



STORIES AS CULTURAL CURRENCY

People share stories as a way to own experiences and reveal parts of themselves to others

Every product needs a story, as does every brand. The product's origin. The creators' ideals. Or a unique experience. These stories provide value.

Consumers are looking to share narratives as a way to express their knowledge, identity, status, and connections. As the DNA of viral marketing, these stories help people connect more deeply with a brand, a product, and others around them.

TAKE ACTION – *designing for Life's Changes*

1.

Share what you care about

How might design authentically express values to attract like-minded consumers?

2.

Empower people to make it their own

How might we encourage consumers to participate by telling their own stories?

3.

Localize

How might we speak to community to provide deeper meaning and connection in an increasingly commoditized world?

4.

Be discriminating

How might we identify the key aspects of design that connect to the story's focus?



Shoes make the man

A self-proclaimed sneaker geek, Carl has over 500 pairs in his collection. His current favorite? A pair of laser-etched Nikes he picked up in Japan. The detailing is subtle, but to those in the know, they have enormous value.

The specialty stores he visits on his travels, like Alife in New York or Kicks in Los Angeles, fly a bit below the radar. Knowing about them is all about making the right connections. To garner sneaker cred, Carl participates in online communities, sharing his knowledge and proclaiming his status through his collection.

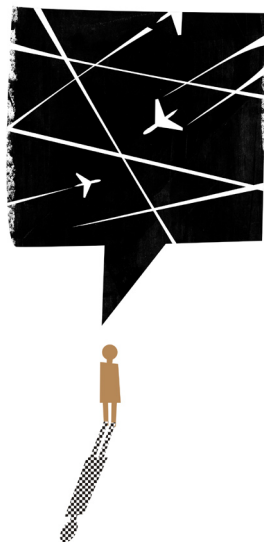
Bragging rights on a global scale

A lot of people travel to Costa Rica to take surf lessons. But only a handful can learn from an internationally renowned pro during a weeklong, invite-only surf camp.

Lee, a 36-year-old investment banker from Manhattan, works hard to attract opportunities like this. She and her banking industry friends are adrenaline junkies, always on the hunt for the next exceptional experience.

Whether it's indulging in local treatments at an exclusive \$1200 per night spa in Thailand or bypassing the months-long waitlist at a trendy restaurant in Vegas, Lee gathers experiences to increase her social and professional profile.

Working in a typically male-dominated industry, she may not always get invited to go bear hunting with the guys in Alaska. But she can still impress the firm's partners with her access to exclusive resorts in remote parts of the globe.



Be a pattern spotter: Now that you've been exposed to a few different examples, don't be surprised if you start seeing *Life's Changes* patterns all around. Keep your eyes open and let us know what you find, especially if it's the next new pattern.



Discerning chickens cause a stir

In Andhra Pradesh, India, a region where clean water is scarce, one humble local farmer's chickens are better off than most people. Searching for a way to differentiate his product, he took a big risk by starting to give his chickens purified water to drink.

Soon after the switch, the farmer's chickens started growing faster, suffered less disease and produced more eggs. Overall, they were much healthier than the neighboring villagers' chickens being fed water from the local well.

News about these high-quality chickens spread rapidly through the local community. Not only did the entrepreneurial farmer's sales shoot up, but sales of purified water went through the roof.

Guest Author: Suzanne Gibbs Howard.
Contributors: Andrea Williams, Holly Kretschmar, Patrice Martin, Sue Tan.
Image Credit: Jennifer Chong.

Red Cross

With IDEO's help, the Red Cross not only has a redesigned mobile center, they have a deeper connection with their donors. The key to altering the overall experience was to switch the focus from the recipients to the donors. Each donor now writes a postcard with their own personal story about why they were motivated to donate blood. These postcards are then posted on the wall at the center for others to read and be inspired by.

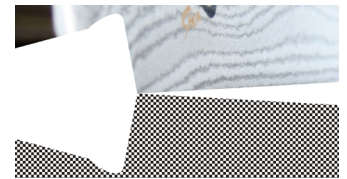
The perfect ingredient for self-expression

Lori's cupboards overflow with obscure artisan food products. She spends a great deal of time scouring the Internet and boutique stores, focusing on details about ingredients and the artisans themselves. To deepen her knowledge, she also subscribes to online newsletters and attends food conferences.

Thirty and single, Lori isn't that engaged with her career, so she has a lot of time and money to spend on food. And her friends reap the benefits. "All summer long, I entertain on the front porch," she says. "My friends tell me I'm in the wrong line of work."

Tesco

Tesco is a company that emphasizes locally grown food as a link to safety. From health challenges like Mad Cow to environmental impacts due to importing, Tesco encourages regional sourcing whenever possible. And by finding local products across the UK and Ireland, they can connect not only with consumers' sense of security, but also their national pride.



Shun knives

The shimmering pattern of a Shun knife's layered steel blade is a distinctive visual clue that can elicit pangs of jealousy at a dinner party. This "Damascus look" tells a more evocative brand story about Japanese heritage and craft than anything Shun could ever express focusing on SUS410 High Carbon Stainless Steel or VG10 core.

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