



Storytelling Marketing Strategy

Marketing Strategy for a Sexual Education Platform

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ABSTRACT

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This paper aims to create a storytelling marketing strategy as part of a business idea regarding a Sexual education platform based in Finland. The Sexual education platform is a business idea that is being developed by the writer. The main research question is "How to effectively utilize storytelling as a marketing strategy?" for the business idea in the future.

This thesis includes extensive literature in social psychology and storytelling that were used as the primary basis in the creation of stories for marketing purposes, specifically brand storytelling.

For this thesis market research was conducted on the current competition, analysing the Finnish people's attitudes on sexuality and analysing examples of storytelling. The research conducted was sufficient to create an effective marketing strategy that was comprehensive enough to be used as a framework for a marketing team.

The strategy comprises of creating a brand for the organization and leveraging brand attributes with customer experience to create evocative stories. The stories were given a framework from current sexual attitudes of Finnish people and the customer segment selected.

Storytelling is a powerful tool that can be utilized to evoke emotions on viewers. When it comes to consumer behaviour and brand perception, storytelling serves to influence both if done correctly. The connection between attitudes and storytelling is difficult to measure. For future research, preliminary attitude research should be conducted and a test group should be implemented to test whether stories influence the attitude consumers have towards a brand.

Key words: marketing strategy, storytelling, educational platform

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1 INTRODUCTION

Stories have been an essential way of sharing knowledge in the times of tribes, and even today, most people have at least one story they can recall that evoked powerful emotions in them. There is no denying that storytelling can create moments of emotional substance and sentiments of purpose and even create processes of deep change in people. In a world where consumers are constantly seeking for purpose and meaning, storytelling is a tool that can be used by organizations, institutions, companies and governments to create effective marketing strategies and plans to achieve their goals.

A person goes to a restaurant with high expectations. Unfortunately, bad customer service and awful food shatter these expectations and bring the person down to earth. Most people would agree that this person would not return to that restaurant again. Why so?

According to social psychologists' attitudes and behavioral research, attitudes can influence people's future behavior, and they have been used to influence people's health behavior for some time now.

Both concepts are intertwined since storytelling in a business context aims to guide consumers' beliefs while staying truthful to the brand.

This paper focuses on creating a storytelling marketing strategy based on brand storytelling concepts, social psychology, and marketing principles. The marketing strategy is for a fictional organization providing sexual education in Finland.

The structure of this thesis starts with the theoretical framework and concepts, followed by market research and the recommended marketing strategy.

1.1 Thesis Topic.

This thesis aims to create a marketing strategy for a sexual education provider that uses storytelling. This topic was chosen because of the powerful tool that storytelling is to evoke emotions, which is abundantly found in a topic such as sexual education. There is a need for effective use of marketing when it comes to social problems and the needed change. In this case, a sexual education provider outside of educational institutions can help provide a more holistic, accessible, and interactive sexual education for everybody, regardless of their environment. The question the thesis proposes to answer is how to create a marketing strategy that leverages the organization's values and the emotionality of sexuality using storytelling and theories of social psychology.

1.2 Research questions.

The main research question for this thesis is: How to create an effective storytelling marketing strategy for a sexual education provider using social psychology and marketing principles?

Sub-questions:

1. How can social psychology be leveraged in storytelling?
2. Are there successful examples of storytelling in a business context, and how has it been used?

1.3 Working methods and data.

This thesis utilizes primary and secondary data. Primary data comes in the form of market analysis, specifically competition analysis and storytelling example analysis. The competition analysis includes 4 different companies/organization that are offering a similar service than SEXED, the sexual education platform utilized as an example in this thesis. Storytelling example analysis includes 4 examples of companies utilizing stories in advertisements or content, and an analysis of the story structure used in these examples.

Secondary data is data which has already been analysed and collected by others, e.g., researchers, authors, and scientists. Secondary data suits this thesis since there is vast data regarding attitudes and behaviour, storytelling in general, and businesses that use storytelling. This secondary data has been sourced from

sources like FINSEX which is a research project by Väestöliitto Ry which research sexual trends in the Finnish population.

(Loge, 2020)

The literature reviews sources are books, scientific journal articles, movies, and documentaries, which will be used to create a literature review and accurate market research that answers the main research question. These sources are books like Maio's "The psychology of attitudes and attitude change" (2018) which includes many of the founding theories of social-psychology from authors like Albert Bandura, Petty & Cacioppo, Greenwald, which have made enormous contribution to the science of social-psychology. Regarding storytelling, two books were used as sources, "Brand Storytelling" by Rodriguez (2020) and Eshter's "Let the story Do the Work" (2017). A documentary from Kanopy from Bandura called "Behaviour Therapy, Self-efficacy and modelling" (2005) was also used.

Depending on the data, this thesis uses thematic, content, and cluster analysis methods.

The final recommendation will be based on a comprehensive literature review and market research. The goal is to recommend a marketing strategy that connects theories and research results.

1.4 Fictional company

This thesis is about creating a marketing strategy for the business plan of a fictional organization that provides sexual education in Finland. To provide needed context, this section will briefly describe such an organization.

The organization's name is SEXED.

This organization's primary mission is to provide accessible, interactive, and quality sexual education to anyone looking for it.

They propose an easy-to-use, interactive, and reliable digital platform from which anyone can access sexual education. This platform is accessible on either a computer or a smartphone.

The organization also creates video and audio content, like educational videos and podcasts with guest speakers.

The business model is the provision of educational services/content to a varying range of consumers. The primary revenue sources are subscriptions, grants, and funding arrangements.

The core values of this organization are human-centric, reliable, and compassionate.

Their brand image consists of being pro-sexuality and safety, interactive and trustworthy, and understanding/accepting of different sexualities, relationships, traumas, and bodies.

This organization utilizes different digital marketing channels as well as physical channels.

The context of time and place is that this organization is about to launch its services in Finland and needs a marketing strategy before launching its services.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this thesis, the goal is to combine theories to influence people's attitudes regarding sexual education and their brand perception of SEXED. This chapter encompasses social psychology and storytelling theories and will define marketing concepts.

Marketing theory will lay the foundation for a marketing strategy, which is necessary to understand so that different theories can give it form and structure.

Social psychology theory serves as a guide that helps us better understand what drives consumers' behavior and what can be done to influence this behavior. The main points are attitudes and behavior, and the second is the factors that affect individuals' learning and behavior.

Lastly, storytelling will use the social psychology theory to structure the marketing strategy. Storytelling can help create stories that elicit strong emotions; in this case, it gives the company a tool to communicate its brand mission in a way that connects with the viewer. Storytelling can also help put the brand mission and vision into stories for the internal stakeholders (marketers, employees) so that this story can be told in all of the company's activities.

2.1 Marketing

Marketing is a core activity of any company. It promotes the buying or selling its offerings (services and products). This is done with tactics and strategies, usually measured by KPIs (Key performance indicators). (Investopedia, 2024)

The official definition by the American Marketing Association (2017) is "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large."

2.1.1 Marketing Strategy

A marketing strategy is a strategy that guides a company to achieve its business goals, like reaching prospective customers and turning them into buying customers. It usually includes the strategies, the company's value proposition, and demographic data on target customers. The company's marketing mix, e.g. (4 P's) is also included in a thorough marketing strategy. Marketing strategy overlaps

with a marketing plan, which is a plan that includes a more detailed plan on how specific campaigns are to be run. (Investopedia, 2024).

2.1.2 Marketing channels

Marketing channels are the channels used by companies to communicate with their target customers. These channels can be traditional, such as radio, television, print, or digital, like social media and email. The most popular are SEO (search engine optimization), social media, digital advertising, email, and influencer marketing).

(Mailchimp, n.d)

2.1.3 Marketing Mix

Marketing mix is a way to define the different aspects of a product/service that can be used to create effective marketing campaigns. These aspects are referred to as the "4 P's" which are:

1. Product: This defines the need the product/service fulfills and how it differs from the competition.
2. Price: Price can effectively market a product and communicate, e.g., luxury qualities. Several strategies exist for pricing a product/service, such as cost-based pricing.
3. Placement: This defines the places a consumer will find the product/service.
4. Promotion: Promotion is how the product/service will be promoted, which channels, which strategies, and what kind of messaging. Promotional efforts usually contain details from the other 3 Ps.

(Kenton, 2024).

2.2 Social cognitive theory

Social psychology is the scientific study of how social context influences people's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, behavior, and how we interact with the environment. Several social psychology theories are essential to understanding why people behave as they do and how to influence that behavior (McLeod, 2023).

Social psychology helps us understand consumers' contexts and how their social environment, beliefs, and behaviors interact. Understanding how these different

factors affect an individual is imperative for making an appropriate marketing strategy.

People are social beings with an intrinsic need to socialize and interact with other people while asserting one's individuality.

Social cognitive theory proposes that learning and behavior happen in a social context that includes three factors:

1. Personal (Cognitions, beliefs, skills, affects).
2. Behavioral.
3. Social/environmental.

People act according to the beliefs of their perceived capability and how they see the outcome of their actions. When people interact with others, an exchange of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and skills happens. The environment gives us feedback on whether our behavior is appropriate, achievable, or valuable. These three factors affect one another, and it is imperative to understand attitudinal and behavioral persuasion. (Bandura, 1986) (Bandura, 2005).

2.2.1 Personal, behavioral, and social/environmental factors

The reciprocity between these three factors can be explained using a student as a subject.

The personal factor, also known as self-efficacy, is the concept of self-perceived capability, skills, and experience to complete a behavior (Personal-Behavioral). Completing a behavior affects a person's self-efficacy, depending on how the behavior went; for example, if a student studies for an exam and it does not go as expected, the student's self-efficacy in studying capabilities might be negatively affected (Behavioral-Personal).

If a person has, for example, learning disabilities and, therefore, develops low self-efficacy, this affects how peers and teachers perceive them.

The teacher might see the student as low performing, perhaps even believe that the student is not interested in studying, and tell them, "You will not amount to nothing".

This feedback from the social/environment will affect the self-efficacy of a person (Personal-Environmental) and (Environmental-Personal).

A teacher can instruct students to listen carefully, which students, without much questioning, comply. Students might also have gotten an awful score average on the last test, to which a teacher might react by changing their teaching methods, e.g., giving more homework. These are examples of environmental-behavioral and behavioral-environmental reciprocity.

(Bandura, 1986) (Bandura, 2005).

In the context of this thesis, these factors need to be studied by researching social/environmental factors, such as the socio-economic atmosphere of Helsinki (Liberal or conservative, middle-class or high-class) and how Finnish people relate to each other. This theory helps to understand what can be done to affect an individual's self-efficacy by understanding the play between personal, behavioral, and social-environmental factors.

2.2.2 Vicarious learning

In marketing, communication happens every step of the way. Consumers build an image of a company from information gathered from friends, media, online, or the company's marketing efforts. This, in turn, affects whether or not a consumer will take action toward purchasing a service/product.

Social cognitive theory assumes that learning happens through enactive and vicarious learning. Enactive learning means learning through one's own experience, while vicarious learning means learning through observation of models (e.g., live, filmed.)

Vicarious learning saves the observers time and effort while allowing them to learn from their environment not only skills, affects, and behaviors but also attitudes (Bandura, 1986).

This is important since models have shaped people's perceptions of objects like womanhood and what makes a good citizen, to name a few examples. An excellent example is how women have been portrayed in movies and books in the last century. These portrayals influence people's assumptions about what a woman is supposed to be because of these vicarious learning processes. For marketing,

this means understanding what influences a consumer's behavior and how vicarious learning processes affect them.

Bandura (1986) points out three vicarious processes: response facilitation, inhibition and disinhibition, and observational learning.

Response facilitation inhibition and disinhibition mainly affect motivation.

Response facilitation, in its simplicity, is the facilitation from our environment or others to enact a particular behavior. For example, if an observer sees a group of people stop in front of a shop, the observer is motivated to follow the behavior.

Inhibition and disinhibition happen when a model strengthens or weakens an observer's probability to behave certainly. Inhibition depletes the likelihood of a particular behavior happening; for example, an observer might see a person crossing a red light and get sanctioned. This discourages an observer from enacting the behavior. Vice versa, the same person could cross a red light and not receive a punishment. This might encourage the observer to lose the fear of a particular action, such as crossing a red light. (Bandura, 1986)

Observational learning is when an individual learns a new behavior by watching someone else perform it. This learning process involves four stages: attention, retention, production, and motivation. (Bandura, 1986)

The level of attention an observer pays to the behavior being modeled can be influenced by various factors, including the credibility of the person performing the behavior and the task features, such as bright colors or music.

Retention, the second stage of observational learning, involves the cognitive organization and encoding of information for storage in memory.

The third process, production, involves translating received cognitive information of observed actions into behavior.

Lastly, motivation is an essential process of observational learning because it facilitates observers' attending to, retaining, and processing modeled behavior. Observers are motivated to learn actions that help them reach desired outcomes and avoid those that lead to undesired outcomes.

(Bandura, 1986)

Understanding these processes is paramount when creating messages and content for consumers, especially when the goal is to incite action.

These factors can be used to create content that uses modeling to affect the vicarious learning process of an individual. Understanding that credibility and how a task or content is featured affects whether or not a consumer pays attention is imperative to take into account. Another critical factor is to create the image, in this case, that sexual education is worth learning since it helps people to reach desired outcomes (healthy sexual life) and avoid undesired ones (communication problems, STDs, insecurity of one's sexual life).

2.3 Attitude and Behavior

Sexuality and sexual education are undoubtedly topics in which individuals have strong opinions, values, and attitudes. How are attitudes built, how do they predict behavior, and most importantly, can they be influenced in this case?

Attitude and behavior have been studied thoroughly in the field of social psychology. Social psychologists assume that attitudes are a set of beliefs, values, and behaviors that can be measured to predict/change future behaviors.

Maio, G. (2018) defines attitude “as an overall evaluation of an object based on cognitive, affective and behavioral information”. An attitude object can be anything that can be evaluated.

The cognitive component of an attitude consists of an individual's thoughts and beliefs about an object. These judgments might be positive or negative. For example, an individual might believe that liberal and sustainable values are positive. Depending on the beliefs an individual holds, an attitude might be formed of an object.

The affective component of an attitude is composed of feelings and emotions linked to an object. For example, the sea causes fear in some individuals, negatively affecting their attitude towards the sea. In contrast, an individual might have a delightful and serene feeling when near the sea, positively impacting their attitude.

The behavioral component refers to an individual's past experiences with the attitude object. These experiences consist of personal behavioral experiences that

can be recalled in the present moment. For example, when asked, “What are your thoughts on immigration?” an individual might remember previous experiences like voting for immigrant workers' rights, receiving aggressive treatment from an immigrant, or having immigrant friends. All of these past behavioral experiences might affect an individual attitude. (Maio, 2018)

2.3.1 Attitude functions

The functions attitudes serve are object appraisal, social adjustment, externalization, and value-expressive (Katz, 1960; Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956).

Object appraisal is the ability of an attitude to summarize negative and positive components of an object, facilitating the recall of this information and saving the observer's time.

Social adjustment helps individuals identify with people they like and dissociate from the ones they don't like.

Attitudes that protect an individual's self-esteem fulfill the externalization function. For example, a singer might dislike singing because their performance has been poor, threatening their self-esteem.

Attitudes that are value-expressive express an individual's central values and self-concept. (Maio, 2018)

Sexuality is inextricably linked with the sense of identity of people, whether it is one's gender, sexual expression, or sexual tendencies; it shapes people's lives. This can be assumed to be a more value-expressive attitude and social adjustment function.

2.3.2 Theory of planned behavior

The theory of planned behavior aims to predict deliberative behavior. This model proposes that intention, an individual's motivation to act, can predict behavior. According to the theory, intention is composed of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control of the intended behavior.

Attitude refers to an individual attitude regarding a behavior. Subjective norms refer to an individual's perceived social pressure to perform or not a certain behavior. Perceived behavioral control is an individual's feeling that they can perform a behavior. (Ajzen, 1991)

According to a meta-analysis performed by Armitage and Conner (2001), there is strong evidence that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control predict behavior.

2.3.3 Cognitive influences on attitudes

Attitudinal beliefs are a critical determinant of attitudes on several issues; in this case, an individual's attitude regarding the need for sexual education can be influenced by their values regarding healthy sexual relationships or the perception of the necessity of sexual education. The role of cognition in attitude change has been highly relevant in creating models of persuasion. Research of WWII propaganda effects on the population helped create the first significant attempt to determine whether persuasive messages cause attitude change in the Yale Model of Persuasion. (Maio, 2015)

According to the Yale Model of Persuasion, Hovland (1953), persuasive messaging can change individuals' attitudes if it presents an incentive for attitude change—incentives like a product's utilitarian value or social benefits. The model assumes that incentives can be influenced by three factors: The source of the persuasive message, its content, and the audience. These factors can also differ in strength and context.

The message's source can be a trustworthy expert on the topic, a highly attractive professional, or the opposite of these attributes. The content of a message can be prolonged with powerful arguments and propose both sides of issues or the opposite. The audience can be a thousand people or it can be one individual, or they can be happy or gloomy. (Maio, 2015)

According to Tony Greenwald (1968), cognitive responses (i.e., message-relevant thoughts) can be regarded as a form of self-talk—a personal internal response to the presented information. Greenwald proposes that these cognitive responses before and after receiving information are crucial to determining

whether there will be an attitude change. Simply put, positive cognitive responses in individuals are more likely to generate an attitude change and vice versa.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) elaborates on the cognitive response view by arguing that cognitive responses to messages vary depending on the individual and contextual situations. The most important core postulations of the Elaboration Likelihood Model are:

1. People are motivated to hold correct attitudes.
2. Variables can affect attitudes by serving as arguments, cues, or factors that affect the nature and amount of elaboration.
3. The motivation and ability to process arguments causes increased use of arguments and lower use of cues.

According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), individuals with high motivation and ability will be more persuaded by stronger arguments since they are paying more attention, thus creating a more elaborate response. In contrast, if an individual has low motivation and ability, simple cues like the length of a message or the appearance of the communicator can change or add to a person's attitude since these simple cues require lower energy to process.

Cognitive influences on attitudes, specifically sexual education in the field of business, can be seen as the attributes of, e.g., promotional messages. How well a topic is argued, what is the source of the information, and is the presenter of the information attractive? The incentives of specific behavior can also be considered, e.g., "why a good sexual education is beneficial."

These are examples of ways in which the self-talk of a consumer can be influenced.

2.3.4 Affective influences on attitudes

Emotions are essential in building attitudes and influencing them since emotions are ever-present. Exposure to stimuli objects in the context of marketing might positively affect consumers' attitudes. Robert Zajonc (1968) suggested that exposure to stimuli is enough to evoke a positive attitude even without direct interaction. This is called the mere exposure effect, which happens when simple exposure to, e.g., kiosk workers might lead to favorable feelings towards them.

An exciting test made by Richard Moreland and Scott Beach (1992) of the mere exposure test further solidified this theory. They arranged for four women of similar appearance to attend a course at the University of Pittsburgh. The women did not interact with any students and attended 0, 5, 10, or 15 times. When the term ended, the students were shown pictures of each and rated them on different traits (e.g., interesting vs. boring, unattractive vs. attractive). Students also had to rate the probability of spending time with them, that they would become friends and work with them on a collaborative project. The results were that students liked women whom they saw more often.

Emotional learning, which happens through conditioning, is essential for the marketing context. While the mere exposure effect occurs through the repeated presentation of an object, emotion learning involves exposure to an attitude object accompanied by an event that causes emotions to arise. Research focuses on three types of emotional learning: observational conditioning (see Chapter 2.2.2: Vicarious learning), evaluative learning, and behavior conditioning. Evaluative learning, in short, is almost like mere exposure, but it adds stimuli that accompany the exposure (e.g., a ring of a bell). Behavioral learning usually is a behavior that is reinforced by an emotional response. Observational learning is the most important of the three for this thesis since marketing through storytelling is primarily observational. (Maio, 2015)

2.4 Storytelling

The marketing basics have been presented to create a basis for the marketing strategy. In the last chapters, social psychology theory is critical to understanding how an individual's attitudes affect behavior and the different factors that affect learning and behavior. The next and last part is storytelling, which will be the primary strategy used for marketing.

Storytelling is the art of telling compelling stories to an audience. Stories have been a significant tool for humans to share knowledge, skills, and emotions thanks to their provocative nature to illicit affective reactions in listeners.

From a business perspective, stories can help brands connect with consumers because of their genuine and emotional nature. Over time, this affects the attitude towards a brand. (Rodriguez, 2020)

Story structure, in its simplest form, a story consists of characters, environment, context, relatable emotions portrayed, challenges/obstacles, and a resolution.

The basic structure of a story has three acts. The first is the introduction/hook, in which a character, context, and setting are presented. The first act is used to draw the attention of listeners/viewers. The second act involves a challenge/obstacle the main character must overcome. The third act portrays the resolution of the challenge and the changes it provokes in the main character.

(Choy, 2017)

2.4.1 Brand storytelling structure.

A brand is the identity consumers give a product or company. Brand perception can be created through visual design, logo, communication tone, and advertising. Building a brand starts with defining its mission and values, defining its voice, personality, and story.

A Brand's mission serves as the central theme for a story, which aims to provoke an emotional connection with its consumers. For example, if a brand's mission is to empower people to dance, how does the consumer feel empowered when choosing such a brand, and what emotions arise? The answers to these questions are used as building blocks for a story.

The story then helps internal stakeholders to understand how they connect with consumers and vice-versa. (Rodriguez, 2020)

The connection between the brand and the story starts with the brand mission since this is the principal theme from which stories are structured. The following is a Storytelling mission design template with the details of each part. This helps to understand how the brand mission translates into storytelling.

1. Story Topics: Who and what is this story about? The brand mission statement needs to define why a brand exists and its core principles and values. The stories will highlight these topics precisely because they give a brand purpose beyond the product and service.
2. Story mission: What is hoped to be accomplished by this story? The stories must have defined their mission, whether to get more visitors to a website

or influence people to try a new service. The brand mission serves as the basis for the stories told, and the mission might differ from story to story.

3. Brand attributes: Here are the attributes like personality, tone, archetype, voice, and slogan. This ensures that stories are aligned with the brand identity.
4. Key audiences: These are the audiences for whom the stories are written.
5. Feelings: What feelings are to be evoked through the stories?
6. Make it believable: What assets and resources are available to back up the stories? E.g., universal experiences that most people have, research results in sexual satisfaction, or a mix of both.

(Rodriguez, 2020)

2.4.2 Story universal truth.

So-called “universal truths” are truths that every person can relate to, such as emotions and situations; this element makes a story individually relatable to every person.

Finding universal truths for a brand starts with understanding how customers feel when interacting with the product or service. These feelings are then compared to the brand mission statement. Does the brand mission align with these feelings? These feelings can be positive or negative, and once there is a clear understanding of what customers feel when interacting with the brand, a universal truth that aligns with the brand can be chosen.

(Rodriguez, 2020)

2.4.3 Story structures.

For a story to make sense, it must have a structured plot that takes the listener/observer on a journey that elicits emotions. These emotions will be connected to the product/brand if done correctly.

The following are some story structures used.

1. Monomyth: The monomyth is also called the hero’s journey. This archetype tells the story of a character who lives a seemingly ordinary life but suddenly, by unforeseen circumstances, embarks on a journey that causes profound personal transformation. In business, this correlates to

the customer being the hero, who shares their testimonial of how a company product/service “transformed” their life.

2. The mountain: This story structure resembles the shape of a mountain in terms of emotional build-up, with a very intense introduction that builds up until the conclusion, which is equally intense and grandiose. This story structure is deliberately used to create intense emotions in viewers, so it is essential to test out the story to see what kind of reactions it triggers in an audience.
3. Sparklines: The structure contrasts the current reality with a utopian world, a “what is” and “what could be” story. This can inspire audiences to take action and start visualizing what the reality they live in could be.
4. Petals: This structure brings together many stories connected by a central narrative. If visualized, the petals are the stories, and in the middle is the central narrative. This structure shows the audience how many stories can be told by one central narrative.

(Rodriguez, 2020)

3 MARKET ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the current market competition and the sexual attitudes of Finnish people will be researched and analyzed. These will be followed by storytelling examples and a respective analysis of them.

The objective is to research and analyze competitors, Finnish sexual education attitudes and the use of storytelling for marketing purposes, to be used as the basis in conjunction with the literature review to create a competitive and realistic marketing strategy.

3.1 Competitor analysis

This section focuses on the current competition in the sexual education market. The research will be done by searching Google with different keywords, such as “sexual education platform,” “online sexual education,” “Seksuaali Kasvatus,” and “best sexual education.”

There are articles published in School of Sexual Education, Sexual Health Alliance, Väestöliitto, Planned Parenthood, Medium and Feedspot’s websites from which different platforms were chosen. The criteria of selection were the relevancy of the companies (Mentions in blogs and articles), the ranking in Google search and the services provided by these companies (Sexual education).

The Analysis was done using thematic and content analysis methodology.

3.1.1 Beducated

Beducated is an online platform for sexual health and happiness based in Berlin, Germany. It offers over 100 courses created by experts that teach pleasure-based sexual education, which means it emphasizes the pleasure behind sexuality. Their teaching method is video material with experts on the topic, e.g., Intimate Touch, Roadmap to Intimacy, and Female orgasm.

Their target market is young adults from the age of 20 up to 50 years old, either individuals or couples, mainly women, since most of their content shows women. Their target market is more open-minded and liberal regarding sexuality and people who want to get to know themselves sexually.

Their pricing is subscription-based, either monthly (\$29,99) or yearly (\$199,99).

Marketing-wise, they communicate to be highly educational, safe for all genders, and shame-free. This is communicated through the content shown on their website, which is explicit but soft at the same time, making it easily approachable. The incentives for buying the subscription are made very clear immediately.

Visually, they use rounded fonts that are easy on the eyes. Their colors are soft and warm, mainly burgundy.

Beducated uses various channels, including YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Discord, and LinkedIn. Each channel uses a mix of 5Ps, communication tone, and content.

The story told here has at its core that an individual can have a pleasurable sex life with themselves and others, and they communicate this with the content shown on their marketing channels.

(Beducated, 2023)

3.1.2 Knowbody

Knowbody is a company that offers a sexual education app that complies with the curriculum provided by the Federal Centre for Health Education of Germany (BZgA), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the ministries of education in Germany. The app offers learning units about relationships, sexuality, gender, body, and self-determination to support teachers teaching sexual education. Their teaching method includes short games, videos, 3D animations, and voice messages.

Knowbody's vision is a world in which individuals properly understand and communicate feelings, understand how to have healthy relationships with themselves and others, and have sufficient sexual education on consent and other topics.

Their target market is mainly educational institutions, teachers, and students in Germany. Their approach is B2B, emphasizing quality, safety, and expertise. Their pricing is license-based, costing 8€ for individuals, for one class of 30 students and the teacher 150€ per class, and for schools for the use of 2 classes or more, 400€.

Marketing-wise, they communicate reliability and certified quality that educational institutions can rely on. This is communicated on their website with short information about who they are, what they offer, why they offer it, and who sponsors them (universities, social entrepreneurship networks, etc.), emphasizing their product quality. Their product is highlighted the most on their webpage, with details of how it functions and what kind of content it has, and they offer a trial version. The tone is very straightforward. Visually, it uses round text boxes, mostly round shapes, violet and yellowish colors, and pastel colors.

The story told here is of teenagers who are well-educated and can enjoy their sexuality. The educational institution can be a better source of this with nobody, and they create these stories emphasizing quality, safety, and reliability with what they do.

(Knowbody,2023)

3.1.3 OMGYES

OMGYES is a company that offers research-based education on women's pleasure through its website. The format varies from videos to animations, interviews with experts, and women sharing their experiences. They emphasize experiencing more intimacy and pleasure. There is a clear emphasis on all their content on sexuality from a women's perspective since almost everything is based on women's pleasure.

Their target market is women from the age of 18 upwards who want to improve their sexual life; their secondary target market is men and couples who also want to improve their sexual life.

Their pricing are one-time payments of either \$59 for 12 techniques and +60 videos and \$149 for all of the techniques and over +300 video materials.

Their marketing focuses on people and their products; they emphasize their vision, inspiring women, men, and couples to find their path to intimate and pleasurable experiences with themselves and others. They use warm colors, such as orange and reddish. A story is told here of women who find sexual liberation

through new practices and sharing with their partners, and this is where OMGYES comes in.

3.1.4 AMAZE

Amaze is a company based in the U.S. that offers comprehensive and free sexual education material for teenagers and educators. Their video materials can be found on their website and YouTube. Their videos are humorous, age-appropriate, and very informative regarding all sexual education topics. Amaze has been adapted for use in Latin America, South and East Africa, South Korea, Madagascar, and Hungary. Their material has been translated to over 50 languages.

Their mission is to use digital media to provide adolescents around the world with medically accurate, age-appropriate, affirming, and honest sex education they can access directly online.

Their target market is adolescents between the ages of 10 and 18 and educators worldwide. Their pricing model is free. They successfully operate with the help of funding, NGOs, and donations.

For marketing, Amaze has many partners worldwide with whom it cooperates, uses, and promotes its content. Amaze emphasizes its video material and uses youth ambassadors in different states across the U.S. Visually, Amaze uses many different colors, and its videos are animated with a cartoonish look.

The story Amaze tells is about empowered teens who understand their sexuality and show vulnerability.

3.1.5 Analysis results

The sexual education market seems to be developing to cater to the increasing demand for digital content that is easy to use, intuitive, and accessible. This is seen in the products and services already available in English and worldwide. In Finland, only one company offered sexual education, TASASEKS. They offered services through courses and workshops for primary school classes and teachers. However, they do not seem to be currently operating. This assumption comes from the lack of content and posts in their marketing channels. The market does not seem to be saturated in Finland.

All these companies/organizations share some themes: safety, empowerment, and quality sources of information. Companies convey these messages using different communication formats, such as pictures, videos, text, etc.

There is a significant difference in the topics chosen to be part of the core product/service, e.g., pleasure, STDs, pregnancy, relationship skills, communication, and consent. Companies such as OMGYES and Beducated provide courses that focus mainly on sexual pleasure and cater to females.

Knowbody and AMAZE, on the other hand, focus on sexual education in its entirety, complying with the current sexual education curriculums in different countries.

This is seen by the way companies choose to market themselves and the content shown through their channels; pleasure-based companies show more explicit content and portray safe sexuality and a sense of individual empowerment. These companies cater to the individual consumer, as well as couples.

More holistic sexual education organizations present only necessary information, do not present explicit content if not necessary, and focus on the essentials: their content, platform, and organizational expertise (e.g., Sex Ed teachers, therapists, researchers), which they cater to adolescents and institutions.

There is a focus on video content in which people, whether animated or real, share their experiences honestly and openly, which creates a sense of safety and vulnerability.

3.2 Finnish attitudes on sexuality

Väestöliitto ry, the Family Federation of Finland, which advocates for the wellbeing and connection of people, funds a research project, FINSEX, that has followed the changes in the sexual life and wellbeing of Finnish people for over 50 years. Their latest research was done in 2015 and published in 2017 in an article. (FINSEX, 2017) The age group was 18 to 79 years old, the material size was 2150, and the answer percentage was 36%. Several topics were researched and essential for this thesis is sexual attitudes.

The following charts show the research results conducted regarding sexual attitudes in Finland in 1971, 1992, 1999, 2007, and 2015.

Figure number 1 and 2 show the percentage of men and women that “accept sexual relations without love.” According to the article, love has made sexual relationships acceptable in the past, which seems to be changing in Finnish society, reflected in the noticeable approval of sexual relations without love in men and women.

39% of men and 21% of women in 1971 approved sexual relations without love. In 2015, 63% of men and 56% of women approved of sexual relations without love. The younger population, from 18 to 44 years old are more liberal when it comes to sexual relations without love than the older population.

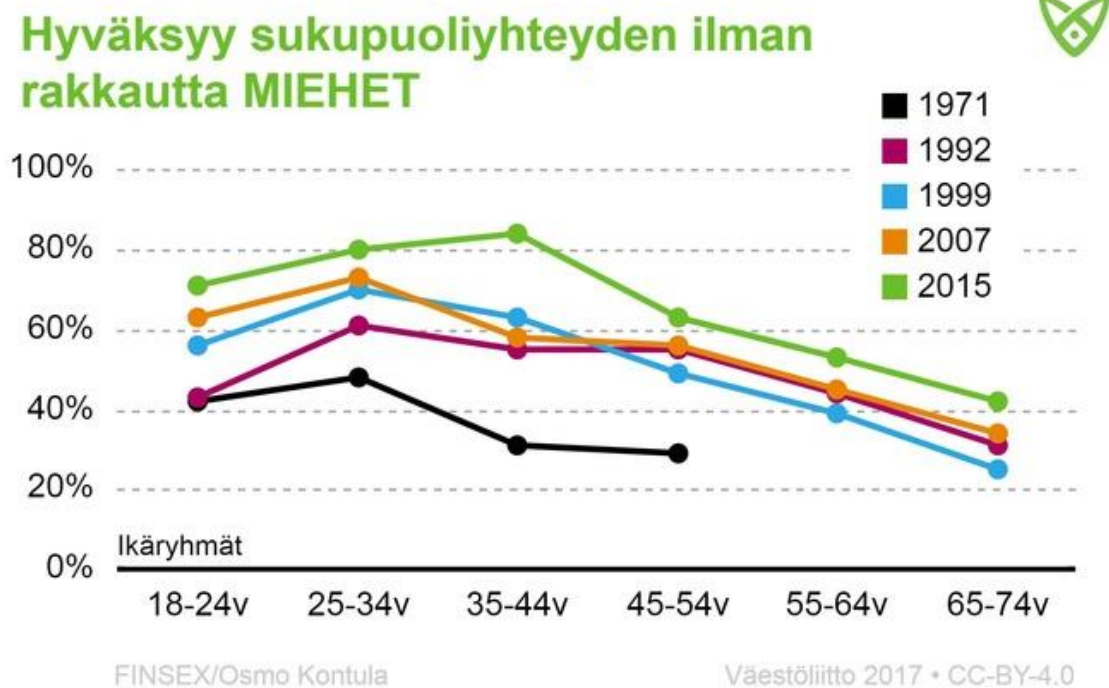
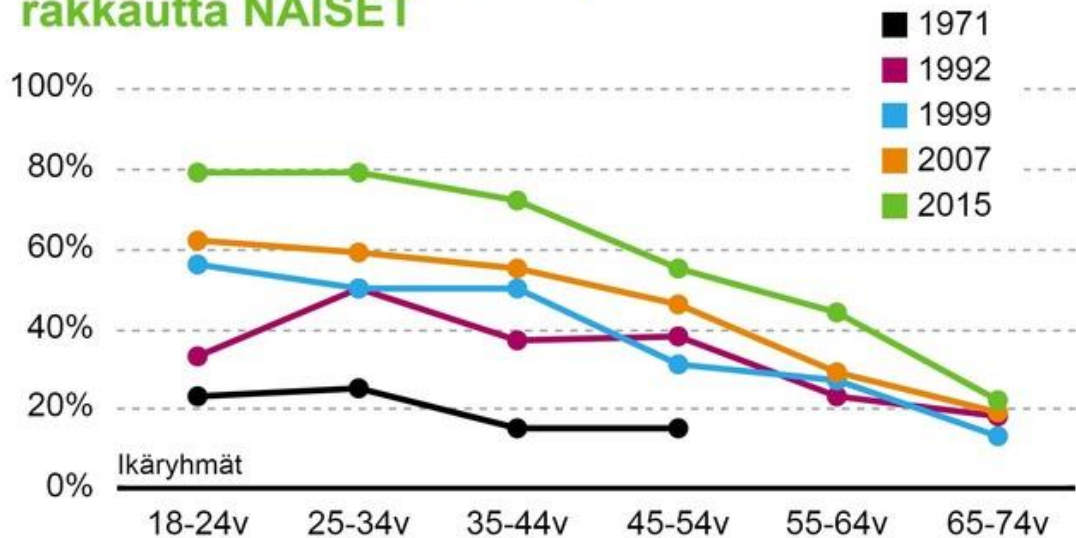


Figure 1. FINSEX. Sexual attitudes of Finnish people.

Hyväksyy sukupuoliyhteyden ilman rakkautta NAISET



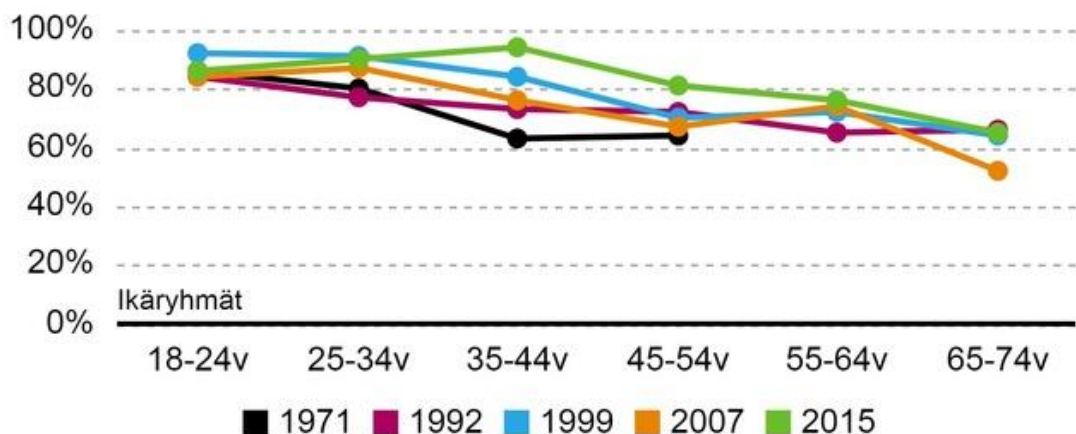
FINSEX/Osmo Kontula

Väestöliitto 2017 • CC-BY-4.0

Figure 2. FINSEX. Sexual attitudes of Finnish people.

Figures 3 and 4 show the percentages of men and women who “definitely think that women have every right to make sexual advances towards men.” In 1971, the percentage of men was 72, and for women, it was 54, while in 2015, that number for men was 80, and for women, it was 73.

Ehdottomasti sitä mieltä, että naisilla on täysi oikeus tehdä seksuaalisia aloitteita miehille MIEHET



FINSEX/Osmo Kontula

Väestöliitto 2017 • CC-BY-4.0

Figure 3. FINSEX. Sexual attitudes of Finnish people.

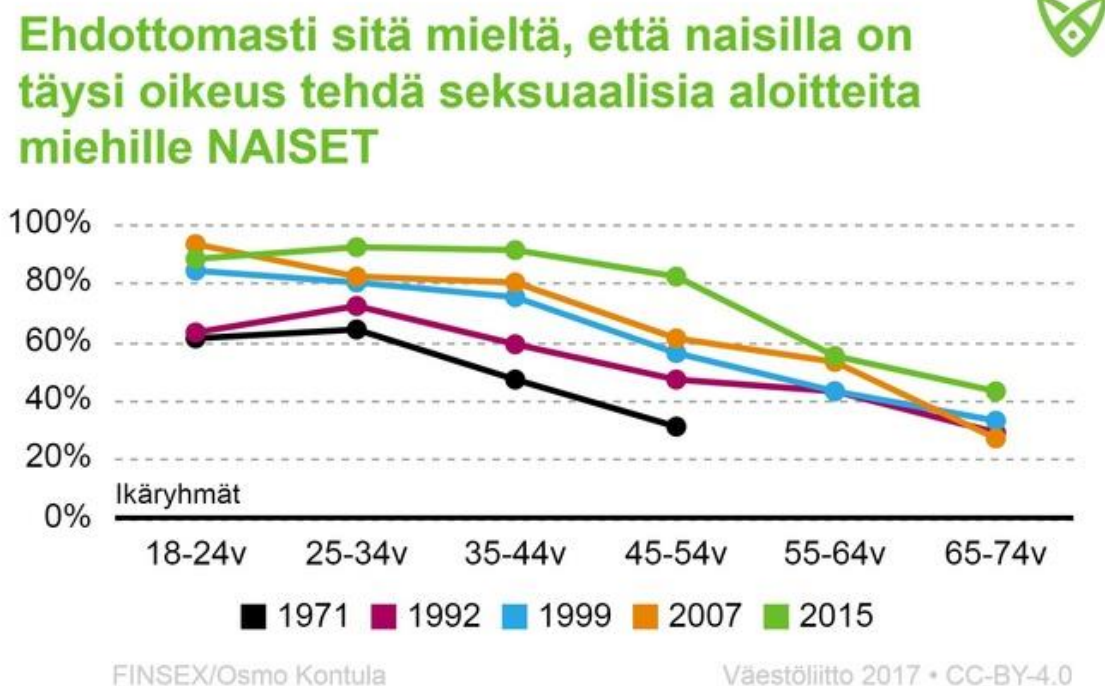


Figure 4. FINSEX. Sexual attitudes of Finnish people.

Another research question was what Finnish men and women find perverse in sexual relations. These are different sexual acts, orientations, and materials. Figure 5 shows the percentage of men who find BDSM, sex in a public place, group sex, homosexuality, anal sex, free sex, pornography, oral sex and the use of sex toys as perverse. Figure 6 shows the results for women.

Pitää sukupuoliasioissa perverssinä tai sairaana MIEHET (%)

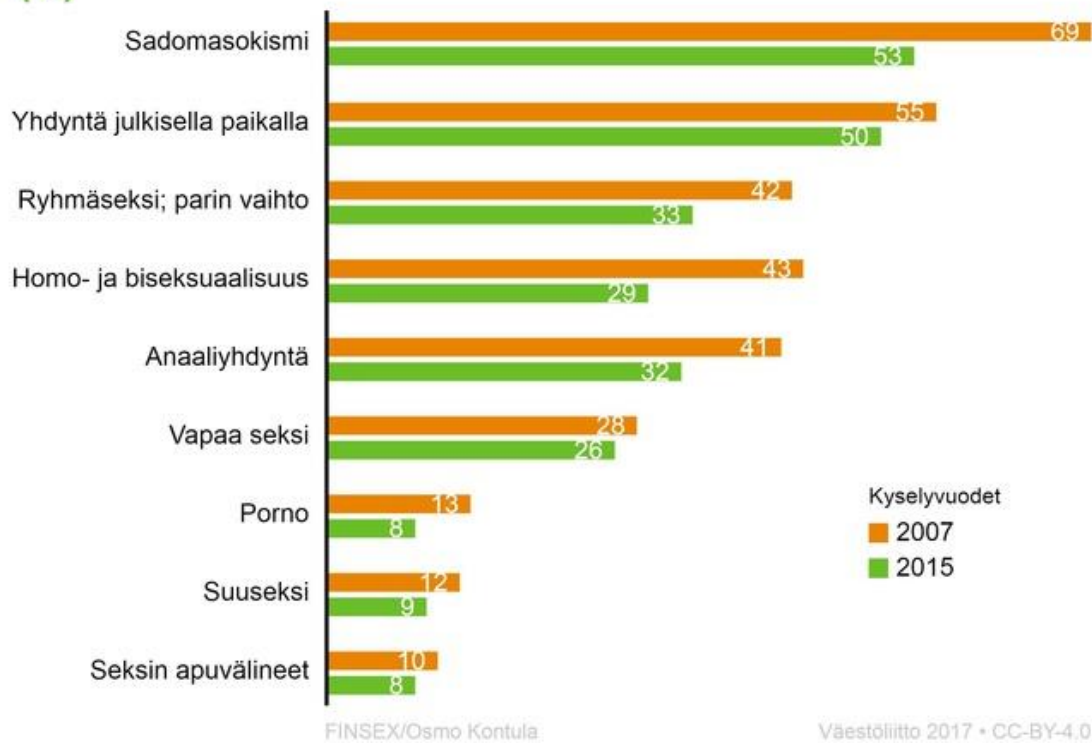


Figure 5. FINSEX. Sexual attitudes of Finnish people.

Pitää sukupuoliasioissa perverssinä tai sairaana NAISET (%)

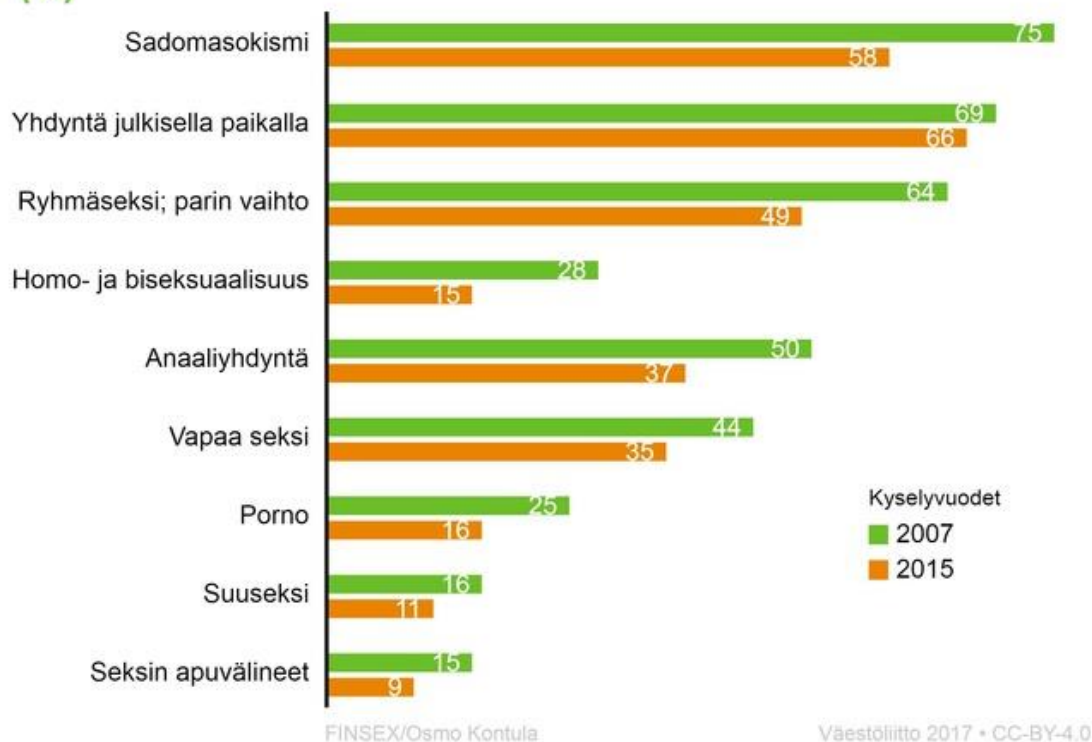
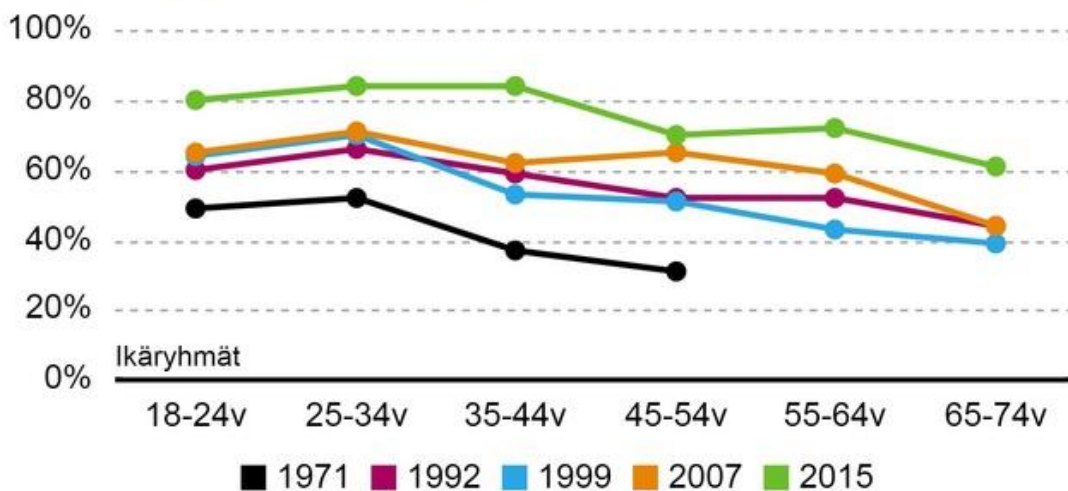


Figure 6. FINSEX. Sexual attitudes of Finnish people.

The acceptance of same-sex relationships has seen a substantial change since 1971. In 2015, 74% of men and 84% of women accepted same-sex relationships, while in 1971, the number for men was 44% and for women 45%. Figure 7 shows the results for men and figure 8 for women.

Hyväksyy homoseksuaalisen käyttäytymisen yksityisasiaksi MIEHET



FINSEX/Osmo Kontula

Väestöliitto 2017 • CC-BY-4.0

Figure 7. FINSEX. Sexual attitudes of Finnish people.

Hyväksyy homoseksuaalisen käyttäytymisen yksityisasiaksi NAISET

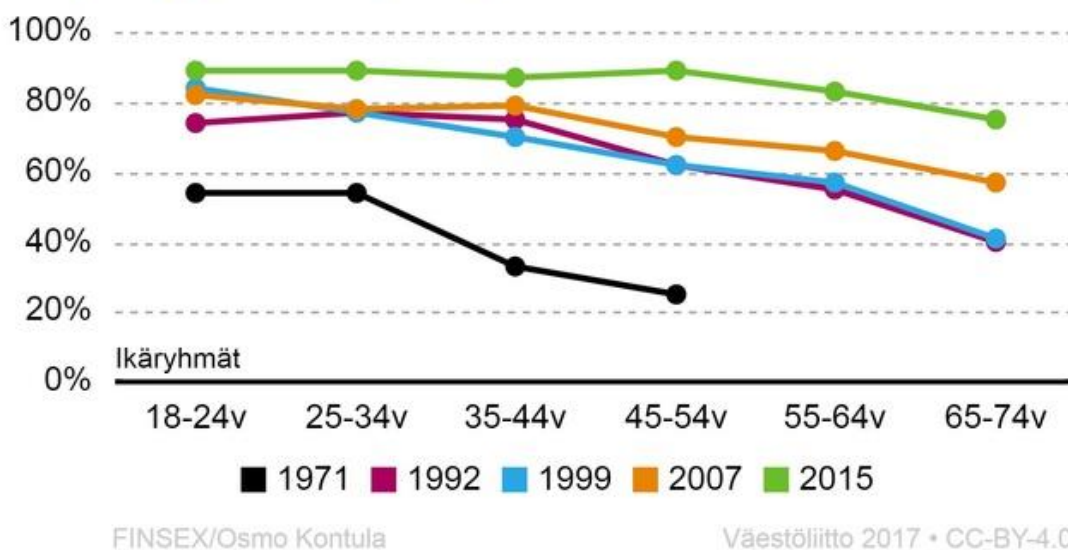


Figure 8. FINSEX. Sexual attitudes of Finnish people.

Regarding abortion attitudes, in 2015, 71% of men and 73% of women declared to accept free abortion; the number in 1992 was 52% for men and 53% for women.

(FINSEX, 2017)

3.2.1 Attitude analysis

There has been a clear shift toward more liberal sexual attitudes in the Finnish population, with the younger population adopting more liberal views quicker than the rest. This is seen in the acceptance of sexual relations without love, the acceptance of same-sex relationships, and the acceptance of the right of women to make sexual advances. The statistics also show that attitudes regarding sexuality and pleasure are becoming more acceptable in all ages.

Regarding how to market and to whom, liberal attitudes on sexuality will guide what kind of content, information, messages, and tone should be promoted. These attitudes are a mix of cognitive, affective, or behavioral aspects regarding sexuality.

To whom, the answer is the more liberal age group. Since sex and sexuality have always been taboo, one could assume that the more liberal and positive attitudes are regarding sexuality, the more an individual will be motivated to learn or receive messages that support their views.

3.3 Storytelling examples

There are countless examples of storytelling in business, which have been presented in images, texts, and video content. While the stories are told in these examples, it is worthwhile to mention that storytelling is a holistic process that connects a brand's mission, communications, competitive advantage, and customer experiences to create content based on storytelling.' These are individual examples of a more extensive, long-term storytelling process as a marketing strategy.

The following examples have been taken from a visual content company's website, Top-Lead (2024), which lists business story examples in a blog post.

3.3.1 Hinge- Dating Apocalypse

Hinge is a dating app for smartphones that released a short visual story about the current dating world, which is infested by dating apps that kill the joy of meeting new people. To put context to the story, dating apps have been part of popular culture for about a decade, and with it, dating has become un-personal, superficial, and riddled with phenomena like "ghosting," which is the action of ignoring a person after messaging them or one-night stands. It has become widespread for people to meet through dating apps, so this is a situation that many have experienced and can relate to.

The story is about a man who wanders to a carnival called "Date-o-apocalypse" while scrolling his phone using a dating app. When he enters the carnival, the people there symbolize the people using dating apps, which seem lost, grey, and without energy. The environment is bright, and there are attractions like the "Cycle of Loneliness," "Catch a Catfish," "The One Nighter," and "Hall of Filters." These attractions depict real-life phenomena that often happen in the dating world. This environment seems fake, and the people roaming are seemingly in a gloomy trance that has sucked the joy out of them.

The main character slowly realizes that the dating environment is unhealthy for him and others and stumbles upon a door with the Hinge logo on it. As he enters, the environment changes completely, from a bright but gloomy carnival to a sun-kissed park that shows many happy couples having fun dates. The main character comes across a woman and tries to swipe, symbolizing he likes her, but there is no way he can swipe right. The woman instead takes his hand, and they go for a walk together. The story ends, and a mobile phone with the hinge logo is displayed with text that says, “Escape the games. Find something real.”

This story proposes that Hinge is different from other dating apps not by displaying the product's attributes but by telling a story that anyone who has used dating apps can relate to. The story revolves around a main character and his journey from the known, which is not desirable, to the unknown, which is a desirable outcome. This outcome comes by discovering Hinge.

(Hinge, 2024)



Image 1. Hinge. Date-o-Pocalypse

3.3.2 Nike- Just do it

A great example of storytelling is Nike's marketing efforts. Nike has been a world-renowned brand for over half a century, and part of its business success was how it marketed its brand. Anyone who recognizes Nike might instinctively associate them with elite athletes, sports, and “cool” garments. In the 1980s, Nike started


investing heavily in marketing by sponsoring athletes and creating memorable ads that propelled its known brand, with its motto “Just do it,” to a world level.

They have used a long-term strategy of creating stories that link Nike with the sports culture, so much so that they are almost inseparable. The first time the motto “Just do it “ was in the year 1988, (Nike. 1988).

This commercial stars a 80 year old man running at the dusk of dawn the mythical San Fransisco Golden Gate Bridge. This short but very memorable commercial shows the man telling the audience he runs 17 miles every morning. He then adds that people ask him how he keeps his teeth from chattering in the winter. He answers, “ I leave them at home”. The screen turns black and the motto “ Just do It” is displayed, followed by the Nike logo.

This is a prime example of how storytelling has been used to connect the consumer to an experience, which is doing sports and empowering them on their journey. Not only that, but it also shows that Nike users are tenacious and ready for any challenge. Nike has added personality attributes to their products by telling the stories of their consumers. Again, in this examples, it is the stories of the users that are being told, not the product, service neither the company. The company is just a side element.

(Nike, 1988)



Just do it.

Image 2. Nike. Just do It commercial.

3.3.3 Patagonia- Fashion is none of our business

Patagonia is a company that retails outdoor garments designed to last and endure extreme weather, like the weather in Patagonia. Compared to other outdoor garment retailers like North Face, Patagonia is committed to an environmentally sustainable business model, which applies to its value chain. This commitment is something Patagonia has been doing since the 1980s, which was revolutionary in the era of infinite growth. Their concrete actions can be found in their website.

This commitment to being environmentally sustainable in one of the most polluting industries is what they use as storytelling material, alongside stories of athletes and adventurers using Patagonia gear on their journey through wild, untamed nature.

In 2024, Patagonia launched a commercial that is an excellent example of storytelling. The title is “Fashion is none of our business.” In this commercial, the story of Patagonia is told by the founder, Yvon Chouinard, by stating that “fashion is none of our business,” followed by telling the story of Patagonia, which started by selling climbing gear in the 70s.

They acknowledge that the clothing industry is highly polluting and that because they are in it, they can “clean it up”. The imagery depicts industrial pollution, a beach full of clothes, and people buying fast fashion. They then change the video's tone by stating, “So what does a quality rain jacket have to do with saving the planet? It means you have to buy fewer of them.”

Here, the story is Patagonia's commitment to being environmentally sustainable. They then finish the commercial by saying “We are in the business of saving the planet. Fashion has nothing to do with it”

In this example, the story is the brand's mission, accompanied by its founding and its vision. The commercial can be found on their website and in YouTube as “Patagonia Unfashionable”

(Patagonia, 2024)

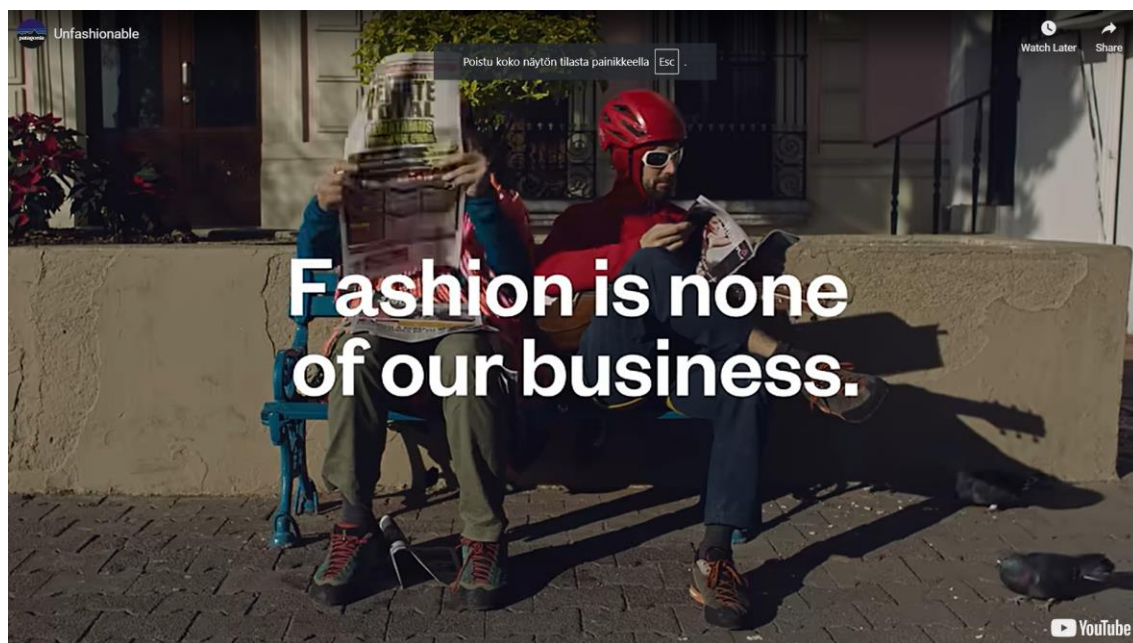


Image 3. Patagonia. Unfashionable.

4 MARKETING STRATEGY

A marketing strategy is an overall approach that uses the abovementioned theory and research to make the most suitable recommendations. This strategy is the basis for devising a marketing plan.

The strategy utilizes social psychology to understand the target audience's social and environmental context and attitudinal and behavioral theories to devise a strategy to influence these attitudes in the target audience. Then, utilizing branding and storytelling, the above-mentioned theories are blended to create content that connects and drives action in viewers,

4.1 Objective and Goal

The objective is to create a strong brand awareness and presence in Finland, accompanied by a successful launch, and attract and retain new users every month for the first year. The strategy is a framework that can be tweaked and changed according to the marketing plan results.

Goals for the first year:

-Establish a strong brand presence in all social media channels selected in this strategy. All the channels are up and running by the end of the year, offering different content and a Discord chat channel from which people can discuss topics.

-The goals for a successful launch (first month) are 2500 followers on Instagram, 10,000 visits to the website, and 1500 new users on the platform.

-For the year, followers, users, and consumers should rise steadily in all channels by 15% monthly.

4.2 Customer segment

The customer segment for this strategy is the following:

Young adult women from the age of 20 to 35 years old live in the top 5 most prominent cities of Finland. These cities are Helsinki, Vantaa, Espoo, Tampere

and Turku. This age group is the ideal customer segment since the research analyzed shows that people in that age group, specifically women have the most liberal attitude towards sexuality. The other reason why women are chosen is because they tend to be the sex who bring up sexuality and sex life with their close friends and partners. This increases the chance of active advocacy. Also, most of the competition have women as their customer segment, it would be wise to follow this trend since it tells that women are the main customers of this kind of services.

This customer segment is also either in a relationship or actively dating. Single people are also targeted. The locations of our target segments are urban and suburban. Most of the people in bigger cities utilize public transportation, socialize in bars and restaurant, parks in the summer. This customer group utilizes social media daily, consume music and podcast through streaming channels and socialize during the week day since distances are shorter in the cities.

4.3 Brand

This chapter defines SEXED's brand, which is part of this strategy. It consists of mission, values, personality, story, and emotions.

4.3.1 Mission and Values

SEXED's mission is to educate and empower people through their sexuality and quality education.

This mission is what the business model tries to offer to consumers. The creation of the platform and other offered content has this mission in mind when designing, creating, and developing further. Every step of the customer journey is designed in cooperation with the primary users in mind by interviewing, surveying, and developing with our customers and sexual health professionals.

(Aboulhosn, 2020)

SEXED values are encouraging, safe, authentic, and reliable.

We value fostering an encouraging attitude in our organization and, from there, want to encourage our customers to be themselves, explore their sexuality, and try new things.

We value safety above everything, creating safe spaces, safe content, and safe user data recollection. We know that sexuality and sexual education need safety to flourish to their full potential.

Authenticity as a value means being authentic to ourselves and our preferences, bodies, and context. It is reflected in how we operate in every step, remaining authentic and transparent to our mission.

Reliability in what we do means that our content and platform are based on scientific research and professionals, so all information our customers find is 100% fact-checked and safe.

(Matthew, 2022)

4.3.2 Personality

The brand's personality and voice guide the voice used to communicate with external stakeholders and help marketers create brand perception and increase brand equity (Tarver, 2024).

The brand's personality and voice are based on what brings empowerment, safety, and reliability. Because sexuality is a sensitive topic, the brand should try to be associated with these feelings in its customers and viewers.

The two leading personalities are Excitement and Sincerity. The secondary personality traits are Courage, Authenticity, Confidence, Listening, Good communication, and Empathy.

These traits will be communicated through published content, marketing campaigns, events, and podcasts. All internal stakeholders should understand this, and internal operations and communications should reflect these personality traits and the values mentioned above.

4.3.3 Universal truth and emotions

The universal truths that SEXED connects to and that people can relate to come from sexual experiences, individual and shared. Sexual experiences are not always physical; they might be cognitive, like receiving information or a particular bias towards one's sexuality or of others; it can be a movie that depicts sexual

acts, or it can be in a classroom or watching the news. Most certainly, sexual activities activities are effective.

These truths are to be used as emotions felt in stories since they relate to sexuality. The following are universal truths, experiences the customer segment can relate to, and the emotions associated with these experiences. People might feel positive and negative emotions when living out these experiences or seeing content that shows these experiences.

Every individual has had their first time when they explored their body, pleasuring themselves, experiencing different touch and sensorial responses.

There is a sense of vulnerability, excitement, and individual empowerment. Every person is curious about pregnancy and sex. Almost everyone has felt excitement. Everyone has been educated somehow sexually, either in school or at home. These experiences are essential and a natural part of the human experience. The truths of experiencing vulnerability, experiencing empowerment through our own body, experiencing curiosity, and excitement.

On the other hand, negative universal truths can also be related to. If brought to the forefront of stories, they should be in a different emotional setting and context than the past negative experience.

This experience consists of first sexual encounters gone wrong, feeling shame and guilt with pleasure, and experiencing guilt when showing curiosity about one's sexuality. At school, there might be a very conservative sexual education teacher who does not let students ask questions about pleasure or sexual intercourse. Or maybe the media talks negatively about abortion and women's sexuality.

These experiences are individual and shared. They are shared and experienced with, e.g., a friend, romantic partner, siblings, parents, family members, school teacher, and neighbors. The environments can be at home, at school, outside, on a train, the clinic, basically all of the places one can talk, think, act receive sexual education, or have sexual experiences.

The media also plays a big role when it comes to sexuality since it presents these topics with set tones and biases.

These experiences are universal and can be communicated through content or blogs, but caution should be exercised when presenting these truths and stories. Content that tells these truths might evoke negative emotions and memories and be associated with the brand.

The positive emotions are Vulnerability, curiosity, excitement, safety, and empowerment.

The negative emotions are Shame, guilt, and repression.

4.4 Stories and Attitudes

The brand section mentioned above and the attitude and behavioral theory, paired with the research on companies, attitudes, and storytelling, will be the basis for storytelling. This chapter guides every marketing effort SEXED makes.

4.4.1 Attitudes

The literature presents attitude as a critical indicator of future behavior. The customer segment's attitude is more liberal and sex-positive than 40 years ago, with 18-35-year-olds being the most liberal. Sexuality encompasses many different topics, such as education, practices, beliefs about individual rights, prejudices against sexual minorities, etc.

The social cognitive theory demonstrates this interplay of personal, behavioral, and social environment factors, in which individual attitudes affect behaviors, people's behaviors affect us, and the social context gives individuals the space and a set of rules for what is socially acceptable.

In this case, personal and social/environmental factors are critical to storytelling. Because sexuality is very much a personal phenomenon, an attitude, a feeling, something that is also guided very much by the sociopolitical context of the individual, self-efficacy and vicarious learning are concepts that help to understand how to influence people to trust and use sexual education of SEXED.

Self-efficacy is an individual's perception of their own capabilities and skills to complete a specific behavior. As we saw in Chapter 2.2.2, Vicarious learning is observational learning. For this strategy, modeling will be the main method of inducing learning of certain behaviors and influencing attempts on people's self-efficacy regarding sexual education and sexuality. Modeling can be used to create circumstances in which people face difficult situations, and a solution is presented, which only in the end is shown to be part of suitable sexual education.

Self-efficacy, the importance of sexual education, and situations in which sexuality comes to the forefront can be modeled. Another essential element is the attributes of the models used; in this case, it would be most suitable to be of the same age as our customer segment. When clicking on an ad or link, messages should be authentic and contain reliable information. Also, individuals will be more motivated to learn and observe positive and worthwhile content.

These are helpful factors to consider since this increases the chance of people actually receiving and processing the content positively and taking action.

4.4.2 Storytelling

Vulnerability, Empowerment, Curiosity, Excitement, and Safety are the values of SEXED, and we want to create these emotions with the SEXED experience. These values will also be included in every story.

The story topics surround our brand mission to educate and empower people through their sexuality and quality education. We want to provide this core to everyone who uses our services. Different stories might show these values in different ways, but these are to be the core of the stories.

The current sexual attitude of Finnish people also gives a framework for what can be talked about and presented in a viewable format. Since Finnish people, especially the customer segment of 18-35 years old, are becoming more and more liberal, a great array of topics and subjects can be used as story material. To stand out, it is important to understand that SEXED is based on quality education and empowerment of people and the belief that this can bring joy to people. Some topics are bound to be political, and so they should be neutral; in this case, it is

to imprison the brand to be boring and nothing new. There is much terrain to experiment with topics and content.

The stories also have different goals: the first is to start creating brand awareness and perception; the second is to generate interest and motivation to consume SEXED content and, finally, to subscribe to the platform.

These are the goals for the time being until a change of strategy is necessary according to the results.

Story structures vary depending on the content's goal, but one essential element for story creation is understanding that sexuality is full of individual and shared stories of vulnerability, empowerment, and curiosity.

Examples of story structures:

1. Monomyth:

In this structure, the Hero is the person having a sexual experience. The stories can start by presenting the characters and context in which they are; as the story develops, different types of sexual experiences, in which good sexual education and pleasure knowledge can make a huge difference, are presented slowly and intimately. For example, a couple having a difficult conversation about sex, an individual stressed out by their own body, maybe about diseases, a woman having doubts about their period, a man interested in the pleasure of their partner, sexual minorities searching for quality sexual education dedicated to them.

These examples can be shown in stories of normal day-to-day events, which people might relate to, in which, with a small effort, they can achieve the “desired” outcome: feeling safe and empowered by their knowledge and skills about sexuality.

Messages can encourage us to use the power of our experiences to care for ourselves and our loved ones by educating ourselves through SEXED.

2. Sparkliness:

This structure focuses on “what is” and “what could be,” which is seen in the example of chapter 3.3.1, Hinge – Date-o-apocalypse. For SEXED, this can be shown by showing contrasts of the possibilities of outcomes, which turn

positive with SEXED but are always shown as individual achievements, not SEXEDs. For example, a couple having a conversation about pleasure but not knowing how to, but it could have turned out well with the help of SEXED, which has information for couples that want to have intimate and encouraging conversations about sex.

These are only examples of stories; the story structure depends on the outcomes of barnstorming sessions. This part involves going through the brand mission, values, personality, and voice to understand the tools used to build the story.

The channels dictate what kind of content is most suitable and in what format. The next chapter will elaborate on this.

A mix of cognitive and affective persuasive techniques should be used within stories told. Cognitive techniques include varying the strength of the arguments used, whether to use statistics as an incentive for attitude change, e.g., do I need sexual education, or a more straightforward argument with the source of the message used being someone with perceived expertise, e.g., a doctor, or a very attractive person. The idea is to create positive cognitive responses that sexual education is good and that this attitude is viewed positively.

Affective techniques are learned through conditioning and exposure to the content and stimuli, such as emotions evoked through stories. This helps to influence the affective contents of a certain attitude, in this case, sexuality and sexual education. This is why it is important to carefully test and see what kind of emotional reaction every content provokes.

Since these are persuasive techniques, ethicality, and trustworthiness should guide content creation. The idea is to tell the authentic story of the SEXEDs brand, not lies or invented facts.

4.5 Creative Process

An excellent framework to start working and creating marketing content, with storytelling as the guiding principle, is the Design Thinking Process. The five stages of Design Thinking are:

1. Empathize
2. Define
3. Ideate
4. Prototype
5. Test

For a more accurate description of the process, please see references.
(Dam, 2024)

4.6 Channels

The following are channels that are to be used as marketing channels. Each channel has a content format that is most suitable for it.

These channels have been chosen since they all build on each other and have great storytelling potential.

All the channels are targeted to our customer segment, except our website, which will be used to market B2B cooperation and funding. These channels were selected because of the potential they have to share content through which SEXED brands stories are told.

4.6.1 Instagram

This channel is one of the most popular social media channels. The content format can be played with since there are so many ways of presenting content. SEXED should create a recognizable page and post regularly. The post formats vary; there are reels, which can be vertical videos of 30 seconds to 30 minutes, carousels that can contain up to 10 pictures/videos, and single posts with only one picture/video.

Here, the focus should be on creating different kinds of content, like reels of the content found on the platform, or maybe interviews with consumers, a carousel with 5 informative slides about STDs, and promotional advertisements in the format of pictures or videos.

KPI's: Followers, comments and likes, shares and visitors to the website.

Instagram is also a good channel for interacting with consumers since it lets people like, comment on, and share SEXED's content. This should also be leveraged by, for example, organizing a live IG every month about a specific topic.

4.6.2 Website/platform

As a channel, the website should be used to describe the platform in more detail, along with content relevant to the users and the SEXED brand. For example, a blog/article page on which longer texts are to be shared about everything related to sexuality and sexual education. This channel's use is more straightforward; since it is our service, it should be straightforward and detailed regarding what we are offering, to whom, why, and our mission and vision.

SEO strategy should be implemented for the website.

KPI's: Organic traffic, Average session duration, keyword ranking and conversion rate.

4.6.3 Traditional marketing

Posters and flyers should also be used as marketing channels in different areas of our customer segment locations, like bus stations around universities, bars, and parks. A place where our customer segment would concur. This content should focus on short messages and strong, symbolic images accompanied by QR codes to our website/platform.

KPI: Conversion rate of the QR Link

4.6.4 Podcast

In this channel, a good idea would be to use the experience value people can give when it comes to stories and emotions, specifically sexuality and sexual education. The podcast should be more light and freely evolving than our other channels.

A good idea for this channel would be to create a podcast in which hosts talk about sexuality, identity, and sexual education either with each other or with special guests, like a sex therapist.

Podcasts should be published on Spotify since it is the most popular streaming platform.

KPI's: Followers, shares, Conversion rate to other channels.

4.7 Testing

The testing phase is necessary for the strategy since storytelling can go wrong. A good rule of thumb is always to create a test group with people outside the organization to see how they react to content. This is especially true with paid ads or more elaborate story videos, in which the emotion evoked is crucial to success.

These tests should also be done on a more general spectrum every 3 months to see how brand perception and equity evolve. These can be done with questionnaires and surveys of our customers.

5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this thesis found a way to use storytelling as a marketing strategy, using extensive social psychology literature to build upon brand storytelling

The research showed a good picture of the sexual education market competition and what can be used to separate the organizations to compete.

The analysis of Finnish sexual attitudes gave guidelines on the attitudinal environment that the organization is working with.

Storytelling is being used as a marketing strategy by big companies, but its effects have not been researched. It is difficult to research how storytelling affect the consumers attitudes and behaviors towards a brand, which is the biggest limitation of this thesis, concrete research regarding the effects of storytelling in consumers.

The final strategy focuses intensely on people's shared experiences and the story value behind them while creating guidelines that should be followed to be effective and cohesive with storytelling content.

The implications of this paper could give SMEs and companies a look into what storytelling would look like as a marketing strategy and what should be considered when creating such a strategy. The contribution to the business community can be seen as an exciting and working strategy to include in their current marketing strategy.

The limitations of this paper come from the research. To truly understand how specific stories influence people, extensive surveys and tests should be done, surveys and tests that are not presented in this paper. It is also challenging to accurately define the general population's current attitudes, but social psychology helps to understand how people interact with the world and how they build attitudes.

Future research should be focused on how storytelling affects customers compared to other marketing strategies to test whether storytelling is truly effective.

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