

STORYTELLING FOR SUCCESS IN THE COMPETITIVE GLOBAL MARKET

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ABSTRACT

In today's globalized society, organizations are competing for clients all over the world. Increased accessibility of technology has expanded globalization and made it possible for companies to move business efforts from a local to global scale. The opportunity to connect with global customers has created a challenge for companies—a competitive global market. This paper explains how organizations should utilize storytelling to combat global competition. Storytelling will move consumers along the customer journey model by creating personal connections with consumers, guiding how consumers ask and act, and turning consumers into brand advocates. A review of pertinent literature on the competitive global market, storytelling, and the customer journey model is included. The impact of technology and innovation in global markets is reported. Organizations' roles in creating programs and training employees with an understanding of the cultural values of the markets they do business in is also discussed. The review of storytelling shares the permeance of stories and how organizations use them to connect with customers. Lastly, the paper explains the progress of customers connecting with a brand through the five pathways of the customer journey model: aware, appeal, ask, act, and advocate.

Keywords: customer journey model, storytelling, globalization, global competition

INTRODUCTION

Globalization is creating connections across the world. The advent of technology has sped up the process in recent years, making it possible for people all over the world to connect almost anytime, anywhere. With an interconnected global community there are many benefits, as well as challenges.

Billions of people have “integrated into the global economy over the past three decades” (Irwin, 2018, para. 4). This integration created more consumers worldwide and benefited many organizations in expanding their global consumer reach. For organizations, “going global is not only a possibility, it is almost a necessity” (Johnston, n.d., para. 1). Because of this, companies that have traditionally been engaged in local and national competition now must learn how to compete in a global market.

For organizations to stay competitive in a global market, they should utilize storytelling to relate to consumers across cultures. Storytelling is engaging and powerful (Nossel, 2018). Customers remember stories they hear and connect with them, thus fostering a connection between customer and organization. Companies should also make use of the customer journey model (Appendix A). Buying a product is no longer an individual decision, it is becoming a community decision.

Individuals are influenced by friends, family members, and online communities throughout every step of their buying process. Brands can take advantage of these conversations by building a story around which individuals can discuss. The stories a brand tells about itself shape how that brand is perceived by consumers. Research shows that the customer journey begins when a customer becomes aware of a product and ends when a customer begins to advocate for a product (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2017).

Thus, this paper will examine important literature on the competitive global market, storytelling, and the customer journey model, followed by a section focused on details of the topic, and lastly a conclusion. Each section gives support to the assertion that organizations can successfully compete in the global market by utilizing storytelling to create personal connections with consumers, guide how consumers ask and act, and turn consumers into brand advocates as they move consumers along the customer journey model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Competitive Global Market

Globalization effects organizations world-wide. With markets becoming increasingly integrated, an organization's ability to connect with consumers globally is more important than ever (Pukthuanthong & Roll, 2008). To do this, organizations must understand the competitive global market. The following will review literature on the competitive global market.

Technology has arguably played the largest role in connecting markets worldwide. Arrighi (1999) connects globalization to technology in his definition of globalization as a “process driven by major technological advances in the transmission, storage and processing of information” (p. 217). People can connect with each other and companies world-wide at any given moment via a variety of platforms. Consumers not only want to connect with companies through technology, but they want to see that companies are utilizing technology in their business models and products. According to Bagley, “innovation and entrepreneurship are crucial factors in sustaining and growing U.S. competitiveness in the world” (para. 3). If organizations are not creating new products and finding new ways to connect with their publics, consumers will lose interest in them on a local and global scale. Technology allows companies the opportunity to showcase connection with consumers, as well as their ability to innovate.

Competitiveness and innovation are linked. Often companies innovate in order to stay relevant within the global market. According to business executives and educators, Thompson, Strickland, and Gamble, “global competition exists when competitive conditions across national markets are linked strongly enough to form a true world market and when leading competitors compete head-to-head in many different countries” (Velocity Global, 2017, para. 4). Global competition is a reality for many organizations today and for organizations to find success amidst tough competition they should have a strategy for competing in the global market. Velocity Global (2017) suggests the following three “best practices” for companies to adhere to when planning their strategy for competing in the Global Marketplace. First, *scour emerging markets*. Emerging markets are full of potential opportunity and by investing in these markets, organizations may gain a competitive edge over their competition. Second, organizations should *form strategic*

partnerships. Partnering with locals in the market you are trying to reach is a must. Companies will better understand the environment and culture they are trying to compete in if they understand the local customs. Lastly, *innovate everywhere*. As mentioned above, innovation is key in staying competitive in a global market. An ability to be flexible and make changes to products or systems in order to fit the culture a company seeks to serve is imperative. The bridge that digital media and innovation builds between companies and consumers encourages constant connection and helps people and organizations better understand one another cross-culturally.

Organizations must research and then implement business practices that are appropriate for the global market they are engaging. Companies like Amazon are cognizant of this as they use technology to connect and do business with consumers globally. Amazon's global success is due in part to the business model it has created for adapting business practices to different cultures (Garner, 2018). In one instance, Amazon recognized the "diversity in the Indian people" and it made sure that its marketing efforts were not too centered on the global Indian market alone but corrected efforts to include the local nuances of the various people groups within India (p. 8). To succeed in the competitive global market, organizations must take a *glocal* approach similar to Amazon. Companies must recognize the differences within each market they are entering, just as they recognize these differences within their home countries of business. Research suggests that having a diverse leadership team may aid organizations in thinking globally, thus enabling them to better compete well in the global market (Lisak & Erez, 2015).

A study by Lisak and Erez (2015) defined global leaders as people with high levels of "cultural intelligence, global identity and openness to diversity" (p. 11). Organizations should assess their employees on these characteristics in order to understand how well employees will do when engaging in cross-cultural business. Building teams that are culturally diverse and offering training programs for team members and leaders within the company that are centered on global characteristics, such as the ones mentioned above, are necessary for building teams that will be able to successfully compete in the global market. Ideally, organizations should train employees to approach business from a *glocal* perspective, realizing that leaders who are only focused on local efforts will probably fail to build a thriving multi-cultural team and those with a global-only perspective may miss important local nuances which need attention in order to gain consumer business and trust (Lisak & Erez, 2013). Leaders who understand the importance of thinking both globally and locally will prosper in the competitive global market.

Storytelling

Storytelling is linked to the very beginning of humanity (Nossel, 2018). Ancient storytelling allowed information to be passed on from one generation to the next. Storytelling has always been linked to remembering. Today, storytelling helps consumers remember certain products and brands that identify with their own personal narratives. Consumers' satisfaction in a brand increases when they see their own stories and causes supported in the brands they purchase (Kotler et al., 2017). Storytelling can help an organization position itself more strategically in a competitive global market (Alexander, 2017). This section will review literature on storytelling.

Narratives are effective in helping consumers remember intended messages (Chattoo & Feldman, 2017). When a story is told, people listen. Not only do stories engage people, but "much

information is stored and indexed in the form of stories” (Woodside, Sood, & Miller, 2008, p. 97). Organizations focused on marketing and advertising should utilize storytelling to build positive consumer-brand relationships. (Woodside, et al., 2008). Using narrative theory, Woodside and colleagues (2008) attempted to explain the way consumers use brands as “props or anthropomorphic actors in stories they report about themselves” (p. 97). The researchers asserted that a good story should incorporate “a tension that includes one or more inciting incidents preceded by conditions or settings that initiate the unconscious/conscious identification of one or more goals, with actions by a protagonist and possibly other actors resulting in an outcome” (Woodside, et al, 2008, p. 101). A company using story should position itself or its product within the tension of a story and then allow consumers to identify a clear protagonist (the company or product) and its successful transition from tension to goal achievement.

Storytelling is also helpful when organizations join forces—whether officially to form a new organization or simply a partnership for a charity event (Edwards, 2012). In an age when “media conglomeration and corporate synergy” is the norm, multi-platform storytelling can help companies run their businesses more successfully (p. 1). Edwards explains that multi-platform storytelling refers to “texts where content appears in a coordinated way across many different media platforms” (p. 1). Stories will engage the consumers and the use of coordination between media platforms will help keep their attention. Organizations must be consistent with their messaging when using multi-platform storytelling. While it may seem daunting to produce consistent messaging for various platforms, an organization that does this will benefit by reaching more audience members than if it only communicated from one or two platforms. For example, consumers who get their information from their mobile phones (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter) may rarely use traditional media sources for information (e.g., Television or radio) and vice versa. Thus, by telling stories through a variety of platforms, organizations reach a larger audience. However, they must remember to keep the stories consistent in order to strengthen their brand identity.

As briefly mentioned above, digital storytelling is a powerful resource for organizations seeking to remain competitive in the global market. Maintaining quality digital storytelling content is a must for organizations as 90% of 18-24 year-olds, 86% of 25-34 year-olds, and 53% of over-55 year-olds notice internet ads (Mintel, 2018). Global companies like Coca-Cola put storytelling at the center of their marketing strategy (Pulizzi, 2012). Digital content marketing can be used by organizations to connect with consumers on a deeper level than simply trying to make a sell. It utilizes storytelling to “attract and retain” customers (Pulizzi, 2012, p. 116).

When thinking of how to best tell a story to global audiences, one should consider the theory and strategy mentioned above as well as the main players in the storytelling process. Global storytelling includes three key groups: experts, tellers, and contributing listeners (Garlock, 2012). The experts are the ones “who first share their work,” the tellers pass the stories along, and the contributing listeners are the audiences (p. 141). In the competitive global market, an organization can be considered the “expert” because it is the first to share an important message. Publics who are already brand advocates may turn into “tellers” who pass along the organization’s story, and consumers who listen to the story become the “contributing listeners” or audience. Storytelling is appealing to consumers. Organizations competing in the global market should utilize its powers to connect with consumers through multi-media platforms.

Customer Journey Model

This section will review literature on the customer journey model. Initial studies by Abbot (1955) and Alderson (1957) commented on why consumers purchase what they purchase, “what people really desire are not products but satisfying experiences” (Abbot, 1955, p. 40). Additional research supports that whenever consumers purchase a product they buy into the product as an experience and as a representation of what the consumer aspires to accomplish (Kotler et al., 2017). Other research shows that when consumers buy a product, they are trying to accomplish a certain job with this product (Ulwick, 2005). Thus, companies must be aware of each individual customer journey in order to best sell to targeted consumers (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

One of the first definitions and frameworks used for the customer journey model was “AIDA, attention, interest desire, and action” (Barry & Howard, 1990, p. 100). Sales managers would use this model to ensure that consumers would buy their products as a result of seeing an advertisement that would ideally create interest and desire in the mind of the consumer (Kotler et al., 2017). This model was once updated to emphasize the importance of consumers acting again in the four A’s model: “aware, attitude, act, and act again” (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 60). In this updated version, interest and desire are transformed into attitude, and “a new stage, act again, is added” (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 60).

This modified framework tries to measure “post-purchase customer behavior and measure customer retention” (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 60). The four A’s framework is a simple model that helps marketers better understand the customer journey. “Customers learn about a brand (aware), like or dislike the brand (attitude), decide whether to purchase it (act), and decide whether the brand is worth a repeat purchase (act again)” (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 60). When the model is treated as a customer funnel, the number of customers that transition from one stage to the next begins to decrease because more commitment and action is required as the customer transitions from each stage (Kotler et al., 2017). The four A’s framework describes the customer journey in simple terms, but the model is outdated. This model served the TV advertising age well, but in the era of the internet, social media, and global connectivity a new model is needed.

Before globalization, an individual consumer determined his or her attitude toward a brand. In the era of globalization “the initial appeal of a brand is influenced by the community” (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 60). Whether an individual decides to follow, tweet, or engage with a brand online is a social representation of who that individual is. As the number of brands and products begins to rise so does the amount a consumer begins to question competing brands—thus, adding the “ask phase” into the new model is essential (Kotler et al., 2017). In the era of globalization, the new customer journey model is “the five A’s: aware, appeal, ask, act, and advocate” (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 62). A graphic of this new model is in Appendix A.

The aware phase in the customer journey model is when customers first learn about the brand. It begins when “customers are passively exposed to a long list of brands from past experience, marketing communications, and/or advocacy of others” (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 64). The appeal phase is when customers “become attracted to brands” and begins when “customers process the messages they are exposed to—creating short-term memory or amplifying long-term memory—and become attracted only to a short list of brands” (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 64). The ask phase is

when customers “call friends for advice” and “search for product reviews online” (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 64). Customers are “prompted by their curiosity” to “actively research for more information from friends and family, from the media, and/or directly from the brands” (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 64). The act phase is when the customer buys the good or service. Lastly, the advocate phase, which is what many marketing scholars argue is the most important and powerful phase of the business and consumer relationship ends the customer journey model (Keller, 2007; Kotler et al., 2017; Urban, 2004). The advocacy phase is when a customer recommends a product to a friend or when a customer defends a brand or product either online or through face to face communication (Kotler et al., 2017). Advocacy is also demonstrated when consumers continue to repurchase the brand or product (Kotler et al., 2017). These five phases of the customer journey model are appropriate for organizations to consider in order to succeed in the competitive global market.

DETAILS OF THE TOPIC

Storytelling Creates Personal Connections with Consumers

Storytelling is not a new concept. It has been used to teach, engage, and inspire audiences since the beginning of time (Nossel, 2018). Borum Chattoo and Feldman (2017) suggest that narrative is necessary for engaging audiences and with the widely available technology that can reach global networks (e.g., social media, internet, video streaming), organizations have opportunities to compete in a globalized economy. Due to its high potential for engagement and the technological advances that have made storytelling an instant and influential means of connecting, organizations should utilize storytelling to build connections with consumers during the aware and appeal processes of the customer journey model.

According to (Kotler et al., 2017), in the *first A* of the customer journey model, awareness, “customers are passively exposed to a long list of brands from past experience, marketing communications, and/or advocacy of others” (para. 1). In the aware pathway, the customer is experiencing the feeling of “I know” this brand. Because stories have the power to create awareness and recall, they are a powerful vehicle for engaging consumers in this section of the customer journey model by increasing audience participation with a brand (Edwards, 2012). An increase in audience participation is necessary to stay competitive in a global market as consumers are flooded with brand messages daily. Intriguing storytelling strategy creates connection with consumers which results in brand awareness. This awareness through storytelling offers organizations a leg up on the competition.

The *second A* in the customer journey model focuses on the *appeal* that organizations must make to customers (Kotler et al., 2017). In the “appeal path,” customers discern if they like the brand (Kotler et al., 2017). Organizations can use storytelling to appeal to the desires of consumers, instilling an “I like” attitude toward a brand. When customers “like” a brand, they feel connected to it. Stories help organizations build a bridge between the rudimentary details of a product to how consumers feel, connect, and think about the product. Garlock (2012) suggested that global storytelling helps cultures extend “into each other” (p. 144). Using stories that can connect across cultures helps companies extend their reach, influence, and appeal. When a customer feels connected to a brand through story the brand is more likely to appeal to its global audience. Facebook and Coca-Cola are two brands that use digital storytelling to connect with consumers.

The following analysis of their digital storytelling campaigns shows how each company connects with customers as it moves them through the aware and appeal stages of the customer journey model.

Brands are moving away from a product/service-centered approach and want to show consumers they care about them. In 2018, Facebook released an ad campaign titled, “The Best Part of Facebook Isn’t What Happens on Facebook. Get Together” (Dimartino, 2018). The ads highlighted 15-second video clips of groups of friends connecting. From dance lessons, to dinner at a food truck, a skydiving trip, along with other relevant storylines, Facebook showed its users that it cares about their meaningful experiences with friends. When consumers feel like a company cares about their social health it invites a deeper consumer connection with the company. The activities Facebook shared in the ads span cultures and show ethnically diverse populations—an important strategy for a global company seeking to succeed in a competitive global market. These ads not only showed friends enjoying one another during a favorite activity, but they reminded users to post on Facebook about the fun experiences they had with friends.

To move customers along the aware and appeal stages of the customer journey model, Facebook engaged consumers through compelling stories and connected with customers over common themes of friendship. Nossel (2018) explains that “stories bring experiences to life and are memorable” (p. 23). Because of all the many ads customers are exposed to, companies competing in the global market must find ways to remain in a consumer’s memory and storytelling is the way to do this. When consumers recall meaningful stories they saw posted by Facebook, this shows that Facebook has successfully moved them through the aware and appeal paths in the customer journey model. The company succeeded in moving customers along the rest of the customer journey model by encouraging users to share their own experiences via Facebook. Connecting with customers through storytelling in order to move them along the first and second stages of the customer journey model is a key strategy for companies hoping to succeed in the competitive global market. Another company doing this well is Coca-Cola.

Coca-Cola’s docuseries “One Last Summer” shares stories about a friend group of recent high school graduates trying to enjoy their last summer as kids (Moye, 2018). The focus of the docuseries is the students not Coca-Cola, though the product is subtly and naturally shown throughout the series. A storytelling strategy with the primary focus on the customer instead of the product makes customers feel cared for by the brand, thus fostering a sense of connection to the brand. As a big brand competing in the global market, Coca-Cola must constantly innovate to stay relevant. The “One Last Summer” docuseries was marketed through social media and could be viewed anytime through YouTube and company sites—giving it the opportunity for global reach.

Stories of friendship and summer were used to connect with audiences and succeeded in moving customers through the first two steps of the customer journey model. In the aware pathway, Coca-Cola showed audiences its stories and grabbed their attention. Audiences had the opportunity to build a deeper connection with the brand at this stage in a variety of ways. For example, consumers might have found a favorite character to follow thorough the docuseries, reminisced the joys of summer as a teenager, or felt inspired to make the most of their current summer. These thoughts and feelings connect consumers to Coca-Cola and give the company an edge over competitors who do not use compelling digital storytelling to connect with customers. Stories like the ones

chronicled in the “One Last Summer” docuseries move customers through the aware and appeal stages inciting feelings of “I know this brand” and “I like this brand”—resulting in customers remembering the brand and continuing the trek through the customer journey model. Digital storytelling with the intent of connecting with consumers to move them along the customer journey model is necessary for brands hoping to succeed in the competitive global market.

Storytelling Guides How Consumers Ask and Act

Anciently, the only way to acquire many goods and services was to exert great physical effort and walk to the destination where merchants would sell various goods (Edens, 1992). In the modern world the customer journey has shifted from a physical journey to a mental journey (Kotler et al., 2017). Instead of walking many miles and greeting one or two sellers—now consumers hardly walk at all, rather they click or tap their way through their purchase (Pires, Stanton, & Eckford, 2004). Although this decision-making process requires less physical energy it requires great mental energy (Kotler et al., 2017). Modern consumers must choose between tens to hundreds of different brands and product options to decide which product option is right for them (Kotler et al., 2017). Thus, consumers must ask many questions about their products to ensure that the product they are about to purchase is the right product for them.

The *third A* in the customer journey model focuses on how customers “ask” about the product or service before purchasing (Kotler et al., 2017). Organizations can help answer consumers’ questions about their products by supplying meaningful narratives for consumers to learn from through online videos and question and answer forums (Stone, Machtynger, & Machtynger, 2015). Organizations can encourage consumers to want to ask more questions by instilling a sense of curiosity about the product for the targeted consumers through storytelling tactics. These tactics may include strategic product placement in a movie or show that identifies with the target market or the creation of a video that tells a compelling story about how the product is used. Products begin to take on a sense of higher meaning when brands create stories around their products (Woodside, 2010). When this happens, consumers start to become curious about the product (Kotler et al., 2017). This curiosity leads the consumer to ask questions about the product to friends, families, and online communities (Kotler et al., 2017).

Thus, storytelling can help instigate global discussions about a product and its meaning beyond it simply being a cleaning product company, a car company, or a shoe company. Two recent cases that show the power of storytelling are Nike’s advertisement with Colin Kaepernick and Apple’s “Share Your Gifts” advertisement (Griner, 2018). Nike used Colin Kaepernick’s story to showcase the importance of believing in something, “even if it means sacrificing everything” (IQUII, 2018). This story-based advertisement quickly became one of the most discussed and viewed advertisements of 2018—helping Nike increase its sales and popularity amongst its domestic and global target markets (IQUII, 2018). This case study is a great example of how Nike used Colin Kaepernick’s story to take a political and cultural stand—making Nike more than just a shoe company to consumers. After Nike’s advertisement, consumers could purchase Nike products knowing they were supporting a political and cultural movement. Similarly, Apple’s recent holiday commercial was an animation that showcased a shy young girl who eventually finds the courage to share some of her art with the world (Griner, 2018). The story did not chronicle someone showing off the latest product features of the newest Apple technology—rather it used story to

connect with content creators and artists from around the world. The message encouraged content creators and artists to purchase Apple products, because Apple believes creativity is important. Both Apple and Nike chose to stand for something in 2018 that went beyond the products they showed. The companies used storytelling to give their brand a sense of meaning that went beyond the meaning of the products they sell. Thus, successfully and subtly encouraging more curiosity and questions from consumers.

Storytelling encourages curiosity amongst consumers, and curiosity eventually prompts consumers to “act”—which is the *fourth A* in the customer journey model (Kotler et al., 2017). Consumers act and engage with a company when they decide to purchase a service or product from that company. Purchase is connected to storytelling through how the packaging is displayed in stores (Yuwono, 2016). If the packaging helps to reinforce the brand image and narrative, it can help push purchase intentions (Yuwono, 2016). If the product’s features or packaging does not live up to the story the company has created, then the consumer will ultimately feel unsatisfied (Jin, Ji & Kwong, 2016). Many unsatisfied customers can weaken a company’s brand image and can ultimately lead to a company’s collapse.

It is imperative that a company ensures that the stories it tells are truthful and authentic. If a company says they are selling the most comfortable mattresses on the planet, they must produce high-quality mattresses. Many unsatisfied customers are inevitable if the company gives out a false message. Organizations should create stories that mirror their products to ensure consumers have a positive experience with each product (Stone et al., 2015). Additionally, excellent customer service can help consumers have a positive shopping experience (Timm, 2011). How company employees help, relate with, and connect with consumers can help tell a brand or product’s story (Timm, 2011).

The elements listed above will lead consumers to purchase products, and storytelling is at the heart of innovating the customer experience (Stone et al., 2015). This innovation can increase the company's revenue and value—helping the company stay financially competitive in the global market. With more companies going global, domestic and global business competition increases (Irwin, 2018). Companies can no longer afford not to tell their stories in a professional and compelling way.

Storytelling Turns Consumers into Brand Advocates

Selling products was once the end goal of all advertising and marketing objectives. That is not the case in today’s globalized societies. Consumers must become more than just numbers on a business spreadsheet. The end goal for all marketing and sales objectives should be to transform product purchasers into product advocates, and eventually into brand advocates.

Thus, the final and *fifth A* in the customer journey model focuses on how satisfied customers can become loyal advocates (Kotler et al., 2017). “The role of marketers is to guide customers throughout their journey from awareness and ultimately to advocacy” (Kotler et al., 2017). For an organization to remain competitive in today’s global culture—where anyone at any time can make digital media and share it online—a brand needs to have a defense system. The best defense system for any global or domestic brand is a group of loyal advocates (Kotler et al., 2017). A group of

advocates can do online and in-person PR for an organization better than any organization can, and in ever-growing online chatrooms—brand advocates are needed now more than ever before (Fuggetta, 2012). Strong advocates can carry brands through crises and help strengthen a brand beyond what traditional advertising is able to do. Brand advocates should be the final goal of every organization (Fuggetta, 2012).

One of the most effective ways to help consumers become brand advocates is to ensure that a brand's story is consistent and honest to the products or services that the brand offers (Veloutsou, & Moutinho, 2009). If an organization tells a dishonest story through its advertisements, then consumers will respond with negative consumer created content. If this content is continually created and viewed through social media channels it can lead to consumers losing trust in the brand and ultimately the brand's collapse (Patel, 2019). Honest and truthful storytelling is one of the best ways to build brand advocates (Veloutsou, & Moutinho, 2009).

Using emotional and human-centric stories is another storytelling tactic for building brand advocacy. Studies show that people become emotionally attached to inanimate objects—including brands (Thomson, MacInnis, & Whan Park, 2005). Organizations can use this advantageously by giving human characteristics to a brand—something known as “human-centric marketing” (Kotler et al., 2017). A brand becomes human-centric when it takes on human qualities such as appearing “physically attractive, intellectually compelling, socially engaging, and emotionally appealing” (Kotler et al., 2017). These qualities can be communicated through emotional stories a brand generates about itself. Emotional stories are then able to persuade customers to become more emotionally invested in the brand, increasing the odds that a customer will turn into a loyal brand advocate (Thomson et al., 2005). The following two cases show how the power of storytelling can help transform product purchasers into brand advocates.

Designer Shoe Warehouse. Designer Shoe Warehouse's traditional loyalty program rewards customers with “points for each purchase and includes tiers of rewards that customers can unlock as they spend more” (Peacock, 2018). However, this loyalty program was old, and consumers easily forgot about their rewards—unless they were frequently reminded through a compelling narrative. Thus, Designer Shoe Warehouse implemented storytelling tactics by launching an email campaign in 2017 that used a compelling narrative to attract and remind more consumers about their products (Peacock, 2018). The emails focused on building trust with personalized stories and deals that made the content memorable and original (Peacock, 2018). Storytelling gave the loyalty program a new look and helped spotlight and connect passionate Designer Shoe Warehouse consumers to each other. Additionally, storytelling helped customers become excited about gaining more points. This is one example of how storytelling tactics help consumers transition from product purchasers to brand advocates.

Airbnb. Airbnb's “Stories from the Airbnb Community” webpage is another great example of how brands are using storytelling to increase brand advocacy (Patel, 2019). The campaign used the written word, photographs, and short films to give a snapshot into the lives of various Airbnb hosts from around the world. This helped relieve the anxiety that a lot of Airbnb users naturally have—the anxiety of not knowing whose house you will be staying at (Patel, 2019). Consumers can overcome that fear by viewing and reading stories from various members of the Airbnb community (Patel, 2019). Airbnb launched another campaign called “Belong Anywhere” to further combat

common consumer fears about travel and staying at someone else's home. “Belong Anywhere” was all about how staying at a local’s home can help you feel more like a local and experience the culture and place more authentically (Patel, 2019). The campaign used storytelling tactics through written testimonials and videos that showed how Airbnb can be more alluring than traditional hotels. Airbnb effectively used storytelling tactics to turn a potential weakness into a strength, and more effectively transform consumers into brand advocates.

Both examples show how important it is to use storytelling to guide the shared narrative around brands. Organizations should strive to create positive brand conversations online and offline by giving advocates content and stories to talk about. The buzz created by advocates will encourage excitement surrounding a product and result in more sales (Kotler et al., 2017). The more customers purchase a brand the more likely they are to recommend it to friends—effectively becoming stronger and stronger brand advocates (Kotler et al., 2017). Companies competing in the global market must supply advocates with consistent and innovative narratives surrounding their organizations and products in order to contend with competitors and remain relevant to consumers.

CONCLUSION

The literature review discussed the literature and definitions associated with the competitive global market, storytelling, and the customer journey model. Staying competitive in the global market requires companies to use the most advanced forms of technology to communicate their messages to targeted consumers. Companies can best accomplish this by thinking about their consumers through global and local perspectives. Storytelling is most effective when organizations consistently tell the same story using similar imagery across many different platforms. When using storytelling an organization should keep in mind who the experts, tellers, and contributing listeners are (Garlock, 2012). The customer journey model focuses on how companies and organizations can guide consumers through the *five A’s* of the customer pathway— aware, appeal, ask, act, and advocate (Kotler et al., 2017).

The details of the topic discussed how organizations can use storytelling to move consumers along the customer journey model by creating personal connections with consumers, guiding how consumers ask and act, and turning consumers into brand advocates (Kotler et al., 2017). Companies can use storytelling to create personal connections with consumers by helping them see similarities between their own personal narratives and the brand’s narrative—this will help guide consumers through the aware and appeal pathways of the customer journey model. Companies can then use storytelling to give their products and brand a sense of purpose and meaning—this will help guide consumers through the ask and act pathways of the customer journey model. Lastly, companies can use honest storytelling to build consumer trust and turn consumers into brand advocates—completing the final pathway of the customer journey model.

Storytelling is not a new phenomenon. It has always been used by people to teach, engage, and inspire audiences (Nossel, 2018). However, storytelling can be reimaged, reinvented, and reused for a variety of purposes as shown throughout this paper. This paper outlines a few storytelling tactics that companies and organizations trying to succeed in the competitive global market can use to guide customers through the five pathways: aware, appeal, ask, act, and advocacy (Kotler

et al., 2017). However, the methods listed are not meant to be an exclusive list. The strategic uses of storytelling are as limitless as imagination itself.

Acknowledgement: The authors would like to thank Dr. Amiso George, Associate Professor of Strategic Communication at Texas Christian University, for her help in editing this paper.

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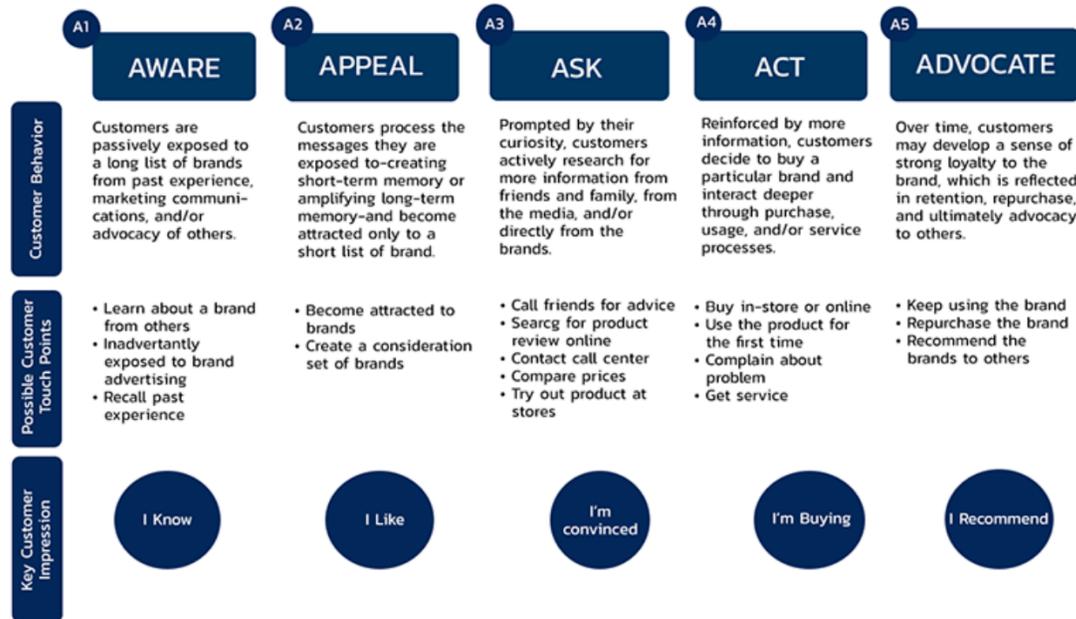
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APPENDIX A: CUSTOMER JOURNEY MODEL

Mapping the customer path throughout the five A's



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QUARTERLY REVIEW OF BUSINESS DISCIPLINES

May 2020

Volume 7
Number 1



A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF BUSINESS DISCIPLINES
SPONSORED BY UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA
ISSN 2334-0169 (print)
ISSN 2329-5163 (online)