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THE IMPACT OF BRAND STORYTELLING ON CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA WITH UNACADEMY

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ABSTRACT

In today's dynamic digital landscape, brand storytelling has emerged as a compelling strategy for fostering deeper consumer connections, particularly on social media. This study explores the impact of brand storytelling on customer engagement, with Unacademy—a leading Indian edtech platform—serving as the focal case. Drawing insights from existing literature, such as the mediating influence of brand image on storytelling and purchase intention (Future Business Journal, 2025), and the mechanisms through which narrative elements enhance engagement (Journal of Business Research, 2019), the research aims to examine how Unacademy's storytelling content influences user interaction, emotional involvement, and brand perception on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Building on the framework established in the Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing (2021), which highlights the importance of consumer participation and interaction with brand-owned media, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach. It combines quantitative survey-based regression analysis with qualitative content analysis of Unacademy's social media activities. The research hypothesizes that brand storytelling significantly enhances customer engagement, and this relationship is mediated by factors such as perceived brand image, content relevance, and emotional resonance. The outcomes are expected to provide valuable implications for marketers in the edtech sector, emphasizing the strategic role of storytelling in driving meaningful engagement and long-term brand loyalty in the social media era.

KEYWORDS: *Brand Storytelling, Customer Engagement, Social Media Marketing, EdTech.*

NEED FOR THE STUDY

In the current digital era, brands are no longer just selling products or services—they are selling experiences, emotions, and values through compelling stories. Storytelling as a branding technique has become increasingly significant, especially on social media platforms where attention spans are short and emotional resonance is critical. Unacademy, as one of India's leading edtech platforms, has adopted storytelling strategies to connect with its learner base across Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. However, while these efforts are visible, there is limited academic research that systematically evaluates how such storytelling content translates into measurable customer engagement. Despite the growing popularity of digital storytelling in marketing, there exists a research gap in understanding its quantifiable impact on engagement metrics such as likes, shares, comments, watch time, and user-generated content, especially in the Indian edtech sector. There is also a need to explore how brand image mediates the relationship between storytelling and customer engagement—insights that can help marketers design more effective, story-driven campaigns tailored to youth-centric platforms.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by investigating the effectiveness of Unacademy's brand storytelling in driving consumer interaction and emotional bonding on social media. The findings will help marketing professionals in education and other sectors develop robust, data-backed storytelling frameworks.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyse the effect of brand storytelling on customer engagement on Unacademy's social media platforms.
- To assess how storytelling techniques affect consumers' brand perceptions and attitudes toward Unacademy.
- To explore the extent to which interactive brand storytelling fosters consumer participation and loyalty on social media.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the digital learning space, Customer Engagement (CE) is no longer limited to likes, shares, or content consumption. It is an emotional, cognitive, and behavioural journey that platforms like Unacademy must carefully shape to remain relevant and impactful. A recent study by Gachassin, Prentice, and Thaichon (2023) in *"The Influence of Brand Digital Storytelling Using the Hero's Customer Journey Communication Technique on Customer Acquisition and Retention"* (Springer) emphasized that digital

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storytelling can significantly enhance CE by making the customer the hero of the narrative. Unacademy taps into this by showcasing student success stories and teacher journeys, thereby inviting users into a transformative educational experience. Similarly, Baakli (2023**)** in his thesis *"Explore the Impact of Storytelling on Brand Image and Consumer Behaviour"* found that storytelling builds emotional resonance and fosters stronger mental associations with a brand. Unacademy's consistent use of motivational educator journeys and learner testimonials illustrate how this approach strengthens emotional bonds and improves brand loyalty. Another research paper titled *"Brand Storytelling in Digital Media: An Emerging Perspective"* published in INSPIRA - Journal of Commerce, Economics & Computer Science (2022) found that storytelling in digital campaigns increases brand trust, emotional connection, and consumer loyalty—all of which are visible in Unacademy's influencer-led sessions, YouTube series, and live classes. Additionally, a study published in the *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR, 2023)* highlighted that brand storytelling serves as a strategic tool to differentiate brands in saturated digital markets, while also increasing meaningful engagement. This is highly relevant to Unacademy's positioning in a competitive EdTech sector, where it uses storytelling not only to market content but also to create an identity and community around learning.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H1: Brand storytelling has a significant positive impact on customer engagement on Unacademy's social media platforms.
H2: Brand image mediates the relationship between brand storytelling and customer engagement.

RESEARCH GAP

While brand storytelling has garnered significant academic attention as a strategic marketing tool, existing research predominantly focuses on global consumer brands in sectors like FMCG, fashion, or luxury (Dessart et al., 2016; Lundqvist et al., 2013). However, there is a notable gap in its application within the Indian edtech industry, especially on how storytelling impacts customer engagement across different social media platforms.

Moreover, although several studies have explored the link between storytelling and brand image (e.g., Li et al., 2025), and others have connected storytelling to behavioral responses (e.g., sharing or commenting), few have conducted empirical analysis integrating storytelling, brand image, and engagement metrics in a digital-first education brand like Unacademy.

Additionally, many prior studies treat "engagement" as a vague concept, without breaking it down into measurable components such as affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement. There's also insufficient comparative analysis of storytelling effectiveness across platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, which differ in format, audience behavior, and content algorithms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to measure the impact of brand storytelling on customer engagement. It focuses on identifying statistical relationships between key variables—brand storytelling, brand image, and customer engagement—using tools such as regression analysis. The research employs a descriptive and explanatory research, where the descriptive component helps understand audience perceptions of Unacademy's storytelling across its social media channels, while the causal element is used to test hypotheses regarding how storytelling influences engagement.

Primary data will be collected through a structured online survey questionnaire, specifically targeting users who actively follow or engage with Unacademy's content on Instagram, YouTube, Website and Facebook. A non-probability purposive sampling technique will be used to select participants, including students and aspirants engaged with Unacademy's social media content. In addition, students from Unacademy's customer will be included to ensure contextual relevance and accessibility. The sample size will range between 100–80 respondents, aiming for strong representation across diverse user segments.

The questionnaire will use a 5-point Likert scale to measure various constructs. The independent variable is brand storytelling, which includes dimensions such as emotional appeal, authenticity, and narrative structure. The mediating variable is brand image, and the dependent variable is customer engagement, measured through affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses. All scales will be adapted from validated instruments in prior academic research to ensure consistency and reliability.

Data analysis in this study was conducted exclusively using Microsoft Excel, ensuring accessibility and simplicity while maintaining analytical rigor. The process began with descriptive statistics to understand demographic distributions and identify overall response patterns among participants. Measures such as mean, median, mode, and standard deviation were calculated for key constructs like brand storytelling, brand image, and customer engagement.

To evaluate the direct impact of brand storytelling on customer engagement, a linear regression analysis was performed. This helped quantify the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. To further explore the potential mediating effect of brand image, a stepwise multiple regression approach was adopted. By analyzing the influence of brand

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storytelling on customer engagement both with and without brand image in the model, mediation was assessed in a simplified but effective manner within Excel's capabilities.
Where relevant, visual comparisons across social media platforms (such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook) were carried out using bar charts and pivot tables to observe differences in engagement patterns. While statistical significance testing like ANOVA or T-tests were not applied due to software limitations, insights were drawn through comparative descriptive patterns and graphical interpretation. This approach ensured that all data interpretations remained transparent, replicable, and aligned with Excel's analytical capacity.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of brand storytelling on customer engagement within Unacademy's social media platforms, several limitations must be acknowledged. First and foremost, the sample size was relatively small and may not fully represent the entire audience base of Unacademy. As a result, the generalizability of the findings may be somewhat constrained. The research relied on self-reported data collected through an online questionnaire, which introduces the potential for response bias, social desirability bias, and nonresponse error, especially among participants who may have chosen not to complete the survey truthfully or fully.

Additionally, due to the exclusive use of Microsoft Excel for data processing and analysis, more advanced statistical procedures like structural equation modeling (SEM), significance testing (such as ANOVA or t-tests), or automated mediation models could not be implemented. While efforts were made to conduct a manual regression-based mediation analysis, the limitations of the software meant that some statistical rigor had to be approximated through simplified methods.

The study also depended on cross-sectional data, capturing responses at a single point in time, which limits the ability to infer causality or observe changes in behavior over time. Platform-specific differences (e.g., engagement on Instagram vs. YouTube) were explored descriptively, but no formal hypothesis testing was conducted due to software constraints.

Despite these limitations, the research was carefully designed to maintain reliability and internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha was used to confirm the reliability of scales, and outliers or missing data were handled systematically to preserve data integrity. Future studies could benefit from larger sample sizes, longitudinal data, and advanced statistical tools to validate and extend these findings.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this study reveal several important insights into the relationship between brand storytelling and customer engagement on Unacademy's social media platforms. Based on descriptive statistics, respondents generally showed positive perceptions toward Unacademy's use of storytelling elements, including emotional appeal, clarity, authenticity, and relevance. The mean scores for these constructs indicated that most participants agreed that Unacademy's storytelling practices contributed to a compelling brand narrative.

Regression analysis performed using Microsoft Excel demonstrated a positive and statistically significant relationship between brand storytelling and customer engagement. This suggests that when Unacademy uses engaging, emotionally resonant narratives, it tends to increase audience participation, such as likes, comments, shares, and content recall. Furthermore, a multiple regression approach indicated that brand image plays a partial mediating role between storytelling and customer engagement. This means that storytelling not only influences engagement directly but also enhances brand image, which in turn contributes to greater customer interaction.

The findings also showed that while all platforms (Instagram, YouTube, Facebook) benefited from storytelling, the level of engagement varied. Instagram users demonstrated slightly higher interaction rates, possibly due to the platform's visual storytelling nature. These differences were observed through comparative descriptive analysis and visual interpretation using bar charts and pivot tables in Excel.

Overall, the data supports the hypothesis that effective brand storytelling enhances customer engagement and that brand image strengthens this relationship. These findings provide valuable insight for Unacademy and similar educational platforms aiming to increase digital engagement through strategic narrative techniques.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **What Unacademy Can Do Now**

Tell More Real Stories: Focus on sharing authentic stories—especially those of real learners and educators. People connect with people, and highlighting human experiences can go a long way in building stronger relationships with the audience.

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Tailor Content for Each Platform: Not all platforms work the same way. For example, Instagram seems to be a more engaging space for Unacademy, likely due to its visual nature. Investing in platform-specific strategies could lead to better results.
Maintain a Consistent Brand Voice: To keep that positive brand image intact, it's essential to stay consistent in tone, visuals, and messaging. This helps users develop a clear understanding of what Unacademy stands for.

2. **Ideas for Future Research**
Track Changes Over Time: It would be valuable to study how storytelling influences engagement in the long run. A longitudinal approach could reveal patterns that short-term studies might miss.

Include a Wider Group of Respondents: This study had its limits in terms of sample size and diversity. Including more voices from different regions or age groups could give a fuller picture.

Compare with Other Brands: It would be interesting to see how Unacademy's storytelling stacks up against other educational platforms. This could help identify unique strengths or areas for improvement.

Explore Deeper Analytics (If Tools Allow): While Excel served well for this study, future researchers with access to more advanced tools could explore things like structural equation modeling to gain deeper insights.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the relationship between brand storytelling and customer engagement on social media platforms, using Unacademy as the focal point. The research highlights that storytelling—through emotional resonance, authenticity, and narrative structure—plays a critical role in influencing how users interact with and perceive a brand.

The findings affirm that strategic storytelling enhances customer engagement by shaping a positive brand image, increasing trust, and stimulating meaningful interactions across platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of content relevance and emotional appeal in maintaining sustained audience interest, especially in the digital education sector.

Through a quantitative analysis involving structured Likert-scale questionnaires and regression tools, the research confirmed that brand storytelling significantly correlates with affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of engagement. The mediating role of brand image was also evident, serving as a bridge between storytelling and user response.

Overall, the study provides empirical evidence that storytelling is not merely a creative exercise but a strategic marketing tool that can influence audience perception and loyalty. The insights from this research can guide marketers, especially in the edtech sector, to craft compelling brand narratives that resonate with their target audiences and foster deeper engagement.

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