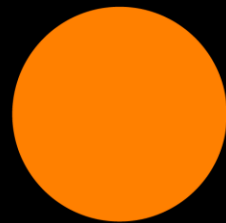


Telling a brand website story

Strategic Spotlight





Branded websites

A storytelling medium

Websites have taken on a slew of forms since the first one launched, with one of the most popular being the branded website.

Publicly accessible and dedicated to a specific brand, product, service, or portfolio - brand websites have ranged from storytelling mechanisms to transactional platforms to everything in between. In today's commerce landscape - saturated with branded websites and countless digital (e.g. social media, third party commerce platforms) and analogue (e.g. TV, print, audio) platforms - where does the brand website fit into a brand's Purchase Journey and its media ecosystem.

About brand websites

From then to now



Brand websites were designed to bring current and potential consumers into a brand's ecosystem. A brand would pull consumers into its online ecosystem (e.g. website) to tell their story before pushing consumers where the brand wanted them to go (e.g. point of purchase).

This new behavior has changed the way consumers engage with a brand website – resulting in consumers bypassing them altogether. However, as consumers become increasingly hesitant about trends such as data collection, misinformation and transparency in product sourcing, 2020 is the year that the brand website will reemerge as the trusted source for information and transaction.

In the past, it wasn't just about pushing consumers out to a digital property for purchasing but helping them in-store for education and purchasing.

With the rise of eCommerce, social media and emerging digital pathways to discovering and researching brands, products and services – the structure and role of the brand website has been dismantled as people turn to the Amazons and Googles.



Presenting a brand consistently across all platforms can increase revenue by up to 23%.

Forbes,

Relying on third-party data

Benefits and pitfalls

The popularity of third-party platforms has played a key role in the evolution of the brand website.

Not just third-party platforms for purchasing (e.g. Walmart.com), but also publishers and third-party platforms where brand content is pushed to (e.g. Facebook, BuzzFeed). This is an instance where value can be found in brands driving consumers off their website vs. to their website. Platforms like voice assistant apps and shoppable social platforms are all great ways to push out branded content so people can see it, but you can't protect someone within their personal digital ecosystem once they get there. However, pushing someone to an outside ecosystem with your brand's voice offers benefits such as increased reach.

That said, we don't recommend that a third-party platform be the home for your core storytelling for two reasons:

1) Data Collection:

Creating a long-standing dialogue and relationship with your consumer is key. If you do not own or have full access to data that impacts both you and your consumer, you are missing critical components of meaningful action opportunities.

2) Control

When on a third party platform, you cannot guarantee that consumers will stay within your brand ecosystem vs. explore comparable brands and competitors. Unlike when you drive them to your brand website, which you hold 100% control over, you only have a small portion of the third-party ecosystem and are providing consumers the chance to find other comparable brands and competitors (e.g. Amazon discovery).

As we said

There is value in pushing brand content to a third party. You can increase your reach by being in more places than ever before. However, brands should keep in mind the above watch outs.

Source: [Forbes. "10 Marketing, Web Design & Branding Statistics To Help You Prioritize Business Growth Initiatives"](#)

Mining data

Why should brands care about their website data

Investing in data collection is critical to understanding which consumers' evolving needs to meet during their Purchase Journey.

It also ensures brands can execute proper data collection to inform product offerings, customer service needs and marketing strategies. Aggregating data from the start of a consumer's engagement on a site is vital for CRM performance throughout the Purchase Journey.

In a world of misinformation, being a trusted resource is key. Whether you're B2B or B2C, a brand's website can educate, connect and drive action amongst consumers in your own ecosystem by positioning it as a trusted, defined resource. Conversely, brands can utilize the site to better understand consumer expectations from products or services and how they are meeting those needs.

When making that investment, it's important to recognize brands are building incrementally for the long term. Both content offerings and data collection need to be enhanced and evolved. However, not every brand can make those massive moves simultaneously. We recommend completing an audit to best understand the current state of your brand website to prioritize investment based on white space or opportunities. It's not just about focusing on the small wins or building towards longer-term efficiency, but doing both at scale of need. For example, a larger brand focusing on a microsite for one product launch may not be as efficient as turning the overarching brand website into a trusted source to drive a consumer towards said product launch



Future- proofing your brand website

For brands interested in evaluating and investing in their website, key things to keep in mind:

Always evolve

It's less about what you shouldn't be doing anymore with your brand website and more about what new offerings you can utilize to modernize and evolve your site.

Understand category concerns

Brands can address wider category questions and concerns by making their website a trusted advisor. This enables you to utilize the data gleaned by the consumer being in your ecosystem to best understand, target, and push them to where you want them to complete a purchase.

Leverage SEO and data

SEO is a sustainable source of traffic as valuable content only drives brand results if that content is discoverable. Likewise, ensure the brand/user conversation can continue after initial connection via discovery and targeting.

Create for your audience

Search data can help validate how many people are asking a question and if the topic is trending, which ensures that brand content investments are against targets that will reach the highest volume of consumers.

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