

Storytelling and building a personal connection



Everyone has a story to tell - between narrator and listener, humans love stories, they inspire us and motivate us, creating a connection to the essences and values of who we are. As consumers, those emotions and resonations can influence the way we interact and perceive a brand.

Such as with eCommerce, stories are everywhere, making it one of the most effective methods used by eCommerce businesses. Consumers are constantly on the move to get what they want, in the most seamless way possible, without wasting time or money. Storytelling, in the context of eCommerce, allows boosting value not only to your content but also increases brand loyalty and captivates your audience, market, and industry amongst the competition.

What is eCommerce storytelling?

Storytelling in itself defines the social and cultural activity of sharing stories from one another, from the roots of bonfire anecdotes to narratives of fiction and non-fiction describing plots and characters for the means of providing entertainment, cultural preservation, education, and morals.

eCommerce storytelling focuses on the narrative of your company or brand and its products, and how you tell that “story” to your customers and audience. Telling a simple story is easy, but telling a story that sells, and considers different audiences, demographics, and your customers’ tastes, takes investment. Brands can show their determination in getting to know their customers, taking the time to listen and interact with them, while understanding any

pain-points they may face during the customer journey, or in products they use.

Stories cannot be generic, pointing to the need for personalization in your brand’s narrative, where your customer is the main character, your brand or product the secondary characters, and your stage ranging from your webpage, social media platform, to email marketing.

Amongst an information overload that happens in every customer’s eCommerce journey, storytelling not only shows authenticity but promotes your unique brand voice, showing that you offer more than just your product, but the time and effort behind those products and brand.

Storytelling “*between the lines*” - this is what you want for your eCommerce company, a story that captivates and embodies who you are as a brand, and how you want to resonate with your values and essentially, products, to your customers and audience as well. In this article, we will explore tips and tricks to incorporate into your brand’s storytelling to not only make your brand more memorable but to foster customer loyalty and generate engagement to sales and conversions.

What does it take to tell a successful story for your eCommerce brand?

eCommerce brands are faced with today’s hyper-competitive landscape of capturing their audience’s attention. More so, the current landscape requires more than just an eye-catching website with a smooth and seamless purchasing and checkout journey. Customers are no longer moving linearly, and are instead, interacting with

omnichannel content, seeking experiences that resonate with them.

1. How do your customers and audience feel using your products?

According to a study by the Harris Group,¹ **more than 78% of millennials would choose to spend money on a desirable experience or event rather than buying something desirable.** It is all within getting to know how your customers and audience feel and can feel about using your products, then urging them into the purchasing journey of buying your product afterward.

Storytelling in this context does not necessarily mean talking solely about the product, but by showing and communicating with your audience a task, for example, that was done before using the product, versus after having your product. It's an opportunity to hone in on using emotional language and visualization, showing the before-and-after difference and the shift to an overall positive experience.

Remember: show, don't tell!

The advice of 'show, don't tell' resonates with how you present yourself as a brand, and the deeper underlying stories and content you wish to tell. You don't just blatantly say what you want to say, you illustrate it in the voice and eyes of your customer, showing them the journey, the ups and downs, and the effort you've taken to get to that point.

Imagine you're a brand that sells skis - you wouldn't say you're the brand with the "world's best skis", you tell the story of learning to ski, someone using the skis the

first time up a mountain (or even the story of the skis touching snow for the first time), the sensation the skier gets going through the snow, broken bones along the way, how that skier takes care of the skis post-season, and pistes your skis have conquered.



An example of storytelling through showing, not telling is the Thai brand Peppermint Field, in an advertisement for their nose inhaler - a story of a couple on their anniversary date as it unfolds into chaos and how a simple nose inhaler saves the day. You can [watch the video here](#).

2. Positioning through values: selling the idea of what your product does in telling a good story

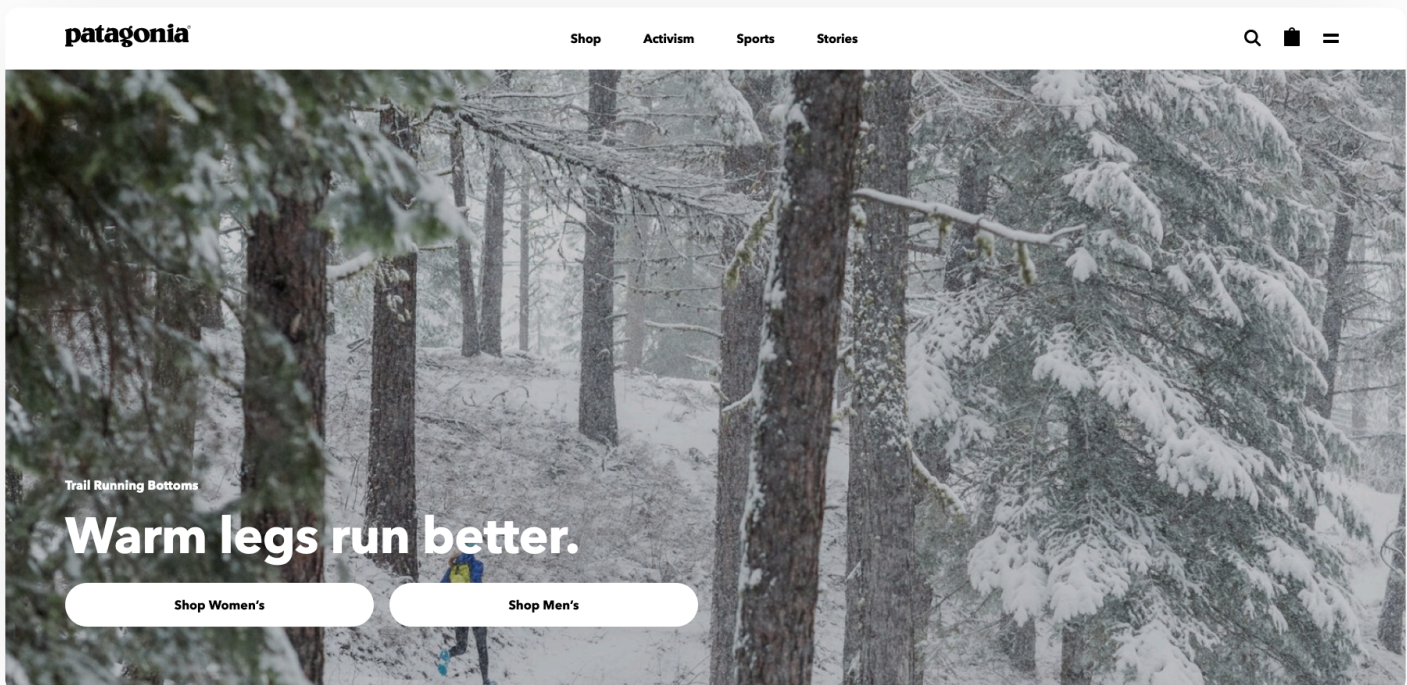
One of the most important starting points in telling a good story is to be as authentic as possible. To do so, think about what makes your brand memorable and unique, lending to building a story around the message you want to convey, with the values and emotions you want to portray to your audience (remember, show, don't tell).

An example of this is seen with outdoor apparel brand, Patagonia. Through the use of their eCommerce landing page, a designated 'Stories' area on their website and social media accounts, Patagonia focuses on stories that resonate with their brand values and audience. While most brands would cut to the chase in promoting their best-selling products, Patagonia takes the time to tell the story of their humble beginnings, and stories that resonate with their target audience of

outdoor enthusiasts and environmentally-conscious consumers.

Stories are seen with awning images of the natural world, society, and individuals who live with it, as well as the menaces it faces. This makes Patagonia a prime example of telling a good story while highlighting what their product can do - quality outdoor apparel and gear made responsibly for people and the environment, whichever natural environment you choose to venture to.

Not only that, Patagonia goes further in concreting their brand values to their customers, solving another customer concern of fast-fashion and its impact on the environment, with the company's promise and commitment to allocating 1% of sales towards the preservation and restoration of the world's natural environment.



3. Do your customers think and feel like you?

Another way to better understand your customers is by reaching out and communicating with them. An invitation to join your brand's conversation with user-generated content that can be shared on your website as well as prominently displayed on social media.

User-generated content can be categorized as any kind of content, such as videos, text, images, reviews, or reels, created by people

and consumers, where brands will share user-generated content through their social media accounts or website typically. According to a survey conducted by Stackla², consumers are 2.4 times more likely to consider user-generated content as more authentic compared to content created by brands, while 80% of consumers say user-generated content highly influences their purchasing decision and journey.

Additionally, a Nielsen study found:³

- Online consumer reviews are regarded as the second most trusted source of brand information
- 92% of consumers trust recommendations through word-of-mouth from people they know
- 70% of eCommerce consumers trust online public/consumer opinions and content

Not only does user-generated content drive purchase intent and decisions amongst consumers, but points to the fact user-generated content promotes credibility amongst consumers while adding a factor of genuine content from consumer to brand. It creates brand desire, showcases and inspires brand loyalty amongst customers, and allows your brand to

consequently build up a content library to always have relevant material to story-tell and share while getting in touch with your consumers.

An example of this can be found from [Viva Dogs](#), a monthly subscription service of dog toys and healthy-nutrition snacks that utilizes their Instagram primarily through user-generated content, where they encourage pet owners to send images of their dogs while enjoying their product.

[How this works](#)[Our boxes](#)[We like to help](#)[Lookbook](#)[Vivacats](#)[My account](#)**A monthly box with the best products for your dog**

- ✓ No commitment. Pause or cancel anytime.
- ✓ Save, its value is higher than the price you pay.
- ✓ 10% of our profits go to shelters.

[Subscribe](#)

Try out **vivadogs** with next months box

4. Keeping the message simple, shareable, and relevant

Every story has a message to tell - in creating a central and shareable message that resonates with your brand's values such as a call to action (CTA). A simple call to action can be used across multiple channels, giving you the benefit of projecting your voice as a brand. Make sure you hone down on the message you want to convey, making it easy to understand and to the point. Once you have this in hand, go further in interacting with your users, asking about their experiences, reactions, and feelings to the CTA and thus, how you can create a story stemming from that CTA.



[Look at Nike's 'Just Do It'](#) - a universal, simple, and to-the-point call to action. The 'It' could be anything – getting out of bed in the morning, taking the first step in a run, climbing the highest mountains, or crossing the roughest seas. 'Just Do It' could be turned into whatever the customer feels and needs, growing with them and instilling strength and wonder – to 'Just Do It'.

Similarly with Nike in staying relevant, getting to know your audience also requires understanding their values, culture, and behaviors - especially if you are tapping into a different audience group, market, or new geographical location, such as with the example of [Nike's Chinese New Year spot](#).



Key Takeaway

The main goal of every brand and eCommerce business is to drive sales and revenues - yet the key to it all in telling a good story is embracing your brand, your products, and your customers for who they are. Your eCommerce business is not just selling a product, but selling the results that you can offer and the feeling that your customers will be getting from using your products and brand. In embracing the way you tell your story, through emotional connections and values, you can develop a stronger relationship with your customers, build a stronger and honest brand true to its values, drive brand loyalty, creative and captivating content, while standing out from your competitors.

Everyone has a story to tell - what's yours?



Endnotes

1. Eventbrite, Millenials Fueling the Experience Economy. http://eventbrite-s3.s3.amazonaws.com/marketing/Millennials_Research/Gen_PR_Final.pdf
2. Businesswire, Stackla Survey Reveals Disconnect Between the Content Consumers Want & What Marketers Deliver. Feb. 2019, <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20190220005302/en/Stackla-Survey-Reveals-Disconnect-Content-Consumers-Marketers>
3. Newswire, Consumer Trust in Online, Social and Mobile Advertising Grows. Nov. 2012, <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2012/consumer-trust-in-online-social-and-mobile-advertising-grows/>