

PART II

NARRATIVE MASTERY: THE POWER OF STORYTELLING IN LUXURY FASHION

STYLE ALIGNMENT

INTRODUCTION

We can say that storytelling is almost the oldest art in the world and the first concrete form of literary communication. Long before the appearance of the pen, folk tales, legends, and stories existed as a way to transfer knowledge from one generation to another. Spreading knowledge through stories is as educational as it is enjoyable. Stories are the best teachers. Over time, religious leaders have used many metaphors and parables to teach valuable lessons about morality and ethics. Some doctors in the twentieth century believed that such stories contained symbolic messages that managed to reach the listeners' subconscious. Storytelling creates a bridge between the storyteller and the listener, allowing for authentic communication to take place. In this intimacy lies the healing or therapeutic aspects of stories. Since the beginning of time, stories have helped people discover the meaning of their experiences, providing explanations for what they were striving to understand.

The narrative represents a storytelling of an event or a sequence of events. It can be true or fictional. However, a good story always has an element of truth at its core, even if it's fiction. The message conveyed by the story must be true and consistent, and it must be authentic. A story adds emotions, character, and sensory details to explain facts. That's why a story attracts and captivates people. Storytelling is the art of telling stories to engage an audience. The storyteller brings together the message, information, and knowledge in an entertaining way. Literary technique and nonverbal language are his tools (Anderson & Mack, 2019, p. 49).

THE KEY TO

Today, there are signs of a growing interest in this ancient art. One of the clearest indicators of this curiosity is the belief in the educational and healing powers of stories. Consequently, storytelling has been incorporated into therapeutic methods made available by doctors, educators, and priests. Research confirms that stories can be up to 22 times more memorable than other types of information. And this is just one of the many fail-safe benefits of narrative. Neurological studies have also shown that when people are exposed to stories, the brain produces the following neurotransmitters or hormones: dopamine, which contributes to feelings of pleasure and satisfaction; cortisol, also known as the "stress hormone," which creates an effect that predisposes the individual to act (fight or flight); endorphins, which are responsible for our feelings of pleasure; and oxytocin, known as the "love hormone," a hormone and neurotransmitter associated with empathy, trust, sexuality and relationship building.

Furthermore, the auditory, olfactory, visual, sensory, and motor cortices are also activated when people tell or listen to stories. This means that if told well, a story can make the entire human brain wake up, making it feel like the real protagonist or any other active character in the story. Marketers and advertisers know that a consumer doesn't make rational decisions when buying. People first make emotional decisions and then rationalize them with logic. Storytelling allows for easier digestion and recall of content because it helps connect information with emotions in a way that no other form of communication can achieve. Another important power of storytelling is maintaining attention. Stories release neurochemicals such as oxytocin and cortisol, which create physical tension and help maintain the audience's attention. Even when presenting boring content, such as numbers and data, if the presenter strategically introduces a character, a plot, and a conclusion into the content, they will have a much higher chance of engaging the audience. Stories are also excellent for influencing and transferring values (Rodriguez, 2020).

YOUR HEART

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Due to these qualities, storytelling has begun to be used in marketing and advertising as a promotional technique. In the twenty-first century, stories are everywhere, more so than ever before. Online, on television, in newspapers and magazines, wherever people look, there is now a story. Thanks to technological advancements, stories spread faster than ever before. They traverse countries and continents in a matter of seconds. In this rapidly changing informational environment, it is crucial for companies and businesses to find a way to make themselves and their products stand out. In advertising, the storytelling technique uses narrative to evoke emotions, motivate, and most importantly, convince the consumer

to choose a particular brand or product. Storytelling has become a technique often used when aiming to intensify the power of emotions in advertisements, as people tend to store information in the form of stories, facilitating their recall (Schank, 1999, p. 12). Advertisements that utilize storytelling and narrative transportation stimulate consumers' emotions and make them blend stories with their own feelings and experiences in their minds. In an environment such as fashion, where consumers often make choices based on irrational reasons, as we have seen in the first part, storytelling technique gains even greater importance. We will further explore how storytelling can be used as a strategy in advertising.



In the ever-evolving landscape of modern markets, characterized by intense competition among businesses vying for consumers' attention, there arises an imperative to explore and implement more sophisticated and efficient communication strategies within marketing endeavors. On one hand, there is an evolution towards the use of increasingly technically advanced communication channels, and on the other hand, attempts are made to find ways to make content more attractive (Znanewitz & Gilch, 2016, pp. 30-35). In today's world, people are bombarded with a multitude of advertisements. To achieve the company's marketing goals, advertising agencies are constantly looking for creative ways to grab consumers' attention and influence their feelings towards brands (Byun, 2016, pp. 9-18).

LOOK

A creative strategy can be defined as a sketch of the message that needs to be conveyed, to whom, and in what tone. This process is generally the result of a team composed of copywriters, art directors, and creative directors. Every advertising agent should use different creative strategies and attractive methods to target consumers' attention (Byun, 2016, pp. 9-18). In other words, advertising agents use different ways of thinking to create persuasive expressions and slogans that capture the consumer's attention. One of the most effective methods of making people feel positively about a brand is by conveying stories relevant to both parties involved. Its significance increases especially in times of crisis of trust in advertising, as storytelling, due to its authenticity, influences the realignment of the transmitted content.

AT ME

The term "storytelling" was invented in 2003 by Henry Jenkins. He defined this term as a new way of telling stories using different types of media, methods, and perspectives. It is a form that focuses on the message contained in many communication channels where diverse contents exist, but manage to enhance each other, ultimately shaping a comprehensive message composed of multiple interacting elements. In Jenkins' definition, transmedia storytelling also refers to other stories, motifs, or characters and their placement in the stories they create. In this context, storytelling is a way of communicating an idea through narrative, primarily focused on capturing the recipient's attention amidst the multitude of messages reaching them, practically increasing day by day (Zatwarnicka-Madura & Nowacki, 2018, p. 694).



MAIN CHARACTER

In today's world, storytelling can be seen as one of the strategic tools of marketing, allowing for seamless and consistent transfer of ideas in a manner that distinguishes a product from others while simultaneously building a positive brand image in terms of the emotions conveyed. Storytelling logically and coherently presents and organizes consecutive facts, starting with the introduction of events, through orientation, complication, and ultimately resolving existing issues. The interactions between characters in a story build attractiveness in the eyes of recipients. The story itself is the fundamental way to convey one's perspective and perceived values, enabling the transfer of complex emotions due to its structure. Narrated stories emphasize the emotional aspect rather than the rational one, which is effective given consumers' characteristics (Zatwarnicka-Madura & Nowacki, 2018, p. 694). According to Znanewitz and Gilch, there are several criteria for streamlining storytelling in advertising. Firstly, the chosen story must align with the core of the organization, ideally based on the organization's history or the experiences of its members or other stakeholders.

Secondly, current trends relevant to the organization's target audience must be considered. The story should be unique and novel, different from stories told by other organizations. It is recommended that the narrative be concise and relatively simple, capable of being summarized in a few sentences. The story should include elements of connectivity, such as gaps or incomplete background information, allowing the audience to become co-creators, making them to engage in the narrative. Lastly, the streamlining of storytelling can be achieved through brand characters, utilizing archetypes for a quick and easy connection with the recipient (Znanewitz & Gilch, 2016, pp. 30-35). Creative directors must also understand both the verbal and visual structures of narratives used in successful advertising to discern why or how these companies can evoke strong emotions in the audience or gain authenticity and the power to capture attention. It's important to note that due to information overload, consumers are better informed than ever and tend to selectively accept and retain marketing information.

“For me, it's really about storytelling. Without a story, it can be quite boring to shoot forty pages for a magazine. A narrative changes everything. My first was for Italian Vogue in 1990, and it went like this. Helena Christensen discovered a little Martian who had obviously crashed his UFO somewhere in the Southern California desert. She drove him to Los Angeles and showed him the Santa Monica Pier and Hollywood Boulevard, and then she took him to her home, an old trailer in the middle of nowhere. He fell in love with her. But the Martian received signals through a transmitter radio in the trailer and had no choice but to reunite with his friends, who were desperately trying to rescue him.

So where does the story come from? Never from the clothes, as much as I deeply respect the designers (I haven't gone to a show for twenty years!) Never from other images. Well, you can be inspired by a pre-existing image, of course; the idea for the Martian narrative came from a Skywatcher magazine someone had left in a waiting room at the American Hospital in Paris. But it's really about the story you create at a given moment, beyond any source material.”

- PETER LINDBERGH

SELLING

According to the philosophy of luxury brands, advertising is used to sell dreams rather than necessarily the products themselves. The essence of luxury is to keep dreams alive by maintaining exclusivity and elite status (Jack, 2009, pp. 14-18). Ultimately, consumers of these products seek to live their dreams by purchasing identity, culture, art, and status through luxury and fashion brands, unlike traditional ones. Desire is largely created through visual storytelling and in recent years through digital storytelling, as fashion houses and designers collaborate with global celebrities and international models in their advertisements. Interestingly, demand today is even higher as luxury goods prices rise, because through social media advertising, luxury brands find it easier than ever to reach the minds of their audience. Therefore, fashion houses and designers are increasingly incorporating storytelling communication strategies (Hemantha, 2021, pp. 193-200).

Luxury brands have a rich heritage and culture, completely different from mass-market brands. True luxury brands require a strong communication strategy where they must be extremely selective about their visibility in promoting the right product for their consumers. Unlike mass media advertising, luxury communication until recently was done only through exclusive events and shows for those select clients, due to the strong relationship between luxury brands and luxury product consumers. As time goes by, luxury brands must remain relevant in the market, therefore they must focus on sustainable practices and consistent communication to fashion industry consumers. This aspect holds true for brands in all industries, but especially for luxury brands where heritage and social values form their core. Additionally, luxury and fashion are closely related to the arts, and heritage and craftsmanship impact consumer authenticity and perception of luxury (Hemantha, 2019, pp. 75-80).



THE DREAM

IN THE MOOD

Storytelling is a strategy relatively recently adopted by luxury fashion brands, but the art of storytelling has nonetheless been successfully integrated into the promotion of exclusivity. This success is due to the ambition of fashion houses to sell dreams to celebrities and luxury consumers. Additionally, brand communication in this industry combines the offline and online environments, with storytelling techniques fitting into both scenarios. Fashion houses align online brand communication with classic methods to continue transmitting their heritage, history, and vision. This movement has made luxury brands resonate more with consumers, helping them better understand the brands they admire and increasing the number of potential clients (Hemantha, 2019, pp. 75-80). Those working in the fashion industry primarily use storytelling for promotion through two methods: fashion photography and fashion videos, also known as fashion films. Both approaches to using narrative

in luxury fashion fall under the category of visual storytelling but leverage digital storytelling to remain relevant to consumers and are created through digital creation methods. Through fashion photography, a unique and valuable record of society at that time, moods, manners, perceptions of current cultural concerns, artistic influences, and more are captured (Devlin, 1979). Fashion photography presents an idealized world, the idea of beautiful people dressed in elegant clothes and situated in a sumptuous setting. Fashion photos play a significant role in creating images that not only sell products but also create a world of beauty where the viewer is captivated by the use of visual storytelling. The boundaries of that world are determined by the richness of the photographer's imagination (Tilloston, 1997). The luxury fashion market operates on three types of fashion photography: editorial photography, advertising photography, and catalog photography.

FOR FASHION

TYPES OF FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY

The editorial pages of fashion magazines consist of articles and columns illustrated with photographs. These represent the fashion editors' point of view. If advertisements are removed, these pages form the core of the magazine. They communicate what editors decide to show readers in that particular season. The term "editorial photography" applies to all photographs accompanying fashion articles. Although these photographs are not specifically intended to sell clothing items, the designers whose creations appear in these images will receive welcome publicity (Khornak, 1989). The purpose of advertising photography is to sell a product. Advertising agencies are hired by clients to shape the image of their product. There are a large number of products that require this type of photography, which are not limited to just clothing and accessories but also include cosmetics (makeup products, hair and nail products, skincare treatments, and perfumes) that are often from the same luxury brands and designers that create clothing (Khornak, 1989).

The creative director is the one who carefully selects the right photographer to create advertising photographs. The art director may choose a photographer based on style, technical skills, or their rapport. While in editorial photography, the photographer works alongside editors and stylists to create a story that captivates the audience, in advertising photography, the photographer works closely with the creative director to ensure that the brand's requirements and vision are met. When a photographer is hired as a catalog photographer, they will conduct photo shoots for mail-order houses or department stores. These businesses mail catalogs to thousands of people on their mailing lists. The ultimate goal of any catalog is to sell products. In fashion catalogs, clothing is always the focus, and presentation is crucial. Creativity is important even though there are strict rules to follow. Unlike editorial or advertising photography, catalog photography does not rely on storytelling techniques (Khornak, 1989, p. 16).



FASHION FILMS

In addition to fashion photography, fashion films or videos represent a key element in promoting fashion houses and designers. Moving imagery has become a crucial marketing tool for fashion, focusing on allowing brands to shape their visual codes and expanding brand awareness (Skjulstad, 2020, pp. 117-119). Fashion film has come to embody increasing interest in the field of fashion promotion, image creation, and experience, due to the expressive and marketing possibilities afforded by movement and time. Unlike photography and other static images, fashion film unfolds over time and, unlike fashion shows, it solidifies fashion as an image. However, fashion film is understood here not in isolation from these forms, but rather through their intermediary connections, which have intensified in the "digital era." Because film represents a sequence of images, it allows for a richer use of storytelling. It provides those working in the fashion industry with the opportunity to create complex and detailed narratives that effectively communicate the unique story or vision of a luxury brand.

CONCLUSION

Although storytelling has been around since the beginning of humanity, it's only recently that people have realized the effects and benefits of this practice and started using it in various fields. In marketing and advertising, storytelling plays a crucial role due to its appeal to emotions. While it's often argued that people make purchasing decisions based purely on rational reasons, the truth is that decisions are often made under the influence of emotions. Marketers often use storytelling as a strategy to distinguish a brand or product in an oversaturated market.

In the luxury fashion industry, where fashion houses and designers seek to sell more than just clothing, the art of storytelling holds a truly special place. These brands, with their rich culture and heritage, seek to convey their story to captivate and persuade those with discerning tastes. Whether it's through the social media channels of these brands, print or audio-video advertisements, or the complex editorials in fashion magazines, stories undoubtedly underpin these materials. Through storytelling, designers and fashion houses aim to showcase their vision and identity, conveying the brand image.

In the third part, "Building Brand Image in the Luxury Fashion Industry," we will delve even further into the discussion of how fashion houses use storytelling, but from the perspective of building a brand image. Thus, in the next chapter, we will see what the luxury brand market looks like, what actions a brand takes in the luxury fashion industry, and how storytelling is used in this context.

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