

# Digital Storytelling: A Hypodermic Needle of Business Strategy

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## ABSTRACT

Research from all over the world over the past decade shows an increasingly use of stories in Commercial and Business World. Digital Media has brought in sweeping changes in Business World. Through the sharing of stories, brands are introduced in an accessible way which creates understanding about them. The process of indoctrination of consumers as audience has paved way for new marketing strategies. The term storytelling is very comprehensive that covers a wide range of narrative forms. A well delivered stories are the backbone of a strong marketing strategy. Although the effect of digital story telling in business and commercial world may vary as it is more evolutionary than revolutionary in nature. The Business World has witnessed deeper transformation in the business processes as digital engagement has become indispensable for Business Communication. This article uses Netnographic analysis of the content posted on social media platforms to comprehend how the Digital Storytelling on social media platforms influence consumers across a spectrum of online involvement. Netnographic Analysis will study a specific set of data related to Digital Stories webcasted and manifested on the Internet to build the image of certain brands.

Keywords

Digital Storytelling, Online Media, Business Strategies, Branding

## 1. Introduction

The famous quote by Christopher Hitchens - Everybody does have a book in them, but in most cases that's where it should stay. For thousands of years, humans have relied on storytelling to engage with people, to spark their emotions and to speak about their personal experiences. Storytelling is a narrative form of presentation of events, happenings or connected series of happenings, whether true or fictitious. It generally has ingredients of human actions or emotions that affect human beings. Stories are part of conversations, recollections, experiences, plans, hopes, desires and fears. (Walsh, 2014)

Storytelling is an art of structuring content that delivers visions, values, feelings and memories. It conveys real or fictitious events in words, images, and sounds. (Cathy, 2012) A successful beginning, middle, and end while moving smoothly from one stage to the next creates a beautiful story. Storytelling is a universal habit and all cultures have forms of anecdotes. Stories are part of conversations, recollections, plans, hopes, desires and fears. People of all age groups tell stories; stories are narrated in different forms from childhood days to various stages of life. (Grurgeon & Garder, 2016) There are plethora of stories that revolves around the feelings, values and experiences. However, the value and nature of storytelling are used as a means by which human beings represent and structure their world. People can forget facts, but they will never forget a good story. Therefore, storytelling is the art of incorporating a facts with a story. The stories generally depict facts, information, knowledge, or wisdom to an audience in an entertaining way. (John, 2016) Stories fascinate people and often can be more easily remembered than facts, it has a power to engage people. The old tradition of storytelling was performed in front of an audience and shared across generations. Stories have been part of every culture as a means of entertainment, education, and transmission of culture. The stories have a significant imparting knowledge and moral values. As soon as the humans learnt speaking, they have developed a natural ability of using verbal communication in teaching, explaining, and entertaining. Psychologists believe that human brains have the power to remember stories. Psychologists have termed this power of storytelling as narrative psychology. Narrative psychology is described as a nascent field of psychology in which humans deal with their own experiences by creating stories and by listening to the stories of others. (Vassilieva, 2016) A story is another word for the human experience in narrative psychology.

Narrative psychology refers that our psychology is concerned with the structure, content, and function of the stories that we share with each other in social interaction. As behavioral psychologist Susan Weinschenk described "that stories manage to engage more of the brain than straight recitations of facts or dry arguments" (Weinschenk, 2014) Therefore, human conduct is best explained through stories as we live in the world which is surrounded by plenty of stories. The history of storytelling is not new, it existed before the man learned to write as he had to rely on the memory. Human brains can process information better through narrative formation, as it is considered as a highly effective memory tool. Our brain works well with the list of words structured in a form of story. Consequently, information presented in the storytelling form of a story is easier to remember than if that information is simply put in a list. (Brock & Yasin, 2012)

Storytelling is considered as a device for disseminating information, it is only that the presentation of storytelling has transformed from traditional form to digital form. (Brock & Yasin, 2012) Traditional storytelling were presented through words, pictures, paintings or actions while on digital platforms the people experience multi-media storytelling. Moving beyond Web 1.0. Social Media has flipped the idea of Storytelling. The multifold features of digital media have proffered a platform to deliver stories. The cyber world has become an indispensable space of telling a story. The word "Digital" refers to anything associated with the information age, and "story" means a structured information with various ingredients. (Ohler, 2013) Therefore, Digital storytelling (DST) is a presentation of stories on digital platforms.

## 2. The Art of Storytelling in Business

Persuasion is the cornerstone of any story and good storytelling can connect people with business. The art of storytelling has been recognized as an essential characteristic of business strategies to persuade the customers. In business, the information about the product or service is well structured and presented to touch the emotions of the people.

A story helps in building connection and loyalty between the business and the people. Today Businesses strategically use storytelling as a tool to develop and deliver a memorable story about their brands to customers. The introduction of social media has proffered a platform for businesses to narrate stories and connect with customers. Storytelling in business helps to connect with the people as it spark the emotional side of the brain. Whether the message have wheel of emotions like sad, happy, scared, anger or content, it makes people feel more alive. Stories have a potential to collaborate and drive a successful branding. The information architecture is shaped by designing and scripting a content saga that appeals the customer. (Kaul & Chaudhri, 2017) "None of the facts and figures matter until you have some sort of emotional connection," (Choy, 2017) Therefore, stories are a great way to connect with people emotionally. When crafting a story it is important to think what emotion needs to be communicated for delivering a story. The art of Business Storytelling connects people through their senses and appeals them effortlessly. The corporate communication is strategically designed to set the scene by describing the visuals. Business stories are characterized by strengthening employee engagement, building customer loyalty, driving innovation and creativity and growing the business. Thus, Stories provide a unique opportunity to communicate a message. Stories are likely to increase the credibility, capture attention and engage the minds of customers. (Gallo C. , 2017).

## 3. Brand Stories: A new paradigm

Social media is defined as a group of internet based applications built on the framework of Web 2.0 and allows the creation and exchange of user generated contents. (C.Fuchs, 2014) The allure of social media derives from the ability to facilitate open source, free flow of information, sense of community, conversation and dialogue threads and enable linkages between online communities.

These attributes help to create momentum, mobilize and build reputation. This is a dynamic landscape of communication marked by high connectivity, diffusion of power, blurring boundaries and real time conversation. (Kaul & Chaudhri, 2017) With the dramatic growth of social media, digital business stories have the power to build a brand. Well-told stories of a brand have the potential to influence consumers.

The stories of brands like Apple, TOMS Shoes, Paisabazaar.com, BIBA, Hyundai, "LG Innovation Story, Prega News that gained popularity on social media are discussed and examined to comprehend how the stories play a role in business communication.

1.2.1 The story narrated by Steve Jobs during the launch of Apple's iPod received a huge attention on social media platforms. Steve Jobs shared the story how Apple iPod was developed. He told that when the engineers presented him with a prototype, after careful examination, he was not at all impressed as in his opinion, the device was too big. He wasn't convinced by the explanation of his engineers that the device is in its appropriate size. As an answer to such statement, Jobs walked over to the fish tank and dropped the iPod prototype in it. As the device was sinking in air bubbles released. When iPod reached the bottom, Steve Jobs said: "Those are air bubbles that means there's space in it "Make it smaller."

1.2.2 The brand Paisabazaar.com garnered over 5 million views on YouTube channel in just three days of its broadcast. Paisabazaar.com portrays "a story of two brothers and focus on how the right advice can change lives". The idea of Paisabazaar.com is to connect with the consumers by building trust. The story of Paisabazaar.com highlights the special bond between two brothers. The story is about a guy who is dumb and his brother who gives voice to his sign language. The mute guy gives a touchy speech on his brother's wedding, expressing his gratitude for always being his guiding light and giving him the right advice to overcome all the hurdles on his own, and therefore, making him a more confident person in life. When the dialogue threads were analysed it was found that the netizens have requested to share the video with English subtitles. Paisabazaar.com took heed of people's demand and uploaded the video with English subtitles. This depicts the fact that brands are keenly interested in connecting with people.

1.2.3 The other business story of Olymp Trade shares the story of a family with a headline "Woman earns over 58,60000.00/- rupees working from home and keeps it a secret from her husband for 3 years". This story is presented in the form of news that arouses curiosity in customers. This story was circulated on the platforms of Facebook which grabbed the attention of people.

1.2.4 The brand TOMS shoes highlights another example of business storytelling.. This story shares an Experience of Blake Mycoskie that while traveling in Argentina in 2006, he witnessed the hardships faced by children growing up without shoes. Seeing them barefooted and Wanting to help, he created TOMS Shoes, a company that would match every pair of shoes purchased with a new pair of shoes for a child in need. Thus, this "One for One" Tagline strikes the emotion of customers. The Comments of people on Its Facebook Page appreciated the idea of "One for One".

1.2.5 Red Bull a popular energy drink presents the story of India's only luger, Shiva Keshavan and states the Tagline "experience the world of Red Bull like you have never seen it before". The motivational story of Red Bull was appreciated by the people on the platforms of social media.

1.2.6 Another striking story of BIBA, a Fashion Brand depicts the story of gender equality with a Tagline "ChangelsBeautiful. The story starts with a woman sitting at her dressing table, putting on a pair of ornate earrings. The story depicts a touching message "when the girl asks her father how she is supposed to choose a husband over a plate of samosas". But the story takes a twist when the father of a girl asks about the culinary abilities of a boy. This depicts a striking message that why the girl is by default expected to cook and marriage means equal partnership of a couple in all walks of life. When the comments posted on this video were analyzed it was found that people appreciated the video and stated "well depicted gender equality".

1.2.7 "Hyundai | Celebrating 20 Years of Brilliant Moments," which was uploaded to the Hyundai India YouTube channel on June 27, 2018. A recent story of the South Korean car maker Hyundai's 20 years celebrations. It portrays the emotional connection with the brand and sharing brilliant moments. The video of Hyundai India has 4.K shares and 880k views on its Facebook page. The dialogue threads referred it as Heart Touching Story as it depicts the emotional bond with Hyundai in past 20 years.

1.2.8 Another “LG Innovation Story – Brand Film 21 Years Celebrations,” This brand showcased the story of a father who got only 3 out of 100 questions right on a test – in his father’s math class. This story reflects the idea of Innovation and shares the bond of a family. The comments posted on Youtube Video described it as Amazing video and beautiful story.

1.2.9 The brand Prega News takes the conversation forward from pregnancy to post pregnancy and presents an issue of postpartum depression with a story revolving around new mothers. The story portrays the difficulties faced by a women post delivery to balance work and life. This video was highly appreciated by people as they were unaware about postpartum depression.

The brands discussed have acquired digital storytelling tools to portray an enthralling impression amongst the customers. The stories presented by these brands show various ingredients of articulation that appeals the customers. The brands incorporate the elements of social issues, experience, emotions to strike the attention of the customers. Over the years, several studies have found that our brains are far more engaged by storytelling than with a general information so the Brands are using stories as marketing techniques. The Stories illustrate the notions which are easy to memorize and allow a brand to create stronger emotional bonds with their customers. That’s why storytelling is occupying a significant place in business. The viewers identify with the story relate themselves and even empathize with the characters which ultimately influence them to engage with the brands.

#### 4. Review of Literature

Though, research on Business Storytelling are limited in Indian context, but the role of stories in business strategies is a pressing topic. (Choy, 2017) It has been observed that the businesses have eagerly adopted storytelling techniques for engaging with customers, entering into direct dialogues with people and enabling vivid discussions. Storytelling has developed as a form of business promotion strategy. Taking into consideration that storytelling is relatively new in business the amount of research conducted in this field is inadequate. (Dietz & Silverman, 2013).

Storytelling is indispensable for business as it has simplified a complex ideas into a fascinating one. A story helps in building connects and loyalty between the brand and the customer. (Kaul & Chaudhri, 2017) Stories work beyond, it not only outlines the background information of a founder, company’s competitors rather these are classic plot devices, layered into corporate messages. In a book “The Storyteller’s Secret: From TED Speakers to Business Legends, Why Some Ideas Catch On and Others Don’t - Carmine Gallo states, audiences wanted to discover powerful stories, inspiring stories that could stimulate their minds.” (Gallo C. , 2017) Whether the goal is to sell, educate, or entertain, the story is a most valuable asset for businesses. A well-told story strikes attention, it triggers the emotions and illuminates the path to innovation. The Story is a “a strategic tool with irresistible power,” as stories let to craft the most powerful delivery (Chakraborty, 2018)

Communication expert Carmine Gallo in the book – “The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs: How to Be Insanely Great in Front of Any Audience” articulates that the presentation of goods is a crucial ingredient of success. A good story can spark action and passion; it can revolutionize the way people think. (Gallo C. , 2009) Therefore stories can also operate more subtly. By adapting proven structures and conventions, the forgettable presentations can be transformed into compelling ones, and make lasting impressions. Storytelling has emerged as a strategic skill that every business leader must master to build the loyalty of people.

#### 5. Objectives

The study has been carried out based on the following objectives:

- (i) To examine how storytelling helps in connecting with people.
- (ii) To examine the strategies of Storytelling in Business.

#### 6. Methodology

This research analyses various appealing business stories that became viral on social media platforms. The research employs a qualitative conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), within the conceptual framework of Business stories to explore the stated objectives. Conventional content analysis involves coding categories that are directly derived from the data. A good stories acts as a hypodermic needle to influence the customers.

All the available posts were classified, categorized and coded. Here, the coding of the business stories evolved from the data. The content of Business stories are categorized and coded into three categories.

#### 7. Analysis

In terms of storytelling strategies, Business world has used an intelligent mix of digital media and content marketing that fascinates the people. Businesses portraying great stories have created a huge community of fans, followers and subscribers on their social media platform and has stormed them ahead in the race. From the brand stories discussed above and gained popularity on online platforms three codes were shortlisted for Analysis:

Brand Identification – Brand Identification refers a emotions and cognitive relationship between people. A good story gives a unique identity to the brand amongst customers.

Building Brand Communities – The Brand Communities are built by initiating a dialogue with people who are influenced by the stories of brands. The stories shared on social media platform involve people in discussion.

Connecting People and Obtain the data of Customers– The key objective of storytelling in businesses is to engage people. The advantage of connecting people is that they build relationships that can foster brand loyalties. The stories tickle the emotional instinct of people so that they share their feedback which ultimately helps them to connect with the people. They seek advice, suggestions, their opinions to stay connected.

Tables 4.1 shows the classification of the objectives of Business Storytelling.

Codes	Analysis of Online Campaigning Posts and Dialogue Threads
<b>Brand Identification</b>	Identify a brand that captures a brand's emotional story and builds long-lasting value for a business.
<b>Building Brand Communities</b>	Storytelling in business strengthen brand communities by facilitating shared customer experiences. Digital stories are shared and reposted which helps to build a brand community
<b>Connecting People and Obtain the data of Customers</b>	People-Public-Private-Partnership, Seeking Advice, Suggestions, Opinions from People, Integration with people to broaden the spectrum and obtaining Big Data.

Table 4.1

## 8. Discussion

As Table 4.1 shows social media has provided a digital platform of business for sharing the stories. Taking into account different characteristics of Business Storytelling, the well structured stories helps in developing relationships with people. As the data shows that the chief objectives of narrating stories in business are Brand Identification, Building Brand Communities and Connecting with people. The Storytelling strategy attempts to strike the emotions of people. As can be seen that the social media is all about real time conversation, so the brand ensures public participation with their stories.

The storytelling unequivocally illustrates the business plan that targets the customers by tickling their emotional instinct. As the youths of this generation are highly active on social media platform the stories presented revolve around those notions that can easily appeal them. The idea of digital storytelling is to webcast information on a worldwide stream and connect with people across the globe.

## 9. Conclusion.

The art of Storytelling in Business has become a branding phenomenon; youths have become the targets to influence them on social media. The business stories have a power to involve people; expanding the scope of reaching people directly. The discussions on social media platforms surrounding the stories of brands shows that great stories entice people and foster brand loyalties. In this age of digital society and social networks, the practice of digital storytelling has extended to online platforms, beyond the geographical confinements, exhibiting the business goals to a large canvas of online platforms.

Businesses have witnessed a whirl of transformation over the period of time and its dependency over social media to connect with people has expanded. The diversified nature of social media, potential to shape the opinion of million of users and as 40% of its total population constitutes of Indian youth, the Business strategies have incorporated digital tools to disseminate their brand stories to engage with people and develop a brand community.

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