

Building a strong brand image: the role of storytelling in marketing

Popo Suryana

Pasundan University, Bandung, Indonesia

Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Brand Image, Storytelling, Marketing	A strong brand image is a strategic key for companies in facing increasingly tight business competition. This research aims to investigate the role of storytelling in building a strong brand image in a marketing context. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The research results show that storytelling has a crucial role in strengthening brand image. First, storytelling is able to create deep emotional bonds between companies and consumers, evoke positive feelings, and stimulate strong emotional responses. It not only presents product information, but also forms an emotional experience that sticks in consumers' memories. Second, storytelling builds close connections between brands and consumers by presenting stories about the company's integrity, goals and vision. This creates closer relationships, strengthens trust, and increases consumer loyalty. Third, storytelling gives a brand a deep dimension and character, forming a unique brand identity and differentiating it from competitors. By detailing the company's unique aspects, values, and history, storytelling creates a lasting impression in the minds of consumers. Overall, storytelling strategies, such as data-driven, philanthropic, and customer-led storytelling, are not only effective marketing tools but also a strong foundation in strengthening and establishing a meaningful brand image.
This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC license 	Corresponding Author: Popo Suryana Pasundan University, Bandung, Indonesia popo_suryana@unpas.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

For business actors, both those operating in the conventional and social realms, planning interesting and creative marketing strategies is an urgent need (Wijoyo et al, 2020). Especially in this era of rapid technological development, social media has become one of the main platforms that is popular for introducing products. With so many business actors competing to take advantage of the existence of social media, it has become essential for them to design marketing strategies that can steal consumers' attention amidst the ever-increasing information noise (Rahman et al, 2024).

The importance of understanding the dynamics of social media is not only limited to disseminating information, but also to successfully reaching and interacting with audiences. Therefore, marketing strategies that involve the use of creative content, inspiring campaigns and direct interaction with consumers can be the key to success (Nopiana et al, 2024). By utilizing social media platforms effectively, business actors have the opportunity to build brand awareness, increase engagement, and ultimately increase sales conversions (Rusdianto & Setiawan, 2024). In increasingly fierce competition, implementing innovative

and consumer-oriented marketing strategies can be a significant differentiator for business success (Pattipeilohy, 2018).

A survey conducted by the Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers (APJII) provides a very interesting picture of the potential of social media in the business realm in Indonesia. With more than 78% of Indonesia's population using the internet in 2023, social media has become a platform that cannot be ignored for business actors (APJII, 2023). This massive presence creates a huge opportunity to introduce the product to the wider community. The fact that most people have access to the internet indicates that social media can be an effective channel for strengthening brand image, building consumer engagement, and increasing overall brand awareness (Winasis, 2023).

To be able to take advantage of this opportunity, business actors need to design a mature and attractive marketing strategy plan. With increasingly fierce competition, creative and targeted strategies are the key to getting the attention of potential consumers (Pitaloka & Kardoyo, 2023). Inspirational content, engaging campaigns, and active interaction with consumers via social media can create a closer bond between brands and consumers. Therefore, planning a marketing strategy that wisely utilizes the potential of social media can be an important strategic step for business success in this digital era (Mukhlis et al, 2023).

One marketing strategy that has proven successful in attracting consumer attention and sympathy is storytelling marketing. The success of this strategy can be explained by the ability of stories or narratives to touch a person's heart and emotions, as well as being able to move individuals to take certain actions (Lin & Liou, 2016). In the context of social enterprise, storytelling marketing is not only a tool for marketing products or services, but also an effective medium for conveying value and increasing public awareness of the social problems faced (Pereira, 2019). By telling powerful and authentic stories, social enterprises can create emotional connections with consumers, motivate volunteer participation, and even attract the attention of investors who share social values (Korzh & Estima, 2022).

Apart from that, storytelling strategies are also able to build strong relationships with various parties, including consumers, volunteers and investors. A well-delivered narrative can create a deeper and more personal relationship with consumers, creating a sense of affinity for the company's social mission (Agustina, 2020). More than that, stories told well can also be the basis for building sustainable multi-stakeholder partnerships (Lindawati, 2018). Through enlightening stories about social goals and the resulting positive impacts, social enterprises can establish meaningful partnerships with various parties, expand their reach, and strengthen their contribution to desired social change (Sari, 2020).

Storytelling marketing, as explained by Salzeromorling & Strannegard (2004), is a form of narrative created by companies by connecting their identity and philosophy to the activities and products they offer. Different from traditional advertising which only highlights product advantages, storytelling marketing has its own advantages. Narrative advertising is able to form a stronger brand identity and can establish emotional bonds with consumers (Kodrat, 2020). By creating more personal and relevant stories, storytelling advertising becomes more sticky and familiar to consumers, allowing them to experience the company's values more deeply (Mucundorfeanu, 2018).

The importance of storytelling in the context of consumer purchasing decisions cannot be ignored. According to Kotler and Keller (2009), at the alternative evaluation stage, where consumers determine the decision to buy or not, storytelling can have a significant influence. Its ability to retain existing consumers and attract potential new consumers, as stated by Delgadillo and Escalas (2004), makes storytelling a strategic element in maintaining and increasing market share. In the context of social enterprise, storytelling is not only an effective marketing tool but can also be the key to reaching consumers and developing networks. With the power of networks, the social impact desired by social enterprises can reach more levels of society and provide a more sustainable contribution (Lindawati, 2018).

The aim of this research is to understand the extent to which the use of storytelling can influence consumer perceptions of brands, increase consumer trust, affinity and loyalty. Thus, this research seeks to identify the most effective storytelling elements in creating emotional bonds with consumers and explore the potential of this strategy in improving marketing performance and company brand image. It is hoped that the benefits of this research will provide in-depth insight to business people and marketers regarding the power of storytelling in a marketing context, as well as provide a basis for developing more effective marketing strategies in building and strengthening brand images.

METHOD

In this research, the author chose a qualitative descriptive approach to describe, analyze and understand the phenomenon that was the focus of the research. The decision to use qualitative methods was taken because the main aim was to investigate phenomena in depth, especially in real life contexts. This research aims to create a systematic, factual and accurate description of the characteristics and relationships of the phenomena that are the focus of the research (Moleong, 2014). The data collection process was carried out through literature study, by referring to various literary sources such as books, magazines, journals and previous research reports. It is hoped that the use of literature can provide information that is relevant to research and avoid duplication of results. In line with Yulianah's (2022) view, library research is considered useful for researchers in utilizing all information and thoughts related to their research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Storytelling has a crucial role in marketing to strengthen a strong brand image. First of all, Storytelling has tremendous power in creating deep emotional bonds between companies and consumers. By crafting compelling and relevant stories, companies are able to explore consumers' emotional landscape, evoke positive feelings and stimulate strong emotional responses. A well-told story can be a bridge that connects a brand with consumers' personal values, creating deeper and more meaningful connections. In this process, storytelling is not just about presenting product information, but more about forming an emotional experience that sticks in consumers' memories.

Apart from that, storytelling can also build closer connections between brands and consumers. By presenting stories that reflect the company's integrity, purpose and vision,

consumers see the brand not only as a provider of products or services, but also as a partner whose values align with their wants and needs. These closer relationships create stronger trust and loyalty. Consumers not only choose brands based on product quality, but also because of the emotional bond and connection they feel through the stories told by the company.

By understanding the potential of storytelling to create strong emotional connections, companies can design more competitive marketing strategies. Creating an authentic and evocative narrative can be a valuable asset in building a brand image that consumers not only know, but also love. In an era where experience and emotional value play a key role, storytelling becomes an invaluable instrument in forming lasting relationships between brands and consumers.

Second, Storytelling, as an undeniable force in the marketing domain, is able to imbue brands with deep dimensions and character. When a company is able to compose a story that explains its unique aspects, espoused values, and history that form the basis of its existence, storytelling not only creates an interesting brand narrative, but also becomes the main pillar in forming a brand identity that is so distinctive and differentiates it from the competition. fierce with competitors. These stories are not just a narrative thread, but rather a series of elements that give the brand its own unique color, feel and personality. Thus, the brand identity attached to storytelling becomes valuable capital in facing ever-growing business dynamics.

Through storytelling, companies can reveal more than just information about the products or services they offer. They can explore the elements that make the brand unique, from the core values espoused, product uniqueness, to stories about the company's journey. By detailing and deepening this story, brands are able to build a deep and unforgettable impression in the minds of consumers. A strong brand identity through storytelling not only creates a richer consumer experience, but also positions the brand as a more attractive and meaningful choice compared to its competitors. Therefore, storytelling is not just a marketing tool, but is also the main foundation in strengthening and confirming the brand image in the minds of consumers.

By marketing brands through storytelling, companies give consumers the opportunity to do more than just understand the product or service; they can also absorb the values and meaning contained in the brand. Through the dimensions and characters presented by storytelling, brands not only become commercial entities, but also become part of the consumer's journey and experience. Therefore, storytelling is not just a marketing technique, but also a reflection of the identity and philosophy that the brand stands for, creating deep and sustainable relationships with consumers that not only engage them rationally, but also emotionally.

Third, Storytelling, as the skill of telling stories, is not just entertaining, but is also a very effective marketing tool for conveying brand messages. In a marketing context, stories become a medium that allows brands to communicate core values, company goals, and product benefits in a more in-depth, interesting, and impressive way for consumers. Stories can provide rich dimension and context to brand information, making it more relevant and memorable for consumers in the ever-expanding crowd of marketing information.

Through storytelling, companies can craft narratives that combine creative elements with the strategic messages they want to convey. By creating compelling stories, companies can strengthen brand appeal, radiate desired values, and provide a deep understanding of the company's vision and mission. Consumers not only receive information, but are also involved in a story journey that forms a positive perception of the brand. Thus, storytelling is not only an effective marketing tool, but also a strategy that builds emotional connectivity and consumers' desire to engage further with the brand.

Apart from that, storytelling not only functions as a marketing tool, but also as a foundation for building and strengthening a brand image that has character and is highly competitive. By conveying brand messages through stories, companies can create a unique brand identity, differentiate them from competitors, and increase positive impressions in the minds of consumers. The brand image formed through storytelling has the power to stick in consumers' memories, creating long-term relationships based on trust and loyalty. In this way, storytelling is not only a tactical tool, but also a strategic element in forming a strong and attractive brand image.

In an effort to realize the above role, there are several storytelling strategies that have been widely used by social entrepreneurs, both in the world and in Indonesia (Lindawati, 2018). First, data-driven storytelling is an approach that integrates data as a key element in creating stories. In this context, the use of data is not only to support information, but is the core of the narrative being conveyed. This approach harnesses the power of data to raise awareness of a particular problem or issue. By presenting complex data but using simple language, the main goal is to make the information easier to understand and relevant to the audience.

One example of the success of data-driven storytelling is found in Kitabisa.com, a social business platform in Indonesia. Through their website, Kitabisa.com presents concrete data, such as the results of fundraising that have been realized and their impact on society. The use of this data is not only as a financial report, but as a story that tells the positive changes that have been achieved through community support. Data is a powerful tool for visualizing achievements and providing a clear picture of the positive impact resulting from community contributions.

The use of this strategy at Kitabisa.com not only has an impact on financial transparency, but also on creating encouragement and motivation for people to take part in other charitable projects. The public feels directly involved with success stories built from real data, building a sense of trust and awareness of social problems. Therefore, through a data-driven storytelling approach, Kitabisa.com is not only a fundraising platform, but also a narrator who is able to inspire and mobilize people to take positive action.

The importance of this strategy is not just limited to social business. In the modern world of marketing and communications, data-driven storytelling has become a very effective tool for conveying complex messages persuasively. By combining the power of data and narrative intelligence, this strategy can deliver deep impact, engage audiences, and build meaningful relationships between brands and consumers.

Second, philanthropic storytelling is a very common strategy used by sociopreneurs, especially in responding to the demands of modern consumers who increasingly demand

transparency and deeper involvement with companies. Today, consumers not only want to buy products or services, but also want to understand more deeply about the company's core values, work ethics, and social impact. This is in accordance with the increasing global awareness of the concept of "good business" which can be easily fulfilled by a sociopreneur, namely an entrepreneur who integrates social and environmental values in his business.

Qalpa, as an example of a social business, emphasizes philanthropic storytelling strategies in its business approach. On their platform, Qalpa says that they are not just sellers who connect consumers with artisan products, but rather as a bridge that allows consumers to interact directly with craftsmen. This strategy opens the door to greater transparency, where consumers can see clearly how goods are made, how craftsmen are treated, and how profit sharing is carried out fairly and transparently. By highlighting this aspect, Qalpa builds an image as a company that has integrity and is committed to social sustainability.

More than that, Qalpa also offers the possibility of customizing orders by allowing consumers to interact directly with craftsmen. This not only provides a more personalized shopping experience, but also increases consumer engagement with the production process. Through a philanthropic storytelling strategy, Qalpa succeeded in creating a narrative that not only sells products, but also forms more meaningful relationships between consumers, companies and craftsmen communities. This approach reflects modern business trends that not only seek financial gain, but also strive for a positive impact on society and the environment.

Third, Customer-led storytelling, a strategy implemented by Kitabisa.com, is an important foundation for social businesses in building consumer engagement and expanding their footprint. In this model, the company not only focuses on raising funds for charitable projects, but also leverages success stories from its users to illustrate the positive impact resulting from their contributions. Kitabisa.com actively presents past projects and authentic stories from donors, creating a narrative that encourages consumer engagement.

In contrast to conventional businesses which generally emphasize making profits, social businesses must have the ability to embrace and communicate these success stories well. In the context of Kitabisa.com, telling stories involves users who have contributed, not only as a form of appreciation for their participation but also as an effective tool to attract the attention of potential donors. These authentic stories provide an emotional and personal dimension, explaining how each donation has a real impact in helping people in need.

The importance of customer-led storytelling in social business doesn't just stop at achieving funding, but also at building a solid community. By uniting users around positive stories, Kitabisa.com creates an inspiring environment, where every contribution is recognized and appreciated. This strategy not only impacts participation levels, but also creates wider networks because these stories become attractive to people who share similar values and missions.

Thus, customer-led storytelling becomes an effective tool for social businesses like Kitabisa.com to express core values, expand networks, and create memorable experiences for consumers. In social business, success stories are not only a source of inspiration, but also a strong foundation for building sustainable relationships between companies, users and the communities they support.

CONCLUSION

Storytelling has an important role in the marketing context, especially in efforts to build a strong brand image. First, storytelling is able to create deep emotional bonds between companies and consumers, evoke positive feelings, and stimulate strong emotional responses. It not only presents product information, but also forms an emotional experience that sticks in consumers' memories. Second, storytelling builds close connections between brands and consumers by presenting stories about the company's integrity, goals and vision. This creates closer relationships, strengthens trust, and increases consumer loyalty. Third, storytelling gives a brand a deep dimension and character, forming a unique brand identity and differentiating it from competitors. Marketing strategies such as data-driven storytelling, philanthropic storytelling, and customer-led storytelling each show how storytelling can be applied in various business contexts, including social business or sociopreneurship. Data-driven storytelling combines the power of data with narrative intelligence to convey messages effectively. For example, Kitabisa.com uses fundraising data and its impact to form narratives that motivate community contributions. Meanwhile, philanthropic storytelling emphasizes stories that underline social values, transparency and sustainability. Qalpa, for example, builds strong relationships with consumers through stories of direct involvement with artisans and fair principles in sharing profits. Meanwhile, customer-led storytelling places users as the main narrator in designing business success stories. Kitabisa.com also utilizes this strategy by showing success stories and positive impacts resulting from community contributions, building engagement and a solid community. Overall, the conclusion is that storytelling is a powerful instrument in shaping brand identity, motivating consumer action, and building sustainable emotional connections. Both in the context of conventional business and social business, the ability to tell stories well can be a significant differentiator, bring positive values, and create a sustainable impact in society.

REFERENCES

1. Agustina, T. S. (2020). Storytelling Sebagai Strategi Bisnis Sosial Start-Up Ojek Syar'i Berbasis Aplikasi di Surabaya. *INOBIS: Jurnal Inovasi Bisnis dan Manajemen Indonesia*, 3(4), 448-460.
2. Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia. (2023). Survei APJII Pengguna Internet di Indonesia Tembus 215 Juta Orang. <https://apjii.or.id/berita/d/survei-apjii-pengguna-internet-di-indonesia-tembus-215-juta-orang>. Accessed October 6, 2023.
3. Delgadillo, Y., & Escalas, J. E. (2004). Narrative word-of-mouth communication: Exploring memory and attitude effects of consumer storytelling. *ACR North American Advances*.

4. Kim, J. H. (2020). Storytelling Marketing Strategy based on utopian value. *International Journal of Advanced Culture Technology*, 8(3), 38-44.
5. Kodrat, D. S. (2020). *Manajemen Merek dan Strategi E-Commerce: Pendekatan Praktis*. Prenada Media.
6. Korzh, A., & Estima, A. (2022). The Power of Storytelling as a marketing tool in personal branding. *International Journal of Business Innovation*, e28957-e28957.
7. Kotler, Philip dan Kevin Lane Keller. (2009). *Manajemen Pemasaran* edisi 13 jilid 1. Jakarta: Penerbit Erlangga.
8. Lin, W. T., & Liou, S. (2016, April). How social enterprise attract public awareness using storytelling. In *Proceedings of International Academic Conferences* (No. 3505862). International Institute of Social and Economic Sciences.
9. Lindawati, L. (2018). Kekuatan Cerita dalam Bisnis Sosial. *Jurnal Studi Pemuda*, 7(2), 100-110.
10. Moleong, L. J. (2014). *Metode penelitian kualitatif edisi revisi*. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
11. Mucundorfeanu, M. (2018). The key role of storytelling in the branding process. *Journal of Media Research-Revista de Studii Media*, 11(30), 42-54.
12. Mukhlis, I. R., Ratnawita, R., Oktaviani, D., Solihin, D. A., Agustiani, I. N., Akrom, N. K., ... & Riana, N. (2023). *DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY: Panduan Praktis & Strategi Pemasaran Digital Terkini*. PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia.
13. Nopiana, P. R., Yuliadi, Y., Susanthi, P. R., Sari, A. P., & Suratman, S. (2024). Peluang Bisnis di Era Teknologi dengan Memanfaatkan E-commerce Sebagai Wadah Usaha Bagi PKBM Sahabat Cendikia. *Sejahtera: Jurnal Inspirasi Mengabdikan Untuk Negeri*, 3(1), 257-264.
14. Pattipeilohy, V. R. (2018). Inovasi produk dan keunggulan bersaing: Pengaruhnya terhadap Kinerja Pemasaran (Studi pada usaha nasi Kuning di Kelurahan batu Meja Kota Ambon). *Jurnal Maneksi*, 7(1), 66-73.
15. Pereira, G. (2019). Brand storytelling: A three-dimensional perspective. *Journal of Brand Strategy*, 8(2), 146-159.
16. Pitaloka, L. K., & Kardoyo, K. (2023). Membuka Pintu Pasar Digital: Pelatihan Pemasaran Digital untuk Mendorong Pertumbuhan UMKM Olahan Pangan di Salatiga. *Madaniya*, 4(4), 1368-1380.
17. Rahman, W., Herdiyanti, H., Azizah, J., Asir, M., & Wijayanto, G. (2024). Eksplorasi Strategi Pemasaran Media Sosial yang Sukses dalam Meningkatkan Interaksi Merek dengan Konsumen di Era Digital. *Management Studies and Entrepreneurship Journal (MSEJ)*, 5(1), 355-363.
18. Rusdianto, R. Y., & Setiawan, A. R. (2024). Penerapan Strategi Marketing Dalam Pembuatan Konten Menggunakan Softselling Dan Hardselling Pada Tiktok Untuk Meningkatkan Brand Awareness Kisana. *Jurnal Riset dan Inovasi Manajemen*, 2(1), 130-137.
19. Salzer-Mörling, M., & Strannegård, L. (2004). Silence of the brands. *European journal of marketing*, 38(1/2), 224-238.

20. Sari, I. A. L. (2020). Storynomics: Memanfaatkan Kekuatan Branding Cerita Rakyat. *Prosiding ISBI Bandung*, 1(1).
21. Wijoyo, H., Cahyono, Y., Ariyanto, A., & Wongso, F. (2020). Digital economy dan pemasaran era new normal. *Insan Cendekia Mandiri*.
22. Winasis, P. (2023). *Pengaruh Kegiatan Pemasaran Media Sosial Terhadap Kesadaran Merek, Citra Merek Dan Loyalitas Merek Pada Produk Wardah* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Indonesia).
23. Yulianah, S. E. (2022). *Metodelogi Penelitian Sosial*. CV Rey Media Grafika.