BRAND STORYTELLING IN DIGITAL MEDIA: AN EMERGING PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling is rising in prominence in digital marketing. It is used as a marketing tool and used by firms in brand positioning. The purpose of this study is to explore how brands tell stories about themselves on digital networking. In recent times, corporations resort to the various ways in which brands present narratives about themselves through digital networking. This paper examines the contents of storytelling shared by various brands on digital media. The conceptual study's aim is to investigate the ways in which brands employ various types of storytelling, as well as to learn how communication occurs on various social media platforms and the consequences this has for corporate management. So, this study is done from the point of view of brands to find out how communication is done on social media platforms and its implications for corporate managers.

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Keywords: Storytelling, Communication, Brand Storytelling, Digital Media.

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Introduction

Storytelling is one of the oldest ways of communication and an ancient art since humans are natural storytellers. The ability of brands to communicate in new and innovative ways has been made possible by the power of digital technology and social media. In modern marketing, less emphasis is placed on the goods and services that are produced and provided, and more on the experiences that are generated by brands to provide consumers with a variety of stories to share. Storytelling's persuading potential has attracted marketing academics encompassing marketing strategy and tactics, brand philosophy, consumer psychology, and behavior (Garmston, 2019; McKee and Gerace 2018). It involves brand promotion, product placement, customer-brand relationships, and brand storytelling (Woodside, 2018; Aaker 2018) Digital storytelling is prevalent in every business, from computer games to animated cartoons. Smartphones and platforms like YouTube have exploded professional digital storytelling. Davis & Foley (2016) has succinctly put "…..in the broadest sense, digital storytelling refers to the use of digital media to produce and disseminate stories".

What is Storytelling

Boje (1995) explains a story as a verbal or writing act involving two or more individuals describing previous or expected events. Bennet and Royle (2004) described a story as a sequence of events that take place in a predetermined order with a start, a middle, and an ending. Several researchers assert that storytelling, or the art of telling tales, is an essential tool for businesses to convey symbolic meaning, distinctive heritage, and emotional reactions (Hughes, Bendoni, and Pehlivan, 2016; Kapferer and Bastien 2012). The narrative may facilitate the conveyance of emotions (Hagtvedt and Patrick,2009), and communicating these brand traits influences customers (Kaufman,2003). Consequently, storytelling is an essential component of several branding techniques. Joy et al. (2014) assert that narratives are important to the sustainability of brands. Kapferer and Bastien (2012) stated how stories about luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton originated as a manufacturer of luggage and that Ferrari produces high-performance sports cars conveyed via tales. Literature has identified various story requirements as a pre requisite (Deighton, Romer, and McQueen,1989). For example, the

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commercial included a sequence as a story-based stimulus and has a beginning, middle, and finish. Character development is showing viewers/readers what the protagonist is thinking and experiencing. Causality shows the chronological link between events: an initial incident causes a character's reaction, which leads to actions and a result. The recital of cold, hard facts is less likely to engage our minds than listening to a tale, according to the findings of several studies that have been conducted over the years. Stories may be instructive, are simple to remember, and enable a company to form deeper emotional relationships with its consumers.

Research Objective

The objective of this study is to explore how brands tell stories about themselves on digital networking. This study is done on how brands use storytelling techniques and to find out how communication is done on social media platforms and its implications for corporate managers. As storytelling has emerged as a marketing technique in the business and firms are embracing digital strategy, the following research topic is discussed.

Research Question: How are brands communicating through stories in digital media?

To answer the suggested research question, the primary theoretical foundation for this study is brand storytelling on social media. More specifically, the purpose of this study is to investigate how brands communicate about their products using storytelling on social media platforms.

The following is the structure of the paper. After introduction and research objective, in the next session a literature analysis is conducted to examine the nature of brand storytelling and offer a summary of the impacts on consumers. Following next, a description is provided to evaluate the contents of various brand narratives. In the last section of the study, we will discuss the management implications.

What is Brand Storytelling?

Brand storytelling is the communication of brands via tales, which Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) think is crucial for companies to enlighten consumers about their brand. According to Herskovitz and Crystal (2010), brand storytelling includes all business communication and practices to make their customers aware of the brand and remember them. Denning (2006) argues that these four factors: the message, the conflict, the characters, and the storyline involves the brand storytelling. Delgado & Fernández-Sabiote, E. (2016) identified distinct groups of stories across the websites using the scores obtained from the four aspects of a successful brand narrative (authenticity, conciseness, reversal, and humor) and the total of these attributes that each story had (which is a continuous variable). Determining clusters required a two-step approach using Hair et al. (1999) method to identify clusters when categorical and continuous data were included. According to the features that were identified, the four groups were divided into various clusters. Cluster 1 comprises silver stories (genuine and succinct), Cluster 2 of cherry-picker tales (realistic but lacking in conciseness), and Cluster 3 of short narratives (concise and communicated about the brand). 4th cluster: Golden tales (authentic, emotional, and concise).

Consequently, a brand narrative is a framework, in which a brand image is integrated to express more about the company's origin, founder, purpose, and values to create emotional connection with their audiences (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2005). Tanishq, the Indian jewellery company is a good example in this regard; on the homepage of its website (https://www.instagram.com/tanishqjewellery/?hl=en), a story is provided in which the brand is an integral part. The narrative seeks to portray the underlying compassion of the brand by using the concept of unconditional love between parents and daughter at the time of her marriage. This is done by focusing on the concept of universal innate tenderness that anybody can understand. Further, brand storytelling builds emotional ties and is an excellent strategy for expressing a brand's perspective since it connects and creates connections. Escalas (2004) propagated that brand storytelling may build emotional bonds, are psychologically stimulating, and may be utilized to create mental connections in a customer's mind. Using brand storytelling may increase loyalty, and build trust and personalization thereby, results in engagement between the storyteller and the customers.

Brand Storytelling in Digital Media

Digital storytelling? Is it only computer-based storytelling or is there more? Digital storytelling may seem contemporary, but it's been studied since the 1980s (Lambert, 2009). Anderson and Chua (2018), also traced the origins of digital storytelling in the late 1980s to promote accessible media creation for creative personal expression. Recent advances in information and digital communications, such as PCs and smartphones, have renewed interest in the subject. These advances have allowed us to simply produce and distribute tales in many formats and platforms. Lund, Cohen and Scarle (2018)

identified various platforms consisting of blogs, communities, and networking sites to generate content and engage in online information exchange. As a consequence of brands presenting their stories on social media channels, the businesses have more opportunities to promote their premium brand values (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). Although the essential fundamentals of storytelling persist, digital and social media have affected the dissemination of these tales (Canella, 2017). In the past, brands were cautious to implement social media techniques into their business plans because of apprehension that they would lose significant value (Arrigo, 2018). However, businesses have embraced social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter to fulfill expectations (Lund, Cohen, and Charles, 2018. The use of social media strategies by brands through storytelling makes it possible for users to interact and engage with the brand (Canella, 2017).

Social media storytelling refers to the exchange of knowledge and meaning via digital resources (Canella, 2017). Brands and consumers use social media storytelling to share experiences in meaningful ways (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). Social media platforms provide storytellers with tools to communicate ordinary life to a large audience. As a source of engagement, social media has changed conventional marketing communication methods (Valos, et al., 2016). Social media has changed the way followers interact and communicate on online platforms from passive to active message senders of brands.

3 Contents of Brand Narratives on Social media

How are individuals dealing with COVID-19? McKinsey's Emotion Archive records the personal experiences of individuals from eight nations who agreed to share their pandemic experiences on their online storytelling platform. The Emotion Archive leverages consumer material and data to create an interactive narrative experience that's a picture of how people felt during an unusual period in history. When studied collectively, these microdata stories reveal their true significance. The project's worth to McKinsey and its brand becomes obvious to help McKinsey portray itself as a creative thinking leader, asking questions and uncovering insights others can't. One might make the case that Google does not require marketing at this point. The fact does not prevent the search engine from persistently looking for new methods to engage the people who follow it. One outstanding example? The campaign uses the hashtag "#YearInSearch," which showcases many of the items that people were commonly looking for during the prior year. Google took the information and turned it into messages on social media that were heartwarming. They created a short film that shows the world's positivism and while reading the comments on the post, it was precisely what their followers wanted. He et al. (2021) showed that conversation, narrative, and customer connection and involvement are favourably connected with brand personality impressions and brand attitudes. Brand personality impressions may also moderate the link between brand-owned content marketing and brand attitudes.

Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools in the arsenal of content marketing, and Vogue India employs it. They came up with a concept called #VogueEmpower, which is a campaign to raise awareness about violence against women and the empowering of women. They add glitz and glamour to their content marketing efforts by using Bollywood celebs in their videos, such as Madhuri Dixit, and this generates talk about their brand. Vogue has a substantial fan following across many platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Google Plus, in addition to YouTube, which plays the most important part in the company's content marketing strategy. Anyone with wanderlust should follow Airbnb on social media to view their stunning accommodations. Their Instagram feed is full of lovely photos from a horse farm lodge to a Hawaii penthouse. All of the houses are available on Airbnb, so it's still a direct promotion. The brand isn't subtle, and its descriptions reflect the property's distinctive characteristics and experiences. Followers imagine themselves there and want to travel. That's the power of telling a visual story.

Celebrity endorsements are common and connecting a celebrity to your goods does not always attract more customers. When telling an emotional narrative, endorsements are most powerful. Gillette did that for Seattle Seahawks linebacker. Shaquem Griffin, who is missing his left hand due to amniotic band syndrome. Griffin didn't promote razors or clean shaves for Gillette. Instead, they used his tale to promote overcoming hurdles and being your greatest self. Shaadi.com discusses marriage with emotions and joy and thinks of new hashtags and advertising concepts to stand out. #WoEkBaat celebrates love for Valentine's Day which used a couple's love story to spark conversations while commemorating 6 Million Success Stories. Shaadi.com's content marketing is on YouTube, and present on Facebook and Twitter, however, their content marketing strategies are distinct on social media.

Management implications

       Stories may be utilized to sell antiquities to common commodities by adding symbolic value. A compelling tale may turn customers into brand ambassadors who advocate the brand to others. Storytelling is good for customer-to-customer marketing because it builds relationships. Digital media is a wider platform to tell prospective consumers your story embedded as vignettes or narratives. The recital of cold, hard facts is less likely to engage our minds than listening to a tale, according to the findings of several studies that have been conducted over the years. Stories may be instructive, are simple to remember, and enable a company to form deeper emotional relationships with its consumers. The brand's narrative should inspire favorable customer behavior and establish a brand perspective. As shown in Fig.1, without persuasive storytelling, none of the search engine optimization, potential customer generation or social media marketing techniques will be effective. (Pulizzi, 2012). Stories are essential to creating customer engagement. Bloggers are one type of online content creator; they write about and/or upload media depicting their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Marketers attempt to establish social roles for brands in digital media by piquing consumers' interests and defining their path to purchase attitudes.
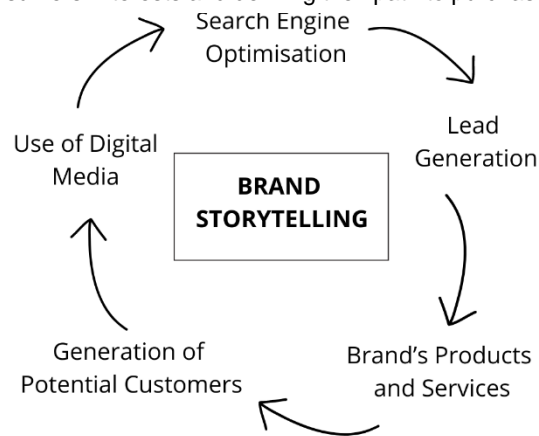

Fig. 1 Brandstorytelling in Digital Media

       The young generation has grown up with unparalleled access to technology, which has altered how they communicate, engage with one another, process information, and learn. The medium of digital storytelling has enormous opportunities for business managers to interact with the people they are trying to attract as consumers. Through the combination of visual representations in addition to traditional written text, digital storytelling may be used to create a brand image. Denning (2006) argued there is no particular right approach to convey a message since the structure relies on the business mission. A negative narrative won't motivate action, yet stories are usually about challenges. Usually, life insurance companies convey the message by eliciting fear in their communication storyline.

Discussion

       A well-designed brand narrative when aligned with truth and authenticity favorably impacts brand-consumer purchase intention. Hence, enhancing clarity, and recall, and establishing positive brand attitudes. Mostly, the organization and brand have been the storytellers on the digital media, while customers were passive story-receivers. Recently, Maggi invited stories from the customers to share their own happy stories with the brand. Lundqvist et al., (2013) found that for certain companies, customers' narratives may better communicate advantages and values than corporate-originated stories. We would want to advise brand managers against being too hopeful about the impact of incorporating stories into their marketing activities. This is because we believe that such optimism might be detrimental to the company. A sudden rise of brand-related stories might irritate consumers. In addition, customers are unable to connect with every brand in the same way or get completely involved in every company's brand story. Research has shown that there are certain similarities between companies that create anecdotes among customers (Solnet and Kandampully, 2008). An interesting, humorous, and fantastical TV commercial scenario that only distantly relates to the product or service being advertised could be more successful than a factual story that does not captivate the target audience. However, our research indicates that it is worthwhile to do so when the organization in question has an intriguing story to tell.

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