

IMPACT OF STORYTELLING ON BRAND LOVE: THE CASE OF VUN ART

● NGUYEN HOANG LAM

ABSTRACT:

In the realm of marketing, storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool, leveraging the intrinsic human connection to narratives and fostering brand love. Through a comprehensive analysis of Vun Art's storytelling strategies and their correlation with the development of brand love, this study elucidated the intricate dynamics between narrative crafting and the cultivation of deep-seated affection toward a socially conscious brand. Insights from this study offer valuable implications for the strategic utilization of storytelling in augmenting brand affection within the domain of social enterprises.

Keywords: storytelling, brand, social enterprises, Vun Art.

1. Introduction

Given that telling stories has been an integral part of our daily life since the dawn of civilization, marketing efforts have utilized brand storytelling to capitalize on the benefits which stories bring. Stories are often simply described as effective communicators, which could prompt emotional connections to brands (Fog et al., 2010). The brand love concept is based on “multiple interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements, rather than a specific, single, transient love emotion” (Batra et al., 2012).

Social enterprises have developed brand storytelling to deliver a complex message, incorporating both for-profit and nonprofit themes, to a diverse array of external stakeholders, such as customers, investors, employees, volunteers, the media, and

beneficiaries (Morris, et. al., 2007). They depend on these stakeholders providing important tangible and intangible resources that are vital for launching and growing new organizations (Miller & Wesley, 2010).

This article studies the impact of storytelling on brand love for social enterprises. Its findings are from Vun Art, a Vietnamese social business that provides jobs and income to the disabled. Vun Art recycles throwaway fabrics into traditional artwork and paintings, which are heat pressed onto and sold in the forms of tote bags, pillows, etc.

2. Overview of storytelling and brand love

2.1. Storytelling

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “story” is defined “a description, either true or imagined, of a connected series of events”, and

“Storytelling” is defined “the activity of writing, telling, or reading stories”.

A story has a structure, which keeps the story together and engages the audience. A story's structure includes a beginning, middle and end. A conflict often propels the story. The central message is delivered through the solution to the conflict. It is important that the action raises interest from the beginning and that the message is clear. An unexpected or unusual twist is often included in a compelling story. Finally, the end, which is often best remembered, should emotionally satisfy the audience (Mossberg, 2008).

The prominence of storytelling is deep rooted in marketing literature, specifically in the field of content marketing and brand journalism, and is widely accepted as a fact. Stories are often simply described as effective communicators. The positive benefits that storytelling has on brand communication are to create experiences that appeal to customers emotions and dreams creates expectations, which affect subsequent evaluations of the brand (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003; Rosen, 2000).

2.2. Brand love

Brand love is defined as a long-term relationship created between the brand and consumers, which is based on “multiple interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements, rather than a specific, single, transient love emotion”. While many antecedents - factors that lead to brand love have been studied, there is still no consensus on this matter. There are eight antecedents for brand love (Bairrada, et. al., 2018; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

1) Perceived quality: People tend to find things that provide them with the necessary benefits and demonstrate high quality as attractive.

2) Prestige: The degree of status that consumers associate with a brand lead to brand love.

3) Hedonistic features: They highlight two

hedonic emotions, fun and pleasure, as being the most connected to brand love.

4) Authenticity: Brand experiences that are perceived as authentic are the ones with the most positive impact on brand love.

5) Brand uniqueness: The degree to which consumers feel that the brand is distinct from competitors is relevant because people tend to want to be different from others.

6) Identification with the brand: the degree of similarity between the consumer self-image and the brand image.

7) Self-expression: the degree to which the specific brand enhances one's social self and/or reflects one's inner self”.

8) Sense of community: The “phenomenon in which customers feel a kinship or affiliation with other people associated with the brand” nurtures brand love.

3. Research methodology

The article uses a mixed research method between both quantitative and qualitative data, which can help provide a better understanding of the research problem than either type of data by itself (Jennifer Byrne et al, 2007). Vụn Art is chosen for several reasons. Vụn Arts promotional efforts heavily utilize storytelling. Not only can storytelling techniques be seen in Vụn Arts social media contents, but also their products, workshops, and exhibitions.

A non-probabilistic sample of 100 participants was studied. 100 participants were chosen for (1) being loyal customers of Vụn Art; they have owned at least one Vụn Arts product and attended at least one Vụn Art exhibition; (2) following at least one Vụn Art social media profile. They were each sent a form, which took on average 15 minutes to complete three sections.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Antecedents of brand love

The most frequently mentioned and important antecedent is authenticity. 80% of the participants gave a 5 out of 5 rating, and 20% give 4 out of 5. It

is positive because Rodrigues and Borges (2020) found that distrust and negative emotions have a negative impact on brand love, which presses for the importance of authenticity. When asked about what prompted this feeling of authenticity, some claimed that it was due to their interactions with Vụn Arts employees or one of Vụn Arts exhibitions. “Vụn Art is really training and providing jobs to the disabled. Their products are polished, so they are trustworthy.

Another valued antecedent was identification with the brand. Specifically, the participants found themselves to share with Vụn Art the same love and empathy/sympathy for the disabled, the environment, as well as Vietnamese traditional paintings. “One of the personal values that I share with Vụn Art is empathy with those who are working / learning at Vụn Art. I love Vụn Art not only because of my love for the pieces of Vietnamese culture embedded in each of their products, as well as the familiar, simple, and modern material choice, but also the humane values that Vụn Art brings through providing the disabled with jobs. Many young people have found their purpose and develop a positive sense of self after learning and working at Vụn Art.”

Meanwhile, most participants rate Vụn Arts uniqueness and the sense of community that the brand brings from moderately to very impactful. The only antecedent, which was debated, was self-expression. However, the participants, who gave this antecedent a low score, all seemed to agree that the reason was that “Although the quality of Vụn Art products are great. The product line is not very diverse”.

4.2. Storytelling and brand love

All participants had followed at least one of Vụn Arts social media accounts and visited at least one of Vụn Arts exhibitions. Subsequently, they all agreed that storytelling as a technique is highly implemented in Vụn Arts promotional efforts, with 40% of the participants rating this aspect a 4 and another 40% rating it a 5 out of 5.

In addition, out of all the components of a story (message, time, place, plot, etc.), the message was the most important part by all of the participants. When asked about why they consider storytelling to be an important part of the brand, all claimed that storytelling allowed Vụn Art to communicate the brands values and mission with the customer. It should be noted that these values and mission - helping the disabled - were mentioned as the reasons why the participants developed an important antecedents of brand love: identification with the brand. Consequently, through hearing the stories, the participants claimed that they were able to understand and positively receive Vụn Arts message. In other words, the participants found Vụn Arts story and brand to be authentic, partly due to storytelling.

Furthermore, the participants claimed that the stories told by Vụn Art were very interesting and were able to paint a positive picture of the brand. The diverse and unique selection of stories were also claimed to have contributed to the brands uniqueness.

When asked about the degree to which storytelling plays as the deciding factor for the formation of brand love, 40% of the participants gave a 5 out of 5 rating. However, 40% of the participants gave a 2 out of 5 rating. The quality of the products themselves is actually the most impactful factor contributing to brand love, while storytelling only contributes to reinforce this love.

In conclusion, storytelling plays a major role in the development of brand love, either as the direct reason leading to this emotion or simply as reinforcements. The effects of this technique are enhanced when the stories entail shared values and show authenticity.

4.3. Consequences of brand love

The most prominent consequence observed is loyalty. When the participants were asked to rate the likelihood of continuing to support Vụn Arts products and brand in general, 60% gave a 5 out of 5 rating and 40% gave a 4.

Meanwhile, the willingness to pay a higher price for Vụn Arts products was a little bit more debated among the participants, 40% rating a 2 and 60% giving at least a 3 out of 5 score. A similar kind of mixed results are evident when the participants are asked to be willing to engage with Vụn Arts branded content. 20% of the participants gave a score of 2, 40% gave a 3 and the remaining 40% gave a rating of at least 4 out of 5. It was due to Vụn Arts content not regularly appearing on their feeds.

Finally, 100% of our participants also claimed to be brand lover of Vụn Art. 100% of the participants claimed that they would very likely recommend Vụn Art to their acquaintances. The most common reason for this decision was that they found Vụn Art to be a high quality and very meaningful brand.

5. Conclusion

Storytelling as a technique not only has the ability to reinforce other antecedent of brand love,

but be an antecedent of brand love in of itself. Storytelling has helped them understand and accept the brands values and promotional message, which leads to brand identification and brand authenticity (two important antecedents of brand love). In addition, the importance of the products quality was emphasized as some participants claimed that the quality of the products, not the stories, was the main reason they loved the brand and it has been proved that generating love for a brand, which does not afford quality, is difficult (Batra et al, 2012).

Through providing proof of the positive impacts which storytelling has on brand love, our research can provide values to entrepreneurs and marketing professionals, particularly in the social entrepreneurship sector. The research findings provide valuable insights into the relationship between storytelling and branding, as well as the basis for future studies into this matter ■

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TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA VIỆC KỂ CHUYỆN ĐỐI VỚI TÌNH YÊU THƯƠNG HIỆU CỦA CÔNG CHÚNG: NGHIÊN CỨU VỚI TRƯỜNG HỢP VUN ART

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TÓM TẮT:

Trong lĩnh vực tiếp thị, kể chuyện đã nổi lên như một công cụ mạnh mẽ, tận dụng mối liên hệ nội tại của con người với những câu chuyện để tăng tình cảm gắn bó của công chúng đối với một thương hiệu, hay còn gọi là tình yêu thương hiệu. Thông qua việc phân tích toàn diện về các chiến lược kể chuyện của Vun Art và mối tương quan giữa các chiến lược này với tình yêu thương hiệu, nghiên cứu này nhằm khám phá mối quan hệ giữa các yếu tố phức tạp trong việc xây dựng câu chuyện với việc nuôi dưỡng tình yêu thương hiệu của công chúng đối với một doanh nghiệp xã hội. Nghiên cứu này kỳ vọng đem lại những thông tin hữu ích cho việc sử dụng chiến lược kể chuyện để tăng cường tình yêu thương hiệu của công chúng đối với doanh nghiệp xã hội.

Từ khóa: kể chuyện, thương hiệu, doanh nghiệp xã hội, Vun Art.