

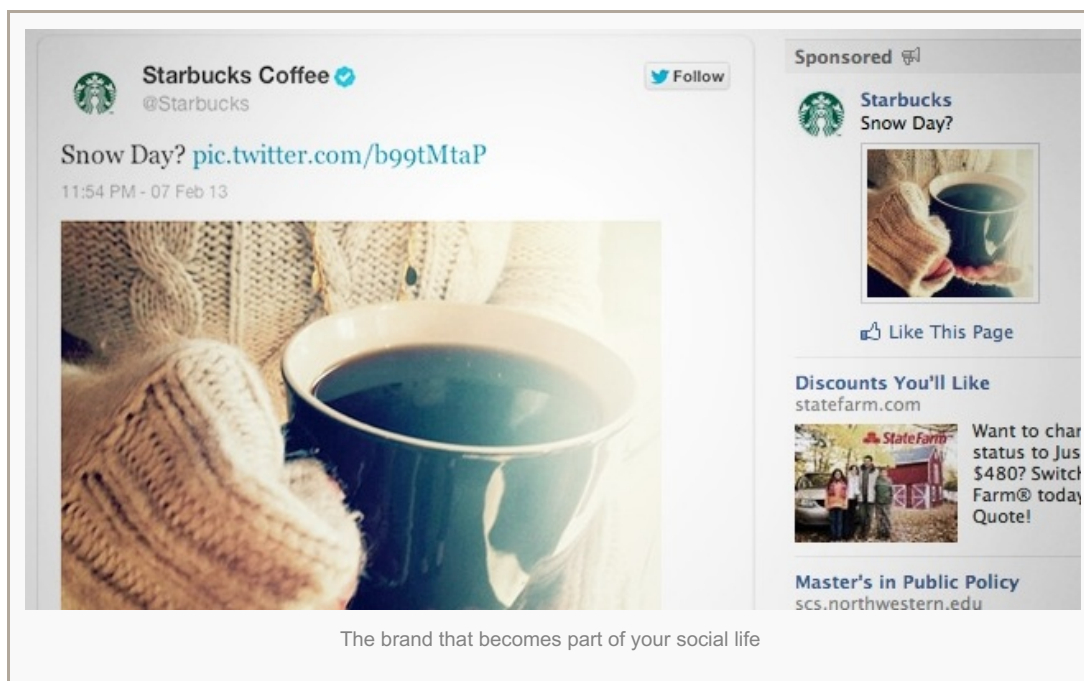
Why great brands tell a story

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Ever wonder why every time you log into a social networking site like Facebook or Youtube or even an online retail website like Amazon or Ebay, you are encountered with advertisements of products 'you may like' or things you just might be looking for? To shed light into the new age model of marketing, Melissa Hopkins, an independent brand consultant, revealed the new customer journey at the latest Polis Lunchtime Talk.

LSE MSc student Donna Mathew [@donna_mathew](https://twitter.com/donna_mathew) reports.



There was a time when the customer journey was a linear progression from identification of a need for a product, to advertising, to creating a retail environment, all the way up to the purchasing of the product. This traditional purchasing model is no longer in play. What we see today, is a complex web of multiple channels enriching the customer's retail experience.

This however, poses a challenge to brands. In order to counter the complexity of the situation, marketers need to attain accurate visibility and understanding of the path to purchase, their customers are taking. Efforts to visualise the customer journey have traditionally involved the mapping of customer touch points. Says Hopkins:

"The biggest problem in marketing is that no one person owns all of the touch points in a business,"

The average person is exposed to 5000 marketing messages a day. Brands interact with its customers through a hundred different touch points. They have the power to influence our decision making capacity. But with infinite limitless choice for human beings, how can marketers build a magnetic brand in a complex world? According to Melissa Hopkins, the answer lies in truly knowing your customer.

What is a Brand Story?

Great brands don't just sell a product, it tells a story. The brand story goes beyond the content and the narratives in the company website and brochures. The story is not based on what the company tells people, rather it is

established on what they believe the brand to be based on the signals the brand sends. Everything from the colours and textures of the packaging, to the business cards, to the staff they hire are part and parcel of the brand story and every element of this process should reflect the truth about the brand back to its customer base.

In order to build a successful brand, companies need to differentiate themselves from the innumerable brands available for consumption. No brand wants to see themselves as a replaceable cog in the consumer market. The aim of a good brand is to create aspirations in people. It is about building something that people care about and want to buy into. It is about building a scarce resource into an entity and dictating its value. Loyalty and the creation of meaningful bonds with its customers triumphs utility and functionality of the products and services. A brand story is not just a catchy tagline in a billboard, the foundation of a brand and its prospects for future growth rests in the brand story.

Brands like Apple, Starbucks and Nike have hit the nail on the head, when it comes to understanding its customers. These brands create a longing in people to purchase their products and be associated with them.

Consumer Mapping Journey

Consumer culture in 2015 is unlike anything we have seen before, customers today are extremely demanding and companies have no choice but to cater to this new age breed of discerning consumers. New digital channels in the form of social media and mobile technology have been highly influential in framing decisions and expectations of consumers. Meanwhile, the convergence of computing and communications technologies has given customers better access to information and choice, whenever and wherever they want to make 'purchase' decisions.

As the world is getting more complicated, customers are interacting with different brands through multiple channels. This in turn has led companies to look at customer information in increasingly diverse ways. The introduction of big data has changed the face of marketing in recent years, companies are more in touch with their customers and are more aware of their customer's preferences and likes than ever before. It becomes crucial that businesses adapt and evolve in order to keep pace with a digitally savvy population. The destination for consumers is still the same, the journey however has changed in a digitally empowered society.

Marketing experts like Hopkins, realise that the future of marketing lies in the mapping the customer journey, optimization of the consumer experience and customization. Those brands that addresses the consumer needs through multi-channel sources will emerge as the winners in the complex matrix that is the purchasing funnel.

This report by LSE MSc student Donna Mathew [@donna_mathew](#)

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