



How effective is storytelling for rural marketing campaigns?

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Storytelling is a powerful way to spark life into your brand. A brand's story and its narrative are as important to the consumers as the products themselves. You can give a brand an identity by capturing and sharing the stories around them; you can lead your target audience on a journey they enjoy experiencing. For consumers to feel a personal connect with a brand, the stories must be inspirational, creative and authentic.

Marketers have been telling brand stories for years through advertising, brand experiences, and so on, but the art of writing those brand stories is a challenge. Each story builds an emotional bridge between brand and consumer. Storytelling can tap into real interests, desires, wants and lives of consumers.

The art of storytelling can be traced back to the beginning of the story of man. What do stories do? They provide context and meaning for life, work, relationships, and societal norms. That's because stories often have characters or plots that readers can relate to, or there are identifiable desired traits and shared goals. And, since brands try to make a connect with their target audiences, it makes sense that they would turn to storytelling.

Storytelling has become more relevant due to the audience's desire for authenticity, meaning, and emotion from brands. Storytelling is actually narrating an event or a product with the help of words or images, often conveyed in an attractive manner. Curiosity can be sparked with the help of a vivid imagination to assist in designing a successful campaign.

But how do the stories appear and appeal when they are directed at rural audiences? Rural marketing can be a challenge and trying to make it click is a path laden with trials and tribulations. However, we have instances of how brands make use of the "Story Telling" tool impactfully. So, why not in rural marketing?

Benefits of Storytelling in Middle India

Telling stories is a critical component to communicate a brand's value to customers, thus leading to increased engagement and conversion. Since the demographics are very different in rural areas, storytelling has to suit their lifestyle. So, marketers should create authentic social content and ensure transparency. They should find new methods to do "experiential marketing" as that will build direct connections and meaningful relationships with consumers. The secret is to tailor your communication in line with the values and behaviours of the rural public – to build loyalty.

Some tips to follow for stories directed at Middle India

- **Build a connect through stories** – Storytelling is known to bring out a stronger emotional reaction to stories rather than ads etc. They touch the cords so that people (here Middle India) start feeling closer to the brand. This is how a loyal customer base starts growing – it relates to the audience to form a bridge between the product or service and the brand.
- **Give shape to what Middle India knows** – A story gives a face to an event and similarly it gives shape to information that becomes a message. When raw data is passed as a story, it converts itself into meaningful ideas which leads to conversations and opinions.
- **Touch the heart, spark reactions** – Mostly, storytelling increases open and close rates as it targets the heart, not the brain. A story is more predictable when it gives better options for the consumer.
- **Communicate and share** – Stories lead to more sharing as audiences find it easier and more fun to share stories rather than sharing videos or ads. This causes communication to kickstart around these stories which ultimately help the brand find deeper reach and better sharing.

The Do's and Don'ts of Storytelling

- Defend your value and brand excellence every single day, and that starts with trust
- Establish your reputation so that the brand builds value
- A brand will have no value if it doesn't show facts clearly, to impact the rural consumer in a clear, compelling way
- Brands should extend their reach; establish mutually-beneficial partnerships
- Don't ever take the audience for granted, as they are a brand's biggest evangelists and most valuable asset

Do brands actually understand storytelling? It is important to understand that storytelling is all about the consumer. No one cares about content and creative that is just about the brand, product features, and benefits. The content must be appealing and worthy. You do that by understanding your consumers' needs first. Determine what will grab their attention and why would they engage with it. Finally, figure out how it draws them back into your brand's overall content ecosystem.

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Shree is the Senior Editor at Reputation Today and hopes to move from one focus area to another in the editions that will be released this year. Having worked in Corporate Communications teams, she has experience of advertising, public relations, investor and employee communications, after which she moved to the other side – journalism. She enjoys writing and believes the power of the pen is indeed mighty. Covering the entertainment beat and the media business, she has been involved in a wide range of activities that have thrown open storytelling opportunities.

