmatism is suitable for this exploratory study, as it allows flexibility in combining multiple perspectives and approaches to investigating how retail brands use storytelling to foster emotional resonance.

Research philosophy	Main characteristic
Positivism	Focus on observable phenomena, causality, and generalisations. Value-free and objective. Typically deductive. Uses highly structured, large samples, typically quantitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be analysed (Survey, experiment, quasi-experiment)
Realism	Focus on observable phenomena and underlying causes. Retroductive, in-depth, historically situated analysis of preexisting structures and emerging agency. A range of methods and data types to fit the subject matter.
Interpretivism	Focus on subjective meanings, social phenomena, and motivating actions. Typically inductive. Use small samples, in-depth, qualitative investigations, but a range of data can be analysed (case study, interviews, ethnography)
Pragmatism	Focus on both observable phenomena and subjective meanings. Values

	play a fundamental role. Focus on practical applied research, integrating different perspectives. Uses mixed or multiple method designs, quantitative or qualitative.

Table 1. Main characteristics of the four research philosophies (Saunders et al., 2009; Muhaise et al., 2020)

Unlike positivism, which assumes one true reality, or interpretivism, which highlights subjective meanings, the pragmatism philosophy emphasizes multiple realities and enables researchers to select research methods based on their practical utility in addressing the research objectives.

Interpretivism philosophy emphasises the understanding of subjective meaning and social construction behind the human role as social actors (Saunders et al., 2009). Thus, it is suitable for narrative analysis, seeking to uncover the messages and cultural context in stories. However, as interpretivism philosophy is rooted in in-depth qualitative analysis, it would limit this study's ability to quantify the prevalence of emotional appeals across the sampled advertisements. Pragmatism, by contrast, is not committed to any one approach or philosophy. Pragmatism is a more reasonable choice for this research, as it allows both the systematic measurement of emotional strategies and the interpretative analysis of narrative structure, addressing the dual aims of the study.

Pragmatism can serve as "a philosophical program for social research, regardless of whether that research uses qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods" (Morgan, 2014). Moreover, pragmatism focuses on the connection between knowledge and action, highlighting how they influence each other. This makes it a suitable philosophical framework for research that actively intervenes in the world to suggest practical solutions, rather than just observing it (Goldkuhl, 2012). Therefore, this philosophy is suitable for this study as it supports the integration of quantitative content analysis (to identify emotional appeals) and qualitative content analysis (to assess narrative structure), aligning with the study's aims to explore the intersection of Narrative Paradigm Theory and Emotional Marketing.

Epistemologically, according to Muhaise et al (2020), pragmatism philosophy enables the use of both objective data (for example, the frequency of emotional appeals in advertisements) and subjective interpretations (for example, the narrative meaning and structure). This supports the establishment of a comprehensive understanding of how storytelling drives

consumers' emotional engagement. Regarding ontological nature, it acknowledges that reality is shaped by both observable phenomena and contextual interpretation, which is useful when assessing advertisements from various retailers, whether premium or budget. This philosophy also ensures the research is value-driven, providing practical insights for retail marketers while managing to maintain ethical standards in data collection and data analysis.

Following that, this study employs an inductive approach, which is appropriate for generating theoretical insights from empirical observation, aligning with the fourth objective of this study, as outlined in section 1.5. This approach starts with detailed data collection from Christmas advertisements (2019-2024) to identify patterns in emotional appeals (nostalgia, joy, and empathy) and narrative structures, then addressing the gap in literature regarding how these elements interact to create resonance.

Thus, the study will adopt a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative content analysis to address the research objectives: identifying the emotional appeals that are most frequently used in Christmas advertising campaigns by selected retail brands, analysing the narrative structures and coherence based on Narrative Paradigm Theory, assessing their interplay, and developing a theoretical framework for effective storytelling (Section 1.4). Guided by a pragmatism research philosophy, methodology priorities flexibility in combining methods to answer the research questions effectively (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.3 Research Strategy

The literature review of this dissertation indicates that there is a lack of previous studies on the systematic integration of the Narrative Paradigm Theory and Emotional Marketing to analyse how narrative probability, fidelity, and emotional appeals (nostalgia, joy, empathy) evoke emotional resonance in holiday advertising. As mentioned in the previous section, content analysis is selected for this research strategy for its ability to systematically describe and interpret media content, enabling both quantitative measurement of emotional appeals and qualitative analysis of narrative structure.

Content analysis is particularly relevant for this research since it is illustrated as a scientific study of the content of communication, referencing the contexts, underlying meanings, and intentions contained in the messages (Prasad, 2008). Furthermore, content analysis has a systematic and structured approach, allowing a comprehensive examination of storytelling techniques in the proposed context. Unlike other methods, such as surveys or interviews, content analysis focuses on existing media content, enabling researchers to identify patterns,

themes, and trends in advertising without the influence of participants' biased opinions. According to Neuendorf (2017), this method applies to multiple forms of media, including television commercials and social media posts, making it suitable for examining the diverse advertising strategies conducted by retailers. Additionally, advancements in technology, such as on-demand streaming and mobile access, have significantly improved the accessibility of media content, particularly Christmas advertising, for researchers, allowing for the correction of coding errors or retrieval of missing data (Neuendorf, 2017).

For the first objective (to identify the emotional appeals that are most frequently used in Christmas advertising campaigns by selected retail brands), quantitative content analysis (calculating frequencies and percentages) will systematically identify what emotional appeals are present and how often they appear across chosen advertisements from retail brands. Complementing this, for the second objective (to analyse the narrative structures and coherence of Christmas advertisements, based on Narrative Paradigm Theory), qualitative content analysis will seek to interpret the narrative structure, deeper meaning, and symbolic elements within the adverts, focusing on coherence and fidelity as outlined in Narrative Paradigm Theory.

Research Objectives	Method Used	Analysis Techniques
Identify the emotional appeals that are most frequently used in Christmas advertising campaigns by selected retail brands	Content analysis	Quantitative (Frequency and percentage calculations)
Analyse the narrative structures and coherence of Christmas advertisements	Content analysis	Qualitative (Thematic analysis using Narrative Paradigm Theory)
Assess the interplay between emotional appeals and narrative elements	Integrated content analysis	Quantitative & Qualitative (Thematic synthesis)
Develop a theoretical framework for effective storytelling in Christmas advertising	Synthesis of findings	Qualitative (Inductive theory prompted from data)

Table 2: Mapping Research Objectives to Analysis Techniques

However, it is important to note that the subjective nature of understanding narrative techniques and responses to them is one of the main obstacles in content analysis. The same advertisement may be interpreted differently by different coders, which results in inconsistent coding. To counteract this, researchers participating in the coding process will participate in intense training sessions, and inter-coder reliability tests will be carried out to guarantee consistency (Neuendorf, 2017).

3.4 Collection Primary Data

3.4.1 *Sources*

This study's population comprises Christmas video advertisements produced by five renowned retail brands targeting the English-speaking market (primarily the UK, Western Europe, and the US), published and aired during the five years from 2020 – 2024. This time frame is suitable to capture the contemporary advertising trends and relevant insights.

The sampling frame is defined as a set of fifteen advertisements released by five renowned retailers (John Lewis: 5, Amazon: 5, Apple: 2, Coca-Cola: 2, Doc Morris: 1). These brands are chosen for their prominence and consistent production of high-quality Christmas advertisements and broad cultural impact. While John Lewis is known for their iconic, narrative-driven Christmas adverts that set the industry standard, Amazon and Apple are famous for their emotionally rich and cinematic holiday campaigns. Coca-Cola has always been a pioneer in Christmas advertising, while Doc Morris gained international recognition for its emotionally resonant 2020 holiday advertisement. These retail brands are also selected for their diverse industry representation, including department stores, e-commerce, technology, pharmaceuticals, and beverages, ensuring a broad yet practical scope.

To manage the sampling process, this study focused on the English-speaking market, as these regions represent the target audiences for the selected brands' advertising campaigns. The Christmas advertisement has been a notable phenomenon ingrained in UK culture, indicating significant cultural relevance and thus making it easier for the researcher to gain access to the video content directly through YouTube or brands' official communication channels. Furthermore, by limiting the study's population to English-speaking adverts, the study can avoid variables and inconsistency regarding language and cultural differences, which could make it harder for the researcher to analyse the stories and emotional appeals in the sampled advertisements.

The sample of fifteen video advertisements (ranging from 1:30 to 3:56 in length) is justified as a purposeful yet manageable number for this mixed-methods content analysis. To achieve this, a non-random sampling strategy has been adopted because the research question requires an in-depth exploration of specific, information-rich cases known for their storytelling, in which the researcher is enabled to extract valuable insights (Saunders et al., 2009). For the qualitative content analysis, while theoretical saturation might require a larger sample, the in-depth and scene-by-scene coding of fifteen complex narratives in advertisements will highlight the thematic patterns related to probability and fidelity. This purposive sampling method, which focuses on high-profile retail brands and a five-year span, is feasible and ensures that each video advertisement is meticulously analysed for both emotional appeals and narrative structures within the limited time resource.

Last but not least, the sampling is defined as Christmas advertisements available on the YouTube platform, accessed via official brand channels or advertising archive channels. YouTube is chosen as the main source due to its significant status as the second-largest search engine and a dominant platform for video content distribution (GMI Research, 2025). This guarantees an accessible and authentic data source, as brands typically upload official campaign videos to engage broader audiences.

3.4.2 *Access and Ethical Issues*

While this research focuses on publicly available media productions, ethical considerations regarding data use should still be handled carefully. Access to advertisements is via YouTube channels, offering free public access to retailers' 2020-2024 Christmas advertisement campaigns. Reliability of the source is ensured by cross-checking the advertisement's information on YouTube channels with the official release date and official announcement.

Ethical considerations are top priorities. However, since the chosen advertisement is publicly available, no individual interaction or sensitive data is involved during the data collection process. This research will comply with copyright law and guarantee proper citation of all advertisements mentioned and quoted, maintaining source transparency by including the YouTube URL for each advertisement. To avoid misrepresentation, the collection and analysis of data are grounded in the conceptual framework proposed in Chapter 2 and detailed coding.

A coding schedule will be developed based on the defined categories for piloting purposes before the actual study. Subsequently, pilot testing will be conducted with a small sample of about 2 advertisements to ensure that the coding schedule includes all the necessary

information. In this testing process, the study aims to identify overlaps, inconsistencies, or inadequacies in coding categories. After that, I will make any adjustments needed to guarantee that I, as the main coder, understand how to apply the coding schedule effectively. This will ensure the research will be conducted in a logical manner.

After pilot testing, an intercoder reliability test will be conducted by having several researchers independently code the set of advertisements using the finalized coding schedule. This step is to evaluate the consistency and validity of the coding schedule. Differences in coding will be discussed and resolved to reach a consensus.

3.5 Approach to Data Analysis

As this study embraces the mixed-method approach, a codebook will be used to organize and process data gathered from primary data to serve the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

This section outlines the approach to analysing the fifteen Christmas video advertisements, embracing a mixed-method approach that includes both quantitative and qualitative content analysis to explore the emotional appeals (nostalgia, joy, empathy) and narrative elements (probability and fidelity). Data gathered from the coding process will be structured and organized using a codebook, which is designed to identify patterns, relationships, and themes across the chosen adverts (Saunders et al., 2009).

Firstly, for the quantitative analysis, frequencies and percentages of the three emotional appeals (nostalgia, joy, empathy) will be calculated, reflecting their appearance across the sample. Data collected through the coding process, identifying emotional appeals by medium (visual, auditory, verbal), will then be integrated into a dataset. Next, when the data collection is completed, the analysis will utilize Excel for quantitative calculations and visualizations. Frequencies will be calculated for each emotional appeal type and medium, followed by percentage computed to assess the proportion of appeals used in the chosen ads and their distribution. This aims to meet the first objective of this study.

Secondly, for qualitative content analysis, the Narrative Paradigm Theory will be employed to evaluate probability (structural clarity, logical flow, consistency) and fidelity (truthfulness, resonance, alignment with cultural values) (Fisher, 2021). This approach aims to interpret the deeper meaning and symbolic structures that support emotional appeals, aligning with the conceptual framework's focus. Qualitative data are associated with such concepts and are characterised by their richness and fullness based on your opportunity to explore a subject in

as real a manner as is possible (Robson, 2002, cited by Saunders et al., 2009). Data will be coded scene-by-scene using a detailed template, with notes on specific timestamps. A manual template will be utilized for qualitative coding, ensuring efficient data management.

To ensure consistency in data coding, a codebook has been prepared. Regards of quantitative coding identifies and counts instances of emotional appeals within each advertisement, using the three categories: nostalgia, joy, and empathy.

Category	**Definition**	**Example**
Nostalgia	Scene or action evoking memories or longing for the past Christmases, traditions, or childhood memories. Often conveyed through vintage imagery or sentimental references.	- Scenes of vintage toys, old-fashioned Christmas decorations, and old family photos - Flashback to the characters' childhood Christmases - References to traditions - Use of traditional/classic Christmas songs, carols (e.g, "Silent Night", "White Christmas")
Joy	Content representing happiness, delight, or festive cheer. Typically shown through people's smiles, celebrations, or upbeat music.	- Smiling/laughing characters (families or friends) - Joyful reunions - Vibrant, bright colours - Upbeat, lively background music - Scenes of dancing, singing, joking, or gift-giving
Empathy	Content evoking compassion, sympathy, understanding of others' difficulties or loneliness, helping behaviours	- Depictions of loneliness or an excluded character who is then comforted or included - An act of kindness or help - Tearful moment (happy/sad tears) - Emotional background music

Table 3. Quantitative Coding Categories

The quantitative coding begins with each advertisement be divided into manageable units with timestamp. Then, the coder will identify and categories each distinct instance of nostalgia, joy,

and empathy by medium: visual (imagery, actions, gesture), auditory (background music, sounds), and verbal (dialogue, text). All the elements will be meticulously noted in a master Excel spreadsheet for later data analysing process.

Likewise, qualitative variables will be coded logically based on two coding categories: narrative probability and narrative fidelity, as presented in Table 4.

Category	**Definition**	**Example**
Probability (Structural Coherence)	*Structural Coherence:* - The logical flow of the story, with a clear beginning, middle, and ending. - Consistency of character actions	- Character motivations are clearly explained and make sense. - Sequential depiction of a family preparing for Christmas, logically leading from scene to scene. - For example, a plot moving from loneliness to recognition to connection.
Fidelity	- Truthfulness and alignment with the audience's values or Christmas experiences - Emotional or cultural impact connected with viewers' beliefs or feelings	- Acts of kindness or togetherness that resonate with the audience's memories and values of Christmas. - Dialogue or situation that feels sincere and realistic (for example, a family gathering or helping others) - Gift-giving scene represents festive generosity.

Table 4. Qualitative Coding Categories

Thematic synthesis will integrate findings across the Christmas advertisement, exploring how narrative elements amplify emotional appeals. This complements the quantitative data,

suggesting a new framework that integrates narratives and emotional strategies to guide effective storytelling in Christmas advertising.

To ensure the coding framework is practical and comprehensive, a pilot test of the coding categories was conducted using three advertisements excluded from the final sample (John Lewis's *Man on the Moon*, John Lewis's *Edgar the Excitable Dragon*, John Lewis's *The Long Wait*). This process allowed for the refinement of coding definitions and clarifications of category boundaries. Any ambiguities regarding the codebook were thoroughly assessed and adjusted, thereby improving the validity and consistency of the final coding process.

Moreover, the subjective nature of understanding narrative techniques and responses to them is one of the main obstacles in content analysis. The same advertisement may be interpreted differently by different coders, which results in inconsistent coding. To counteract this, researchers participating in the coding process will participate in intense training sessions, and inter-coder reliability tests could guarantee consistency (Neuendorf, 2017). However, as this study was completed by a single-coder, inter-coder reliability could not be statistically assessed. To address this limitation, the researcher intensively follows the codebook, conducted a pilot coding session, and re-code random advertisements after one-week time to highlight any intra-coder inconsistency (Mikhaylov et al., 2008). High agreement (> 90%) was observed between the first and repeated code.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter embraced the detailed research methodology adapted from the "Research Onion" model presented by Saunders et al (2009). Pragmatism was chosen as the primary research philosophy, which guides the research to adopt a mixed-method approach to ensure flexibility in meeting the research objectives effectively. Moreover, by using the inductive strategy, this study narrows existing advertising knowledge into a cohesive structure, which is supported by a conceptual framework.

Quantitative content analysis was selected to measure frequencies and percentages of emotional appeals, while qualitative content analysis, informed by the Narrative Paradigm Theory, will assess the narrative coherence and fidelity. Data collection involved fifteen sampled advertisements from YouTube, analysed using a codebook and thematic analysis. The process includes coding for patterns, categorising themes, and integrating findings to thoroughly address the research aims and objectives.

4 Presentation and Discussion of the Findings

4.1 Overview

This chapter will present and discuss the findings from quantitative and qualitative coding of fifteen Christmas advertisements, aiming to systematically and logically address the study's core objectives: to systematically identify the presence and frequency of emotional appeals (nostalgia, joy, empathy), to analyse narrative structures and coherence through the Narrative Paradigm Theory, and to develop a theoretical framework that integrates narratives and emotional strategies to guide effective storytelling in Christmas advertising. Building around the methodology outlined in Chapter 3, this analysis section draws on data collected from sampled advertisements by John Lewis, Amazon, Apple, Coca-Cola, and Doc Morris, published between 2020 – 2024. These video advertisements are sourced from YouTube.

First, this chapter will present the quantitative findings, detailing the frequency and distribution of emotional appeal across the sample in Section 4.2. Next, the qualitative insights into narrative coherence and fidelity, integrated with the quantitative observation of emotional appeals, will be included in Section 4.3. In addition to that, these findings are integrated with the proposed theoretical framework, offering a comprehensive understanding of how retail brands craft compelling storytelling in festive advertisements. This mixed-method approach's purpose is to meet the research questions and objectives, allowing for a thorough exploration of both what emotional appeals are present and how they are narratively constructed. The framework aims to be the primary theory guiding this inductive research study and serve as a framework for future study and as a recommendation for retail brands when it comes to crafting Christmas advertisement that evoke positive emotional impact among audiences.

However, the analysis is not without limitations. As a single coder, subjective and personal understanding may influence the interpretations. This could be mitigated by self-monitoring and the process of re-coding random advertisements after one-week time to highlight any intra-coder inconsistency.

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 *Quantitative Findings*

4.2.1.1 Overview of Quantitative Data

This sub-section provides an overview of the quantitative data collection from the coding of fifteen Christmas video advertisements, focusing on the frequency of three emotional appeals, including nostalgia, joy, and empathy as outlined in the conceptual framework in Chapter 2. The adverts are sourced from John Lewis (5), Amazon (5), Apple (2), Coca-Cola (2), and Doc Morris (1), aired or published between 2020 and 2024. The analysis records distinct instanced of these emotional appeals by medium (visual, auditory, verbal), aligning with the study's first objective to systematically identify their presence and frequency.

A total of 241 emotional appeals were identified across the fifteen video advertisements. Empathy was the most used emotional appeal, with 116 instances, accounted for 48% of total appeals. Joy followed with 65 instances (27%), and the figure for nostalgia was 60 instances (25%).

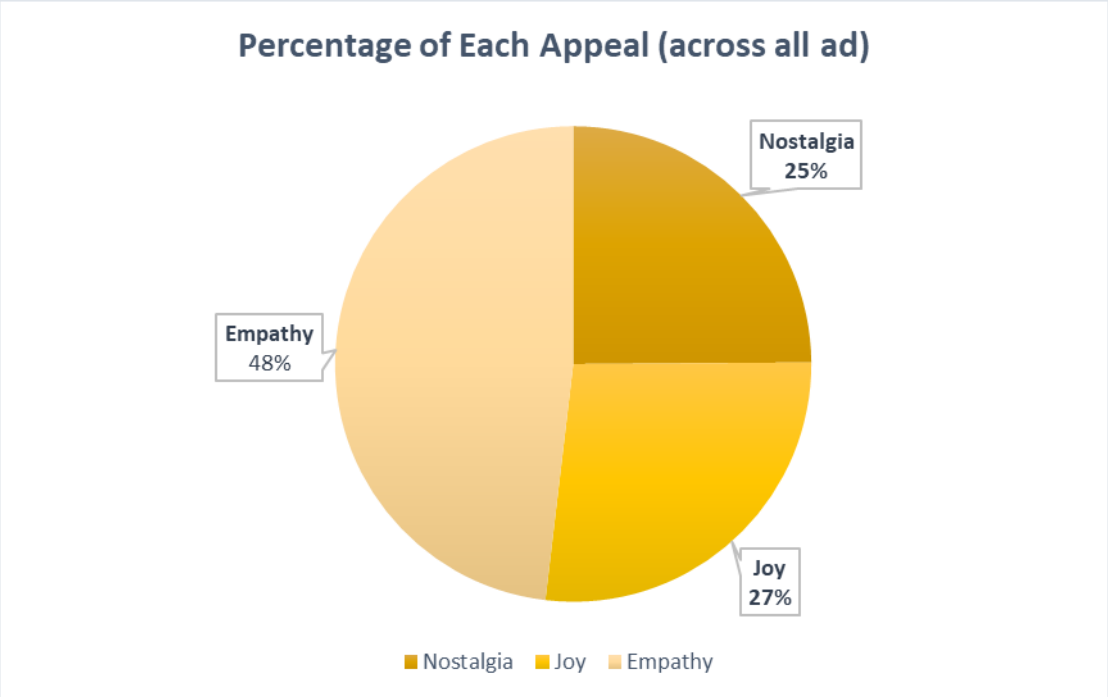

Figure 4. Percentage of each appeal across all advertisements

Further reinforcing the strategic application of these appeals, the data shows that all fifteen analysed adverts contained at least one instance of both joy and empathy appeals (100%).

Nostalgia, while not as frequent, was still included in 14/15 advertising video (93%), indicating its strong impact. This widespread presence suggests a strategic emphasis on empathy and joy, potentially signalling contemporary Christmas theme of compassion, celebration, and happiness though nostalgia deserves further exploration.

On the other hand, as can be seen in Figure 5 the distribution of emotional appeals across mediums has shown remarkable patterns. Out of a total of 241 instances, visual elements are the primary drivers of emotional appeals in assessed Christmas advertisements, accounting for 159 instances (66%). Auditory which represents music and sound effects, contributes 63 instances (26%). Although verbal elements are the least frequent with 19 instances recorded (8%), they still effectively reinforce the key emotional messages within Christmas advertising.

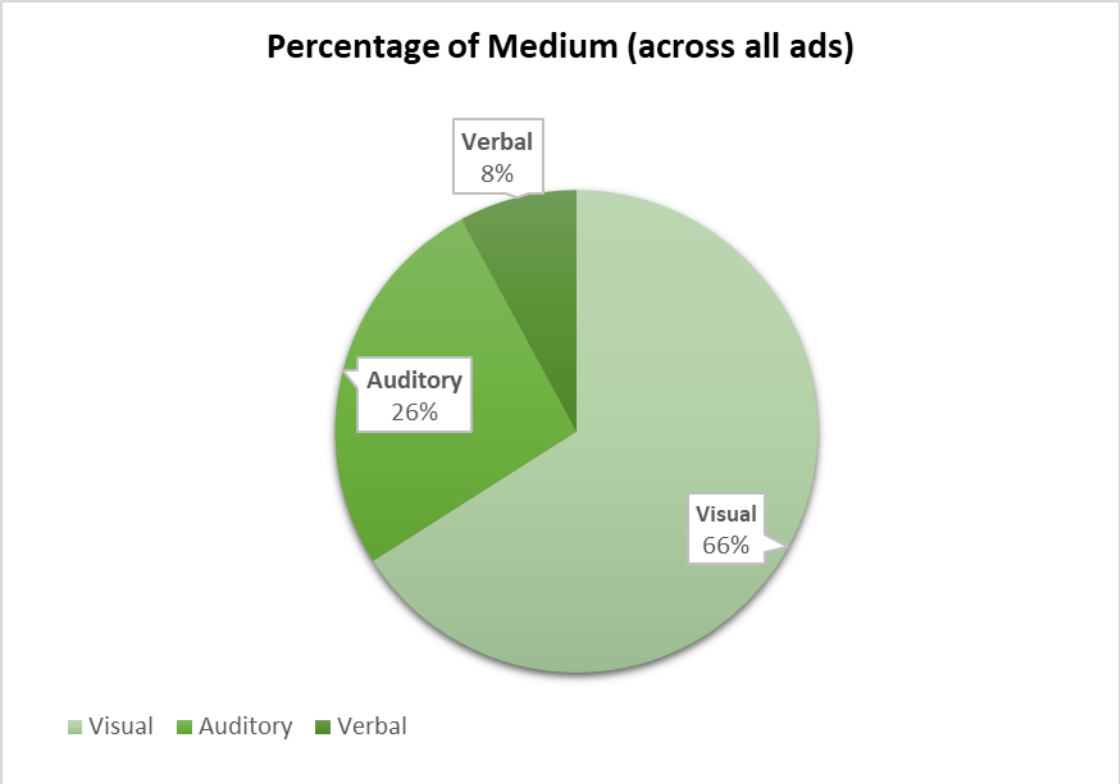

Figure 5. Percentage of medium across all advertisements

4.2.1.2 Frequency and Distribution of Emotional Appeals

Distribution of Appeals by Individual Advertisements

The distribution of emotional appeals across individual Christmas advertisements (kindly refer to Appendix A) reveals patterns when analysed by brand. This provides insights into the

strategic use of emotional appeals within the chosen brands' holiday campaigns from 2020 to 2024.

Examining John Lewis's five Christmas advertisements, which are famous for their emotional storytelling techniques, consistently demonstrate a significant reliance on empathy. For example, John Lewis 2020 advertisements "Give a Little Love", allocated 70% of its appeals to empathy, significantly higher than 22% for joy and almost 9% for nostalgia. Similarly, in the next three years, this retail brand still chose to utilize the use of empathy, which accounted for more than 50% of the total appeals in 2021, 2022, 2023 advertising campaigns. However, the John Lewis Christmas 2024 advert "The Gifting Hour" showcased the highest nostalgia level at 46%, balancing between joy and empathy at 29% and 25%, respectively. This indicates that John Lewis's holiday campaigns mainly leverage sentimental, heartfelt and empathetic theme which aimed at reinforcing family and tradition-oriented content, aligning with their brand identity.

In contrast, Amazon's holiday advertisements present a more varied approach. Empathy is still the dominant emotional appeals, with greatest percentages among 3/5 assessed advertisements. However, a notable trend occurred with Amazon's advertisement in 2022 and 2023, with joy became the most frequently used appeals (50% and 55%, respectively). This shift indicates a deliberate change towards more positive emotional engagement in specific campaigns. Nostalgia, however, is less consistently employed in Amazon's advert. Particularly, Amazon Christmas 2021 advert, titled "Kindness, the greatest gift", did not record any significant instances of nostalgia. This mixture of empathy and joy is more likely to show that Amazon's branding focus on adaptive strategies that based on contemporary societal issue or product launches rather than nostalgic approach.

Apple's two sampled advertisements in 2021 and 2024 present remarkable level of nostalgia (35% and 47%), emphasizing reflective sentimental appeals. While empathy remains steady around 40 – 53%, joy witnessed relatively low percentages of about 12% for both examined Christmas advertisements. This may suggest that Apple's Christmas advertisement focus more on emotionally introspective and meaningful content rather than joyous celebration, consistent with their sophisticated brand's identity.

Next, Coca-Cola Christmas 2020 and Coca-Cola Christmas 2023 advertisements more equally leverage joy (29% and 39%) and nostalgia (21% and 31%, with empathy accounted for 50% and

28% of total emotional appeals, respectively. These figures reflect their long-standing traditional festive marketing as a global icon of happiness and shared celebratory moments.

Finally, the Doc Morris's famous Christmas 2020 campaign also demonstrated a strong emphasis on empathy at 63% and moderate joy (25%), further solidifying the trends of utilizing this empathy to foster deeper consumer connection during holiday.

Medium Distribution of Emotional Appeals

The choice of medium plays a significant role in the strategic delivery of emotional appeals in retail Christmas advertisements. Visual mediums are the most dominantly used to convey all three emotional appeals. For nostalgia, 72% of its instances are visually presented. Similarly, 68% of joy and 62 of empathy appeals are also delivered through visual elements. These recorded figures emphasize the power of visual storytelling through imagery, character expressions, and cinematic setting in generating specific emotional responses.

On the other hand, auditory mediums, regarding music and sound effects embedded in Christmas advertising videos, provide significant support to the presentation of emotional appeals. 25% of nostalgia, 26% of joy, and 28% of empathy are conveyed through auditory channels. This indicates that while visuals play a key role in setting the primary emotional tone of the adverts, sound plays a vital role in enhancing and deepening the emotional resonance, often by creating atmosphere or supporting key moments.

Appeal / ***Medium***	**Nostalgia**	**Joy**	**Empathy**
Visual	72%	68%	62%
Auditory	25%	26%	28%
Verbal	3%	8%	10%

Table 5: Percentage of medium used for each appeal (across all advertisements)

Last but not least, verbal appeals, which is identified through dialogue or text, are least used across all advertisements. They account for only 3% of nostalgia, 8% of joy, and 10% of empathy. Among all the examined advertisements, verbal elements mainly appear as a closing text at the final montages, aligning with the adverts' general theme and the brand's messages. Its lower proportion suggests that emotional impact among retail holiday advertising campaign is primarily driven by non-verbal channels.

4.2.2 *Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings*

4.2.2.1 Overview of Narrative Analysis

The qualitative analysis of fifteen chosen Christmas advertisements employed a scene-by-scene approach to better understand the narrative structure, focusing on probability (coherence) and fidelity as grounded in Fisher's (1984) Narrative Paradigm Theory, which has been included in the conceptual framework from Chapter 2. This theoretical-based approach emphasizes two essential criteria for assessing narrative rationality. Structural coherence refers to the logical flow and consistency of the story, including clear beginnings, plot developments, and resolutions that enable the audience to follow the narrative logically without confusion. Meanwhile, fidelity referred to the truthfulness, authenticity, and the alignment of the story with its target audience's values or Christmas experiences. In other words, fidelity indicating how believable the narrative is to the target audience. By applying these criteria, the analysis seeks to reveal how retail Christmas advertisements construct meaningful stories that deeply connect with viewers on both logical and emotional levels.

The qualitative analysis was conducted through a detailed coding process, segmenting each advertisement into key parts with timestamp to evaluate how narrative elements unfold at each stage. The researchers, after having carefully watch the advertisement, assessed the structural coherence through scene progression, narrative transition, the clarity of character motivation, and especially the presence of conflict/questionable motivation and resolution. Fidelity was examined by evaluating the emotional authenticity, cultural alignment with Christmas values such as kindness, generosity, and family bonding, and the extent to which the narrative evokes nostalgia, empathy, or joy in a truthful manner.

Moreover, the narrative analysis will complement the quantitative analysis, deepening the understanding of how the interplay between emotional appeals and narrative coherence contributes to crafting emotional resonance and consumer engagement during the holiday season. This integrative analysis of quantitative and qualitative findings aims to meet the third research objective as mentioned in chapter 1.

4.2.2.2 Narrative and Emotional Patterns Across Individual Advertisements

John Lewis Christmas 2020 Advertisement "Give a Little Love"

During the 2020 holiday season, Joh Lewis released a heart-warming live-action and animated advertisements captured the national mood during a lockdown Christmas by showcasing eight random acts of kindness. Once again, the two-minute-long advert adopt John Lewis's successful approach to storytelling, exhibiting a strong structural coherence. The advert started with a girl's act of kindness that triggers a logical chain of generosity across scenes, showing "different characters helping others, with a love heart as a central theme throughout" (Wilson, 2020).

This advert tells a series of small, meaningful stories, each with a clear beginning, middle, and end. The seamless flow between scenes and subtle development of characters keep the overall narrative cohesive. The advertisement effectively uses a combination of visuals and music to highlight a chain of kind actions, beginning with a girl helping a boy retrieve his ball, while later scenes reinforce togetherness through actions like sending gift to neighbours, comforting friends… Ultimately, the montage ties story threads logically to close as the advertisement concludes by showcasing kindness is cyclical and impactful.

In terms of fidelity, John Lewis Christmas 2020 advertisement deeply resonates by authentically portraying themes of kindness and generosity. This strong alignment with the traditional value of Christmas was particularly impactful during the pandemic, when the desire for community connection and helping others was at its peak. Quantitatively, it is recorded that 70% of emotional appeals in this video advertisement is empathy, reflecting that the high empathy frequency enhances the coherent narrative flow, creating a persuasive emotional atmosphere that aligns with the conceptual framework suggestion.

John Lewis Christmas 2021 Advertisement "Unexpected Guest"

The John Lewis Christmas 2021 advert, titled "Unexpected Guest", employs a clear and engaging narrative structure. It begins with a surprising incident: a young boy discovers an alien whose spaceship crashes in the wood besides his home. This establishes the initial encounter and introduces the two central characters.

Next, the middle of the narrative focuses on their developing friendship and the alien's first Christmas. The boy acts as a guide, introducing her to festive traditions like decorating tree with lights, sharing mince pies, watching classic Christmas movie, and playing in the snow. During these scene, empathy, joy and nostalgia appeals are carefully embedded, creating an emotional connection with viewers. Finally, the story comes to a resolution as the alien's

spaceship is repaired and she must leave. The climax is presented by a heartfelt and bittersweet goodbye and the boy's gift-giving, symbolizing their unique friendship.

The fidelity of this advert is strong as it evokes emotional authenticity around sharing and acceptance, consistent with Christmas cultural themes of empathy - help among friends. This emotional resonance is primarily amplified by the leverage of empathy appeals (50%), balanced with elements of nostalgia (29%) and joy (21%). Moreover, setting in the context of society returning to normal after the pandemic, this storytelling advert delivered a core message: the value of Christmas and the lasting impact of sharing, particularly relevant during a time when connection was highly appreciated.

John Lewis Christmas 2022 Advertisement "The Beginner"

Developed in collaboration with partner charities Action for Children and Who Cares? Scotland (John Lewis, 2022), has meticulously utilized narrative coherence to deliver its twisty yet poignant message. Viewers are left questioning the motive behind his perseverance until the final scene that explains everything.

The story opens with a clear beginning that introduces a middle-age man's persistent struggle to learn skateboarding amidst a festive backdrop. This immediate focus on his attempts creates an initial mystery for the viewer and builds curiosity about his motivation. Then, this narrative progress through a steady middle, showcasing various humorous actions and his unwavering attempts. This allows audience to be transported into the narrative as they witness the protagonist's journey of self-improvement, even as the ultimate purpose remains unrevealed. Finally, the advertisement culminates in a powerful answer when a knock at the man's door unveils a social worker with Ellie, a young teenager entering her new foster home with skateboard in her hand. This final emotional climax provides the narrative's crucial reveal, immediately brings clarity to the man's earlier efforts and illustrating his silent yet dedicated commitment to Ellie by creating a common hobby. This coherent and creative narrative structure effectively builds anticipation and delivers a strong emotional note to the advertisement.

The advertisement achieves strong fidelity by realistically portraying human determination driven by a sincere desire for connection with loved ones, particularly within the sensitive and socially relevant context of foster care system. Quantitatively, "The Beginning" features 58% empathy appeals and 31% joy, delivering mostly through characters' expression. This integration depicts that empathy's high frequency is likely to reinforce narrative fidelity which

deeply align with audience's core Christmas value of kindness and family inclusion, and doing things for others.

John Lewis Christmas 2023 Advertisement "Snapper: The Perfect Tree"

John Lewis 2023's "Snapper: The Perfect Tree" presents a coherence stories which emphasizes the exclusion-to-acceptance progress. The advert opens with the scene of the protagonist – a boy – bringing home a mysterious seed and nurturing in the belief that he is cultivating the perfect Christmas tree. As the narrative flows, audience witness the plant outgrowing and showing its playful personality. The conflict appears as the tree grows too big for the living room and it then be moved out into the cold by the family, leaving the boy feeling sad. The resolution arrives as the boy deciding to bring gifts outside to comfort the tree and the family join him. Viewers later see Snapper welcomed back into family life, giving out presents and the family find a new joy in gathering around their unconventional Christmas tree.

On the other hand, this advert demonstrates fidelity by evoking emotional experiences related to family, sense of belonging, and reminiscent of childhood friend through the theme of empathetic inclusion during festive season where no one is left alone. The advert aims to show how empathy and acceptance can lead to joyful experience together for everyone. In terms of emotional appeals, the quantitative result shows that 58% appeals used in this advert is empathy, coupled with joy at 32%. The musical backdrop, performed by the renowned Tenor Andrea Bocelli, also sets the emotional tone of the story and perfectly align with the advert's narrative. This strategic integration of narrative and emotional appeals successfully evoke connection with target audience who anticipated this advert.

John Lewis Christmas 2024 Advertisement "The Gifting Hour"

In their 2024 Christmas advert, the famous retail brand unfolded a smooth narrative structural coherence, starting with the scene where the protagonist rushing into a John Lewis store at closing time to find a gift for her sister. This immediately established the protagonist, her motivation, and the narrative's central challenge. Her fantastical journey, starting in the attic of her childhood home, serves as the middle of the narrative. The advert presents fluent sequence which guiding audiences through Sally's memories, visually representing her internal search for the unique present while the clock is ticking. Together with effective use of emotional appeals, with nostalgia predominantly used (46%), this segment of the narrative builds a sense of nostalgic exploration and emotional connection.

At the end, the advertisement concludes in a satisfying resolution as Sally returns to reality with a perfectly wrapped gift. The climax occurs when the protagonist shares a special moment with her sister – the recipient, emphasizing that the secret to find the perfect gift is about memories and connection with loved ones.

In terms of fidelity, this two-minute-long advertisement captured the profound childhood nostalgia, family bonds, and also the Christmas gift anxiety that is extremely relatable to audience's experience during peak season. Its creative blend of reality and memory underscores the importance of thoughtful giving and cherishing childhood memories, fostering a sense of empathy for others.

Amazon Christmas 2020 Advertisement "The Show Must Go On"

Amazon is one of the famous retailers that focus on creating emotionally resonant storytelling in their Christmas commercials. Their advert "The Show Must Go On", released in 2020, employs a coherent narrative structure and high fidelity to tell a story of resilience and community during challenging times. The narrative is clearly divided into three main parts. The beginning introduces a teenage ballet dancer who have the lead role in her academy's winter show. This establishes her persona and a clear emotional base of joy and excitement.

The narrative then progresses in the middle phase, where the rising action showcases her practice from Zoom calls due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. The central conflicts appears when her performance is cancelled due to the new restrictions. At this stage, strong fidelity is shown as the protagonist's sadness and disappointment are relatable with audience's experience during that period. Empathy appeals are dominantly embedded in each sequence, aligning with the advert's theme of human perseverance and caring for others.

The turning point and the core resolution to the conflict begin with her sister's empathetic act: create a homemade poster declaring an outdoor show which is designed for her sister. The next sequences of family and friends pulling together to prepare for the show is logical and fluently organized. The climax arrives as the ballet dancer performs under the snow with her neighbours and family's witnessing. This narrative continuously shows strong fidelity since it aligns with Christmas value of hope and community engagement.

Amazon Christmas 2021 Advertisement "Kindness, the greatest gift"

The Amazon's Christmas advertisement 2021 tells the story of kindness, empathy, and community. The beginning introduces a young woman navigating a return to the post-pandemic life, engaging in daily activities like attending classes and hanging out with friends. The fidelity of this narrative is strongly presented through the character's anxiety during her journey of post-pandemic readjustment. This is highly resonant to audience as many experienced the feelings of stress or anxiety due to lifting lockdown (Mistlin, 2021).

The middle of the narrative unfolds as a compassionate neighbour notices the woman's struggle and reaches out, forming a connection. This sequence marks the rising action, where an unexpected friendship begins to form, highlighting the power of empathy in assisting others during hardships. Empathy accounted for more than two third of emotional appeals embedded in the adverts, logically contribute to the theme of kindness. Finally, the advertisement concludes with the establishment of the new friendship, serving as the resolution. This highlights joy and comfort found in reaching out for new bonds, particularly after a long period of isolation, matching the Christmas spirit of togetherness and genuine community connection.

Amazon Christmas 2022 Advertisement "Joy is Made"

Directed by the famous director Taika Waititi, Amazon Christmas 2022 advert tells the story of a loving father who is inspired to create a unique and thoughtful festive experience for his young daughter, proving joy is something we craft. This advertising video masterfully presents a clear and coherent structure, beginning with the introductive scene of a father and his daughter during Christmas, directly introducing the key object: the daughter's beloved snow globe. As the narrative flows through several sequences, it is clear that the girl is reluctant to be parted from the snow globe. This sets up the challenge and the father's realising the snow globe's importance to his child.

The middle of the narrative then details the father's effort to create something special with the help of neighbours and friend. This segment not only showcases determination and sincere family love, but also emphasise the power of community collaboration, which strengthen the fidelity of the narrative.

Lastly, the advert ends with a delightful scene, unveiling the father's secret gift for his daughter: he has magically transformed the family's green house into a life-size snow globe. This spectacular climax demonstrates a father's love through actions, dedicating to creating a joyful and magical Christmas experience for loved one.

Furthermore, the video concludes with a simple message “Joy is made” – a theme that has been conveyed successfully through the combination of narrative structure and significant use of positive emotional appeals, particularly joy (50%). The advertisement shows strong fidelity to viewers by evoking childhood memories, the magic of Christmas, and the strength of family bonds, highlighting the value of both joy and empathy.

Amazon Christmas 2023 Advertisement “Joy Ride”

The Amazon Christmas 2023 advert was set against a snowy backdrop and a nostalgic musical rendition. It beautifully illustrates a story of friendship through a clear and coherent narrative structure, weaving the theme of Christmas joy and sharing.

The short advertisement’s beginning establishes the scene of three old friends are gathered on a familiar park bench, watching youngsters sledding down a hill. This sets a tone of regret and also introduces a subtle longing, hinting their desire to once again partake in the fun. The narrative transits to a middle with a spark of an idea from the lead character. Noticing her friends’ desire, with a mischievous smile, orders padded seat cushions via the Amazon app. The next day, the arrival of the mysterious Amazon box and the friends’ confusing expression serve as the rising action. Their curiosity then results in them following the leader to the hill, where the purpose of the cushions is finally unfolded: to make their sledging desire come true.

The advert introduces a climax as a joyful resolution for the group’s desire: the trio joins the younger crowd on the snowy slopes with laughter, cheers, and nostalgic flashback to their youth spent together on the same route. The final montage shows them enthusiastically walking back up the hill for another ride illustrates a powerful sense of energy renewal and enduring friendship. This perfectly shows resonance to audience’s festive spirit of shared joy and connection between friends.

To sum up, this advert exhibits strong narrative probability with a logical progression that builds upon character motivations, focusing on joy and nostalgia. Aligning with the narrative theme, this advert logically leverages the use of joy appeals (55%) and nostalgia (27%) over empathy. This combination helps the advert achieve strong fidelity to viewers, resonating their childhood memories, the joy of Christmas, and the unwavering meaning of friendship, and ultimately highlighting the value of both joy and sharing.

Amazon Christmas 2024 Advertisement “Midnight Opus”

The ninety-seconds 2024 Christmas advert from Amazone, “Midnight Opus”, used a coherent narrative structure to shows how small and thoughtful acts can foster joy and bring people together.

The advert begins by introducing a theatre janitor quietly doing his usual tasks, subtly revealing his lifelong passion for singing through a glimpse of an old photo of him as a singer in the locker. This opening scene establishes his character and a hidden inspiration before moving to the middle of the narrative where his colleagues accidentally discover his outstanding vocal talent. This discovery serves as the inciting incident, leading to a rising action where all colleagues decide to prepare a special surprise. The next sequential scenes show colleagues coming together as a community, collaboratively transforming the theatre into a performance stage with special lighting. The swift delivery of an elegant tuxedo by Amazon serves as the final and most crucial element, enabling the janitor to step into the spotlight like he used to in the past.

The advert culminates in a heart-warming resolution where the janitor, urged by his colleagues to sing, delivers an emotional performance of the classic song “What the World Needs Now is Love”. This powerful climax showcases his talent and the joy sparked by his colleagues’ support, reinforcing the advert’s central theme of community and celebration of hidden talent.

The advertisement demonstrates strong fidelity by reflecting the formation of genuine workplace bond, and the transformative power of kindness during festive season. Together with the use of empathy appeals (53%) and nostalgia (40%), this advertisement from Amazon highlights the importance of helping others through empathy.

Apple Christmas 2021 Advertisement

Apple’s Christmas 2021 commercial video unfolds a smooth narrative structural coherence of loneliness to reunion, demonstrating a festive theme of empathy and family bond.

The three-minute-long advert starts with the familiar scene where the family heading to the crowded airport to travel on Christmas holiday. The coherent narrative continues as the family settle down at the grandfather’s house and the girls notice his sadness, which is subtly revealed through his expression and actions. The use of nostalgic elements (35%) in these opening scenes plays a crucial role in evoking audience’s emotional connection as it reminds of their Christmas holiday at grandparents’ place.

As the narrative flows, the girls spend time exploring the house and discover grandfather's archive, including photographs and videos of their grandmother, who has left this world. At this stage, the girls understand the reason behind their grandfather's sadness, leading to a rising action where the girls decide to prepare a special surprise.

In the middle phase of the narrative, not only the two girls but also the woman realises the father's longing for his wife, showing a clear evident of compassion. Furthermore, sequential depiction of the girls preparing for their plan sparks curiosity, which effectively invite viewer's anticipation to know the secret behind.

The advert culminates in a gentle and heart-warming resolution at the Christmas unboxing. Finally, the girls' secret gift to their grandfather is revealed: a lovely video celebrating their family, including their grandmother, preserving her presence as if she were still there. Empathy is exclusively delivered in this scene through the man's tearful expression and the family's gentle embraces to comfort him.

In conclusion, Apple's Christmas commercial 2021 demonstrates a powerful storytelling technique by employing logical progression of scenes and ultilising suitable emotional appeals (empathy and nostalgia) to deliver a message of family bond during festive season, following a journey from loneliness to recognition and lastly, connection. It performs strong fidelity by authentically reflecting emotions of love, nostalgic memories tied to grandparents, and the power of empathy to foster emotional resonance among the brand's target audience.

Apple Christmas 2024 Advertisement "Heartstring"

Apple's 2024 festive commercial is coherently constructed to tell a father-daughter story in two parts, creating impactful resonance among audience.

In the beginning, the narrative introduces viewers into the father's perspective, illustrating his experience with moderate hearing loss as he watching his daughter opening a new guitar as Christmas gift. This opening depicts the initial challenge of the protagonist and establish a sense of empathy towards the father's emotional context. As memories of their time together, including the daughter's first guitar, her birthday, her first day of school, begins to flashback, the narrative evoke a nostalgia sense, though these memories are presented with muffled sounds, reflecting the father's hearing difficulty.

The turning points and the resolution occur in the second part of the narrative, where the father activates the hearing aid feature on his AirPods. This moment serves as the narrative climax, marking a clear shift. As the daughter's playing music becomes clear, the subsequent replay of the father's memories, now with audible voices, transform his hearing experience. This powerful resolution deepens the emotional impact by allowing the father to fully connect with past and present, emphasising the joy of shared experience.

By effectively leveraging nostalgia (47%) and empathy appeals (40%) while telling a coherent story, this advert shows strong fidelity as it reflects the father-daughter love, nostalgic memories, and core festive value of inclusion and connection.

Coca-Cola Christmas 2020 Advertisement "The Letter"

The Coca-Cola 2020 Christmas advertisement, directed by Taika Waititi, employs a clear narrative with a heroic concept to tell a heart-warming story of a father's love and the true spirit of Christmas.

The beginning features a classic Christmas setting, establishing the central motivation and depicting the father's loving relationship with his daughter. The advert opens with the father's farewell to leave for work, and his daughter ask him to post the precious letter to Santa. This simple act marks the father's initial mission throughout the advert.

The middle of the narrative follows the father's epic quest to the North Pole. After realising he forgot to post the letter, he decides to embark on a journey to the Santa's home. On the way, he encounters various challenges, including sailing seas, surviving the jungle, mountain climbing. This visually spectacular journey serves as the rising action and highlights his dedication, but also building emotional anticipation to the ironic climax: his failure to deliver the letter to Santa, leading to his returning home in a Coca-Cola truck.

The advert concludes with a poignant resolution as the father decides to read his daughter's letter and realises her true wish was nothing but for him to be home on Christmas. This unexpected yet powerful reveal, coupled with the final message, "This Christmas give something only you can give", underscoring the magic of being truly present with loved ones during festive season. Empathy is the main theme of the advertisement, strongly resonate with audience's Christmas value of family bond.

Coca-Cola Christmas 2023 Advertisement "The World Needs More Santa"

Coca-Cola Christmas 2023 advertisement continues a theme that has been the central of this renowned brand for nearly a century: kindness. This advert effectively utilised a logical narrative structure to convey its message of universal kindness, beginning by immersing audience in a magical city crowed by hundreds of Santas. This setting quickly establishes a festive and nostalgic atmosphere of kindness and warmth, as these Santas are consistently illustrated helping one another. This segment visually presents a world where kindness and generosity are common norms.

Next, the narrative smoothly swift from Santa world to the reality world where diverse individuals engaging in similar acts of generosity and kindness towards strangers on the street. This visual parallel logically bridges the gap between the magical ideal and everyday life, emphasising that when people show kindness, the spirit of festive Santa is accessible for all. These sequential actions, combined with the emotional appeals of joy and nostalgia, significantly build up the narrative's fidelity. This strong resonance reflects the cultural Christmas value of empathy and community, making the brand' message more immersive and impactful.

Finally, the advert concludes with the impactful tagline, "The world needs more Santa". This ending provides a clear and inspiring call to action that amplified the narrative central theme of empathy, shared good will, bringing a sense of hope and joy to the festive season.

Doc Morris Christmas 2023 Advertisement "Matter of The Heart"

Considered one of the best Christmas advertisements in 2020, the Doc Morris's advert stands out thanks to a clear and emotionally resonant narrative, delivering a message about determination and family love.

The beginning introduces an elderly man struggling with a kettlebell while his motivation hinted as he quickly looks at a photograph. An unspoken goal is established, leaving audience with curiosity.

Later, the middle of the narrative details the man journey to regain his strength. Through a series of logical scenes, viewers witness his determination and also frustrating efforts. Despite the concern of daughter and neighbours, he continues with his goals fixed with the inspiring photograph. This segment builds anticipation and empathy, aligning with the quantitative findings of the use of emotional appeals (63% empathy). Simultaneously, this narrative phase leaves the audience to wonder about the true purpose behind his unwavering effort.

At this stage, the narrative smoothly culminates in a surprising yet poignant reveal. On Christmas day, the elderly man visits his granddaughter with a special gift: a golden star for her Christmas tree. The emotional climax arrives as he carefully lifts the girl so she can place the star, revealing that this single and loving act was the powerful motivation behind his intense physical training. The advert beautifully concludes with the message, “So you can take care of what matters in life”, and the reveal of the photograph of his granddaughter.

This narrative shows massive fidelity by providing the authentic portrayal of elderly man’s determination and struggle, evoking empathy for a person’s hidden motivation, and the intergenerational love. All of these amplify core Christmas values of love, family, giving, and making sacrifices for loved ones.

4.3 Discussion

4.3.1 *Empathy as the Emotional Focus in Christmas Narrative*

Empathy consistently serves as the primary emotional driver in Christmas advertising, dominantly presented in narrative climax of all sampled retail advertisements.

The quantitative findings from the coding process of fifteen retail Christmas advertisements reveals a noteworthy pattern of emotional appeal usage, with 241 instances across nostalgia (25%), joy (27%) and empathy (48.1%). This distribution signals a strategic emphasis on empathy, presented in all fifteen examined adverts alongside joy, while nostalgia featured in 14/15 of the adverts. The dominant usage of empathy also supports Horta's (2024) statement that holiday storytelling often leverage kindness and community, amplifying the cultural value of sharing and generosity. These quantitative findings acknowledge the first research objective, identifying empathy as the emotional appeals that are most frequently used in Christmas advertising campaigns by selected retail brands.

The John Lewis 2020 campaign, “Give a Little Love”, or Amazon 2021 commercials “Kindness, the greatest gift”, are powerful example, where empathy accounted for 70% and 73% of the emotional appeals, respectively. Both adverts foster the themes of kindness and community during the pandemic, which amplifying a collective will of connection and support. Likewise, Doc Morris’s 2020 advertisement leverage empathetic narrative to strengthen the family bond and the elderly’s determination to achieve goal, emphasising empathy as a strategic tool to evoke emotional resonance from audience.

On the other hand, Amazon’s holiday advertisements also demonstrate subtle changes in emotional strategy, where empathy remains at the central of their narratives but joy witnesses

increased position in 2022 and 2023 campaigns. This trend suggests the adaptive strategy in which empathy maintained at the narrative core, but combine it with joy appeals to bring out a sense of optimism in festive storytelling.

4.3.2 *Visual Storytelling as the Dominant Medium*

The medium breakdown provides a broader interpretation of emotional appeals data. Visual dominate with 159 instances, echoing with (Rose, 2007) assertion that visual storytelling is a primary emotional trigger among advertisements. This is a common trend among retailers' Christmas advertising race, as visual content is not only more eye-catching and memorable, but it also invites more audience's engagement and enhance the brand's image (El-Desouky, 2020). Moreover, this dominant presence highlights the strength of non-verbal narrative elements, including characters' facial expression, symbolic imagery (Christmas tree, Santa Claus, fairy lights...), and cinematic settings, in conveying the advertising message and evoking emotional response during peak season. Auditory appeals, with 64 instances, and verbal appeals, with 18 instances, play supportive roles, aligning with Monaco's (2000, cited in Rose, 2007) suggestion that sounds are fundamental to a moving image's expressive content.

All three key emotional appeals (nostalgia, joy, empathy) are mainly conveyed through visual elements, while auditory and verbal cues perform a supportive role. For instance, Coca-Cola's advertisements historically leverage rich, nostalgic visuals of shared festive atmosphere to remind audience of their cultural memories. On the other hand, brands like Apple and Doc Morris utilise close-up shot to focus on the characters' subtle facial expression. This finding provides an insightful on how emotional appeals are communicated across mediums and underscore the evolving trend of leveraging visual storytelling techniques across successful Christmas advertising.

4.3.3 *Narrative Coherence and Fidelity in Christmas Advertising*

The qualitative analysis, which is grounded in Fisher's (1984) Narrative Paradigm Theory, aim to meet the second and third research objectives by assessing how narrative structure and fidelity, combined with the use of emotional appeals, shape emotional resonance. Narrative can be seen as the presentation of a series of events which are connected in a meaningful and temporal way. According to Berhe *et al* (2022), narratives are considered audience interactive as they represent themes related to human emotions and create a strong resonance and motivation among the audience. In other words, a carefully and logically crafted narrative structure have the power to create effective emotional resonant among audience. Aristotle's

three-stage structure, which is adapted by many narrative content creators, classifies a narrative into three main parts (Berhe *et al.*, 2022). The beginning introduces the characters and main setting, while the middle is where the conflict or main problem starts and the protagonist try to resolve the problem. Finally, the narrative concludes as the conflict is solved and the character goes back to normal life.

Through qualitative analysis of the fifteen chosen advertisements, it is clear evidence that this structure has also been adapted frequently. For example, Amazon's 2020's advertisement "The Show Must Go On" introduces the protagonist's background as a ballet dancer, moving to the cancellation of the winter show which make the protagonist disappointed and upset. The conflict is solved at the end of the story when she happily performs again in a private show designed by her family and neighbours. The structural coherence ensures the logical flow, while material coherence reinforces unity. The material coherence is presented in the use of emotional appeals, including empathy, joy, and nostalgia, fostering the logical continuation of the narrative.

Fidelity, assessed via emotional authenticity and alignment with Christmas values (empathy, family, togetherness, generosity…), is particularly strong in all the sampled advertisements. Throughout the narrative arcs, the audience is likely to identify the connection between the underlying message of the advert with their beliefs or feelings. For example, Amazon's Christmas advertisements 2020 and 2021 have authentically exploited the audience's insightful experience during the pandemic, such as isolation, loneliness, and anxiety, resulting in the adverts feeling more sincere and realistic.

The integration of these qualitative and quantitative findings reveals that high empathy frequencies correlate with coherent, logical, strong fidelity narrative, enhancing the persuasive storytelling power and fostering emotional connection with the target audience.

Building on Chapter 2's conceptual framework, a new theoretical framework for effective storytelling in Christmas advertisements was composed, updating elements gathered from qualitative and quantitative findings. This integrative framework fulfil the fourth research objective by contributing to the development of a detailed framework for practical and academic application.

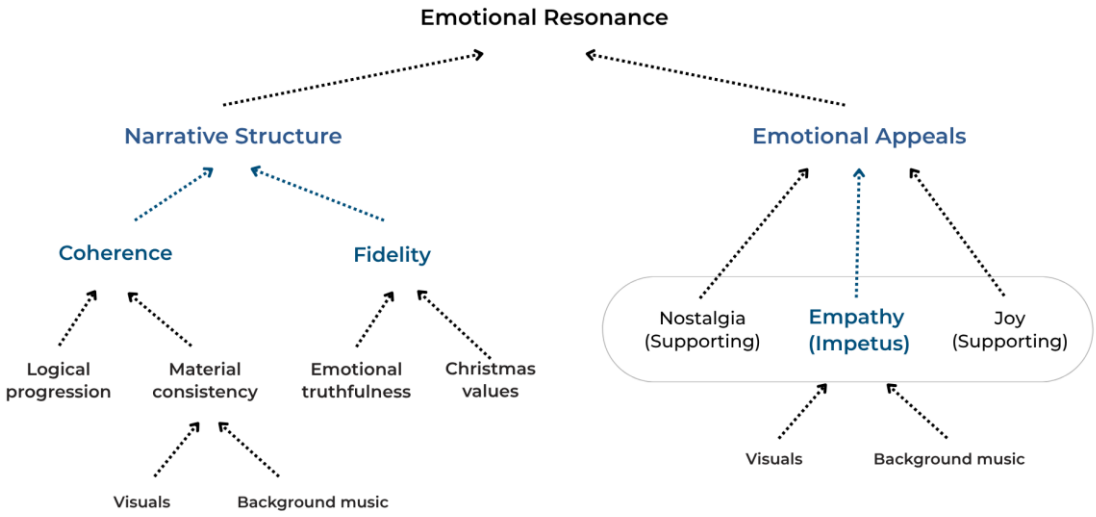

Fig. 6, Proposed Framework for Effective Storytelling in Christmas Advertisements

The framework contains the previously discussed elements from the findings and discussion, aiming to provide a clear path for designing an emotionally resonant video advertisement for retailers. The framework recommends that emotional resonance in a Christmas advertisement is achieved through the interplay of two primary pillars: Narrative Structure and Emotional Appeals. The foundation of a compelling narrative is Coherence, which ensures a logical progression of events and characters' motivation and maintains material consistency through elements like visuals and background music. This coherence is accompanied by Fidelity, which establishes emotional truthfulness by seamlessly combining the advert's message with the audience's core Christmas values. The second pillar, Emotional Appeals, is assisted by three main appeals. Empathy acts as the central impetus, driving the audience's emotional connection with the narrative. The overall emotional response is also boosted by supporting appeals: Nostalgia, which evokes a sentimental connection, and Joy, which fosters a celebratory mood. All emotional appeals should also be conveyed mainly through visuals and background music. Together, these emotional components work in logical harmony to create a festive advertising campaign that evokes deep and lasting emotional resonance with the target audience.

This framework is significant for providing a cohesive and understandable model for crafting emotionally effective festive advertisements, as this topic was often studied through scattered, individual concepts in existing literature. While previous studies have focused on the demonstration of empathy as a general emotional appeal or structural elements in

isolation, this model uniquely illustrates their mutual relationship, demonstrating how a strong narrative built on Coherence and Fidelity is essential for enhancing the impact of emotional appeals. Furthermore, the framework would act as a clear and doable guide for advertisers aiming to create campaigns that strongly tap into the audience's values, while also providing a foundation for empirical study into the dynamics of emotional impact in the advertising landscape.

4.4 Conclusion

The findings and discussion chapter are synthesised from the quantitative and qualitative coding of fifteen Christmas video advertisements, which are informed by the literature review in Chapter 3. The data analysis adopted a mixed-method approach, deriving key themes and codes which are further discussed in section 4.3. Primary themes, guided by Narrative Paradigm Theory and Emotional Marketing concepts, included emotional appeals (nostalgia, joy, empathy), narrative coherence, and narrative fidelity. The coding process revealed the strategic use of empathy and visual storytelling in crafting emotionally resonant narratives. The findings were subsequently compared to existing literature, supporting literature on emotional connections in festive advertising and extending prior insights regarding empathy-driven storytelling in Christmas campaigns released by retailers. Finally, the analysis emphasises the ability of the proposed theoretical framework in guiding effective Christmas advertising and informing future studies into narrative strategies in festive contexts.

The conclusion of the thought on the contribution of the study, its limitations, and suggestions will be presented in the following chapter.

5 Concluding Thoughts on the Contribution of this Research, its Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

5.1 Implications of Findings for the Research Questions

This section concludes the dissertation research by outlining the research findings in relation to the research aims and objectives outlined in Chapter 1. This dissertation aims to explore how retail brands craft emotional resonance through storytelling in Christmas advertising campaigns, using the Narrative Paradigm Theory and the Emotional Marketing concepts. The proposed study analyses various elements used in Christmas advertisements to identify their crucial contributions to a framework for effective storytelling strategies during festive season. The key findings are outlined below, critically addresses related research objectives.

The first research objective is to systematically identify the presence and frequency of emotional appeals (nostalgia, joy, empathy) in retail Christmas advertisements. The findings then revealed empathy as the dominant appeal, followed by joy, and nostalgia, across fifteen video advertisements sourced from YouTube (2020-2024). This supports Horta's (2024) discussion that empathy plays key role in fostering deep emotional attachment in festive advertising. However, the relatively low prevalence of nostalgia, despite it was presented in 93% of sampled adverts, suggest that while nostalgia remains impactful and irreplaceable, it is not the primary emotional drivers in these advertisements. Furthermore, taking into account that the assessed videos were release during and after the pandemic, it is reasonable to discuss that contemporary advertisers may prioritise empathy to reflect societal values like kindness, sharing, and community.

The second objective focuses on the assessment the narrative structures and coherence of Christmas advertisements, based on Narrative Paradigm Theory. The qualitative findings confirmed that coherent narrative, following Aristotle's three-stage model (Berhe *et al.*, 2022), is the most famous structure used by retail brands to enhance emotional impact. Sampled advertisements from John Lewis, Amazon, Coca-Cola, Apple, and Doc Morris demonstrate strong structural coherence through clear beginning, conflicts/raising action, and resolution. This supports the Narrative Paradigm Theory's emphasis on narrative probability. Likewise, fidelity, reflecting authenticity and alignment with audience's Christmas values, show strong evidence across all adverts, resonating with collective themes of kindness, perseverance, and family.

The third and fourth objectives, aiming to assess the interplay between emotional appeals and narrative structure and develop a theoretical framework, were achieved by integrating quantitative and qualitative findings. The framework proposed that an empathy-driven narratives, supported by coherent structures and truthfulness expression, conveyed through visual storytelling would maximise emotional resonance among target audience. All in all, this theoretical framework composed as a result of purposive data collection is preliminary, underscoring the need for future research to validate and expand the research scope across diverse context.

5.2 Contributions and Limitations of the Research

The research wishes to advance academic and practical understanding towards storytelling techniques in festive advertisements by proposing a decent integration of emotional appeals

and narrative structure, building on and extending the prior literature. The study's approach provides a robust quantitative and qualitative analysis of storytelling elements to thoroughly understand how they are strategically deployed by renowned retailers. This research also took a step forward by providing a unique framework that systematically combined both emotional and narrative elements for understanding emotional storytelling during peak season. It also offers a practical diagram for retail brands to create more resonant and persuasive campaigns, minimising the gap between theory and marketing strategies in real world.

Despite the contribution, the study faces critical limitations. First of all, the sample size of fifteen advertisement, while focused and suitable for in-depth analysis in limited time-frame, may restricts the width of insights. This chosen sample potentially miss variations in smaller or non-Western brands' festive strategies, which are notable in the context of global advertising landscape. Secondly, the reliance on a single coder may lead to risks of objective bias in interpreting and coding emotional appeals and narrative elements, a significant concern when it comes to qualitative research (Bryman, 2016). Although self-monitoring and re-coding have been carried out to mitigate inconsistency in coding, the absence of inter-coder reliability testing significantly weakens the findings' richness compared to multi-coder coding (Neuendorf, 2017). Furthermore, the study's scope focus on limited retail brands during a particular period of time. Even though John Lewis, Amazon, Coca-Cola, Apple, and Doc Morris are major competitors, it is possible that their advertising tactics do not reflect general market trends.

5.3 Recommendations for Practice

A successful Christmas advertisement involves a combination of meticulous planning, creativity, and understanding the key emotional drive that attract audience. These much-anticipated adverts and their ability to communicate on high emotional level is based on their storytelling techniques, which making them the "hardest brief of the year" for advertising agencies (Cassidy, 2024). While the adverts may only be a few minutes in length, their emotional storytelling could create great impact among audience, tugging on their heartstring.

As mentioned in section 4.3, the proposed theoretical framework aims to become a guide for advertisers and retailers to come up with a creative Christmas advertising idea, combining effective use of emotional appeals and narrative structure. According the study's findings, retail brands should leverage empathy as the primary emotional appeal in their festive advertisement. Brands should also focus on visual storytelling elements, using imagery and cinematic settings to convey core message and evoke emotional connections, as visuals are

not only more eye-catching and memorable but it also invites more audience's engagement (El-Desouky, 2020). The narrative must be designed based on in-depth research to ensure logical progression and consistency between visuals and background music, while fidelity closely aligns with audience values like family and generosity. Particularly, advertising using sentimental, positive, comforting family scenes is able to evoke "warm" feelings, including love, sense of belonging, family and friendship. The more persuasive the narrative is, the more audience be transported into it. However, while empathy is crucial for connecting with consumers, it is importance to not over-relying on it, which may lead to emotional overload and predictable narrative. Brands need to balance empathetic message with feeling of joy and nostalgia to effectively persuade audience.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

According to the limitations of the study, there are some recommendations for better clarity and robustness.

First, future research should employ multi-coder methodologies to enhance reliability and validate the coding of emotional appeals and other narrative components. The same advertisement may be interpreted differently by different coders, which results in inconsistent coding. To counteract this, researchers participating in the coding process must participate in intense training sessions, and inter-coder reliability tests will be carried out to guarantee consistency (Neuendorf, 2017).

Second, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of emotional storytelling in Christmas advertising, future studies could increase the sample size and include diverse retail brands to provide a more comprehensive understanding emotional storytelling trends in general market. The study's focus on the period from 2020 to 2024 suggest that the dominance of empathy in festive advertising maybe a direct result of post-pandemic trend. Future studies should expand the sampled time frame to help determine whether empathy will continue to dominate or if the use of other emotional appeals like joy and nostalgia will increase over time.

Last but not least, it would be interesting for further research to investigate how emotional appeals interact and their diverse impact across demographics, such as age and cultural background, to suggest tailored effective storytelling for each audience segments. Future studies could also conduct interview through questionnaire to explore audience's insightful findings regarding festive advertising campaigns.

5.5 Final Conclusion and Reflections

The dissertation and the methodological approach allow the researcher to critically examine the various storytelling elements and their complex interplay within Christmas advertising campaigns crafted by outstanding brands in the retail sector. The study proves that the most effective Christmas advertisements are works of art themselves, by combining various emotional strategies into compelling and persuasive stories that evoke deep emotional resonance with the audience. The findings suggest that empathy is a crucial ingredient and powerful visual storytelling is the dominant trend in creating successful campaigns.

The original contribution of this study lies in the development of a new integrative theoretical framework that combines narrative theory with emotional strategies, based on the observation of real advertising samples. This framework offers a clear and doable guidance for producing festive advertisements that truly resonate with customers. While this approach is a significant progression, it can be adjusted and expanded by including more coders and exploring beyond major brands.

On the other hand, keeping up with the latest developments in storytelling approaches it might be challenging, due to the rapid evolution of digital marketing strategies. It could be harder to keep pace with new storytelling techniques as corporations place a greater emphasis on social media and interactive platforms, resulting in new storytelling techniques emerge constantly. To make sure the study remains relevant, researchers and advertisers must continuously observe and adapt to these fast-changing advertising trends.

In summary, this dissertation not only achieves its research aim and objectives but also contributes valuable insights and practical recommendations for drafting emotionally engaging Christmas advertising campaign that motivate future academic research and retailer's marketing strategies.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Appeals Distribution (for each advertisement)

			Appeals Distribution (%)			Medium Distribution (%)		
No	**Advert ID**	**Total number of appeals (each ad)**	**Nostalgia**	**Joy**	**Empathy**	**Visual**	**Auditory**	**Verbal**
1	JohnLewis_2020	**23**	9%	22%	70%	61%	35%	4%
2	JohnLewis_2021	**14**	29%	21%	50%	57%	43%	0%
3	JohnLewis_2022	**13**	15%	31%	54%	54%	15%	31%
4	JohnLewis_2023	**19**	11%	32%	58%	79%	21%	0%
5	JohnLewis_2024	**24**	46%	29%	25%	58%	21%	21%
6	Amazon_2020	**13**	15%	23%	62%	62%	38%	0%
7	Amazon_2021	**15**	0%	27%	73%	60%	33%	7%
8	Amazon_2022	**14**	29%	50%	21%	79%	14%	7%
9	Amazon_2023	**11**	27%	55%	18%	64%	36%	0%
10	Amazon_2024	**15**	40%	7%	53%	67%	33%	0%
11	Apple_2021	**17**	35%	12%	53%	53%	24%	24%
12	Apple_2024	**15**	47%	13%	40%	67%	20%	13%
13	CocaCola_2020	**14**	21%	29%	50%	93%	7%	0%
14	CocaCola_2023	**18**	33%	39%	28%	72%	28%	0%
15	DocMorris_2020	**16**	13%	25%	63%	69%	25%	6%
	Total	**241**						