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Openness to Fictional Experience: Measuring Readers' and Viewers' Narrative Absorption as a Function of Personality

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Abstract

Social media uses narrative templates to present information, whether news (real or fake) or advertisements. The perpetual engagement with stories influences our attention, memory, thinking and behaviour. This study addresses two research questions: What kind of story engages what kind of audience? Are people high in openness to experience more susceptible to getting lost in counterfactual worlds? Participants with high/low scores in openness to experience are presented with literary and film vignettes independently rated as engaging/non-engaging. Narrative absorption and openness to experience questionnaires provide preliminary data indicating reliable narrative absorption-openness correlation. Eye tracking will provide implicit narrative engagement measures for attention (eye fixation), cognitive load (pupil dilation) and engagement (gaze duration). Eye-movement, self-reports, and personality questionnaires will indicate which narrative designs engage specific audiences efficiently.