



STORYTELLING

In Advertising



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What does scientific study tell us?

1. Results showed that narrative transportation and narrative preference are positively associated with favorable responses toward ads. Stories elicited more favorable emotional responses and had some effect on participants' intention to share information about the product by word-of-mouth.

The Role Of Storytelling, Glenn. T. Hubbard

2. This study revealed that emotional response to advertisement storytelling varies depending on the target gender of and emotion type appealed to by the advertisement. This suggests that an understanding of the targeted gender is necessary prior to producing an advertisement and that in deciding on an advertisement storytelling type, strategic attention should be directed to the advertisement's appeal concept or emotion type

Effects of Storytelling in Advertising on Consumer's Empathy

3. The purpose of storytelling is to elicit consumers' emotional experience to meet the objectives of advertisement producers. Therefore, the most important requirement for storytelling in advertising is that it evokes consumers' sympathy for the main character in the advertisement.

Effects of Storytelling in Advertising on Consumer's Empathy

4. Consumers purchase products when they feel sympathy and immerse themselves in the story a brand conveys.

Effects of Storytelling in Advertising on Consumer's Empathy

5. Deighton, Romer, and McQueen (1989) discovered that consumers were more emotionally responsive and voiced fewer rebuttal arguments when they watched drama-type ads than when they viewed persuasion-type ads because those who watched drama-type ads were immersed in the story of the advertisement and felt an empathetic experience for its characters.

Effects of Storytelling in Advertising on Consumer's Empathy





What is storytelling?

Essentially storytelling can be defined as 'to convey lessons, thoughts, concepts, or causal relationships using narrative and anecdote in order to share knowledge or experience.'

Effects of Storytelling in Advertising on Consumer's Empathy

Or, in other words: sharing information about your brand through a narrative-driven story, in contrast to simply pushing your product.

How to apply storytelling to your brand

The most important requirement for storytelling in advertising is that it evokes consumers' sympathy for the main character in the advertisement (Boller and Olson 1991). This does not involve advertisements directly persuading consumers, but rather, consumers themselves finding an answer through the advertisement's story.

Effects of Storytelling in Advertising on Consumer's Empathy

Or, in other words: you're not directly persuading consumers to buy your product. Instead, you're telling a story through which they can discover the benefits of your product themselves. Some might say it's just disguised marketing, but most people actually don't mind: they love a good story. Do the test: you can think of at least 1 story in an ad that you really liked.

Studies defined empathy involved in a storytelling ad as "a dynamic process in which consumers put themselves imaginarily into the main character's experience in an advertisement." This suggests that an understanding of the targeted gender is necessary prior to producing an advertisement and that in deciding on an advertisement storytelling type strategic attention should be directed to the advertisement's appeal concept or emotion type.

Effects of Storytelling in Advertising on Consumer's Empathy

You want to tell a story that your target audience can see and feel themselves in. Or at least make sure it's relatable in some way or another. However, it is possible to push boundaries, like in the 'Switzerland: No Drama' ad. But even here, they're mainly showing the possible activities when vacationing in Switzerland. Just a tad bigger budget than your average advertisement.





Sympathy and empathy in storytelling

Consumers who watch drama ads can forget about themselves and experience empathy by sharing the main character's emotional experience and immersing themselves in the drama.

By contrast, consumers can be sympathetic observers who identify with opposing or assenting viewpoints, while they do not internalize the experience of the main character in drama ads.

In other words, sympathy means having a positive or negative cognitive classification with the main characters, while empathy means a fusion with the main characters through pleasure and pain.

The study showed that emotion elicited by advertisements affects an audience's attitude toward advertisement and brand. Studies also discovered that sympathy responses generated from watching public service advertisements are connected to altruistic behaviors.

Effects of Storytelling in Advertising on Consumer's Empathy

Or, in other words. Consumers can agree or disagree with the experience of the character. This is defined as sympathy, which comes down to whether or not your audience has a positive or negative association with the character.

Empathy is defined as the consumer's journey when they live the story through the eyes of the character and share feelings of pleasure and pain.

This teaches us that there's both a sympathy and empathy factor when it comes to storytelling in advertising.





Analysis of the 'Switzerland: No Drama' ad

1. **First 15 seconds are crucial**

In the first 15 seconds, we see actor legend De Niro and Tennis legend Roger Federer. They're facetimeing each other. Federer has an amazing view from his appartement. What is going on here?

You can skip the ad after 15 seconds and most people probably did. But I guarantee you that on average more people will have continued to watch this ad compared to others simply because it raises so many questions and because it's very intriguing.

2. **"There is no drama at all".**

I think it's great. Simply because it has two sides to it. De Niro wants drama in his movie. Right now, he's just not into it, because it's too boring for him. On the other hand, "no drama" is exactly what people are looking for when they want to go on vacation.

But instead of directly telling the consumer "there is no drama in Switzerland, book a trip now", they discover it 'second hand' through this story.

There's a saying that you learn and remember something more when it's told as a story or metaphor. That's why religious scriptures teach their lessons as stories. That's why most grandparents say things to us that don't make sense when we're 5, but start making sense at 25. That's the power of storytelling, and it works very well.

3. **"Switzerland is just too perfect"**

Again, same thing as "there is no drama at all". They're not going to overdo it. But I like them doubling down on their technique.

4. **"You guys are too nice"**

Okay, one more, they sneaked that in there.





1. **“Fuck you”, followed by a second of silence**

Wow, did they really use “fuck you” in an ad? And they give you some time to think about it. I like it. This ad doesn’t play by the rules. They curse. They even give you some time to reflect “did they really do this?”. At this point, it no longer feels like an ad. And you really want to know where this is going.

2. **"Okay, how about the two of us..."**

The compilation starts here. At the exact perfect time. At this point, you’re totally engaged. They just grabbed your attention by yelling “fuck you”. You’re all-in at this point and this is where they start selling their product. Genius.

3. **"Maybe call Hanks.." "Who?"**

They end with a joke. A perfect way to tie up your story.

4. **Call to action**

The amazing story is followed up by a clear Call To Action. This is perfect. Not too complicated, no special offers or asterisks,... Just a clear-cut Call To Action.





What else is great about the ad?

1. AIDA

There are many processes through which you can sell a product. AIDA might be as old as sales itself and still proves valuable in some situations. It's also not that hard to apply it to certain situations, such as we can do here.

I feel like the scriptwriters used AIDA, or a similar model, to take you through the process of just giving them your attention all the way to you buying their product.

Attention: we see two legendary icons

Interest: you ask yourself what the hell is going on here?

Desire: at the right moment, they sum up the best activities

Action: No Drama? Call To Action

2. Details

Did you see De Niro with no pants? How many of you have had a Zoom meeting since 2020 with just your underpants? Be honest.

These little things make us feel like they're just like us. It makes the story all the more believable. You might think it's just an unnecessary detail, or a joke. And you're partly right. It is a joke, but it's no unnecessary detail. These little things make the difference between a good and a great ad.





Step by step: using storytelling for your brand

1. **Get to know your audience**

Your story has to both sympathetically and empathically trigger them.

2. **Write down what emotions you want to trigger**

This will greatly impact the kind of story you're going to tell.

3. **Write a script**

If you're not great at writing a script, find someone who can help you do it. It doesn't have to be a high-end scriptwriter like the ad we just saw. If you know someone who can tell great stories, sit down with them and figure out how you can use their storytelling ability for your brand.

Test your script, if you have time and resources

You want to find out if the story triggers the right emotions with your target audience. You also want to find out how they sympathetically and empathically react to it.

4. **Tell your story, preferably through video**

There are other ways than video to tell a story. Blogs, books, photography or social media posts are all viable options. But video, or in some cases audio – podcasts for example – are king when it comes to storytelling, simply because it requires more senses, and thus more commitment from who's watching.

Through video, you can convey a lot of information in a short time. Now, I'm not crusading against blogs, books, social media posts or other means of communication. They certainly serve their purpose, also in storytelling. So don't forget about them!

But in cases like this, there is just no way you could have done the same thing and elicit the same kind of reaction through writing or photography. Video marketing is hot for a reason.





1. Don't forget the 15-second rule

You've got about 15 seconds to grab the viewers attention. In this case, they used two legendary people that I doubt you can use for your ads. But there are certainly other ways of grabbing people's attention. Here's a few examples:

- Ask a question
- Have someone tell a true story and build suspense
- Show something controversial
- Give valuable information that leaves them wanting more

These are just a few examples. It also comes down to what your target audience looks like and what the purpose of your ad is.

Ads to raise awareness for danger in traffic, for example, usually shock you in the first few seconds. They have to, because they really need to grab your attention. Now, I'm not saying you should therefore automatically use the shock factor. I'm telling this to show you that sometimes choosing how to grab attention can vary depending on the case.

2. Also, don't forget about this rule

Your story needs to have a logical timeline and you should try to link it to a marketing process, such as AIDA.

In this case, they walked you through the four steps in 90 seconds. At the end, a clear-cut Call To Action is shown for about 10 seconds. It's a very logical timeline and it also uses one of the older and most trusted sales techniques. That's great marketing.

So when writing a script, choose a sales technique such as AIDA and try to build up your story around this.

However, this does not mean you have to use AIDA. There are many, many, many sales techniques and storytelling techniques that you can choose from. Pick the one that fits your audience, your brand and your goals best.

If you feel overwhelmed, AIDA is a very basic one that you can always use and works for almost every branche.





In conclusion

Storytelling is a great way to sell your product or service to consumers. Many studies and cases have proven it to be effective and it really has shown great results ever since it's been introduced as a marketing concept.

Obviously, there are about a million ways to sell a product to a consumer, so you don't always have to tell an elaborate story.

The customer journey shows there are different points in which your clients travel when 'journeying' through your business or brand. And at some of these points, or in some branches, storytelling is not required.

It's always a good idea to do your research or ask someone you know with a marketing background whether or not storytelling is something that you should be considering. But in most cases, if you have the time or the resources or you are willing to commit to it, storytelling can really help you further develop your brand or business.

Sources

The Role Of Storytelling, Glenn. T. Hubbard

Effects of Storytelling in Advertising on Consumer's Empathy

Storytelling & Advertising campaign by Boelet Creative Agency





Everything Marketing University

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out there and kick some ass.**

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