

Your brand should be telling Stories

By  Babalwa Nyembezi

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Instagram has launched a "poll" feature that allows users to add a poll to their Instagram Stories. This is great news for brands, particularly South African brands, who have approached the idea of Stories on social media platforms quite tentatively.



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It's been just over a year since Instagram launched its "Stories" feature, which is basically Snapchat through Instagram. Since then, we've seen Zuckerberg add Stories to both Facebook and WhatsApp. The feature allows users to snap moments throughout the day and build a story that disappears after 24 hours. It's a great content opportunity for brands to play with, and try out new ways of sharing their brand purpose or story.

It's estimated that there are over 250 million people who use Instagram Stories daily (versus +/- 173 million on Snapchat). That's a massive group of people sharing moments from their day on the platform throughout the day. The instant nature of Instagram Stories and the 24-hour lifespan of content loaded to the platform is what may have initially put marketers off adopting the platform to share brand content, however with a growing number of Instagram users taking to the platform – it's probably a great idea to stop putting off the inevitable and get creative with how your brand can use Instagram Stories. Also, once you start, you realise that making and watching stories is addictive! Which means that if the content you make is compelling – you're bound to win over the hearts of your audience.

Instagram Stories vs Snapchat

When Instagram launched its Stories feature a year ago, I had a debate with some industry colleagues about the pros and cons of Instagram Stories versus Snapchat. Snapchat wasn't very advertiser friendly, and the stats regarding widespread adoption of the platform in South Africa didn't look great. Older colleagues also admitted that the platform seemed too "clunky" and thus difficult to navigate. The only real appeal of Snapchat, at the time, was the fun filters – which I will never tire of – but not everyone is like me and there's only so much that brands can do with filters. Snapchat's Ad Manager platform was only launched in March this year and isn't the easiest to navigate while brands can advertise on Instagram through Facebook's Ads platform, which is familiar and easy to navigate. It's safe to say that Instagram Stories has long since surpassed Snapchat and that debate is now futile because the benefits of Stories via Facebook's platforms (Instagram and Facebook) are obvious: the Live streaming feature, Boomerang, your brands stories will most likely reach a wider audience and now, Instagram polls.



Snapchat vs Instagram stories

Anne Dolinschek 13 Jan 2017



We know that authenticity sells, and using Stories provides an opportunity for brands to create authentic content that appeals to their audiences. I think that the debate has moved from which of the two platforms your brand should be using to reach your audience (unless you're marketing to Gen Z) to how can your brand use Stories effectively to get the best ROI? Below I've shared some of the best examples of brands using Stories in innovative, fun, and affordable ways to reach audiences with great content. I'm a sucker for a good story and for great content so here goes:

Exclusive content

Woolies does this really well, they give their followers exclusive access to closed events and launches that they are hosting. Which means that they use the Stories feature to post content that wouldn't normally work as well in a Facebook or Instagram video. The great thing about Stories is that you can upload as much content as you want, and the people watching the story can opt out when they want to. If the story that you're telling is compelling enough, and shows off all the right elements of the event you're hosting – best believe people will want to watch until the end. Wishing the whole time that they could be at your event.

Another example of great exclusive content that does well on Stories, is behind-the-scenes content that gives your audience a peek into what's happening as you prepare for a shoot, a launch or get ready to open up a new store etc. Zana, a small Cape Town brand that produces textiles and homeware, are a great example of how to have fun with stories – and convey what your brand is about to the people who engage with your stories. When they travelled to New York City, we could follow every step of the brand's journey to the Big Apple, and keep up with every exciting aspect of the trip!

Other small businesses also use WhatsApp Stories to share daily specials, new products that they're working on to entice potential customers to reach out via WhatsApp to place their orders.

Countdown

When was the last time you did a countdown to something you were looking forward to? I've been counting down to my upcoming summer holiday and the anticipation is making me giddy with excitement! Countdowns are always fun, and when done right your brand could entice your audience ahead of an upcoming product launch. You can build up hype around a special day and peak your followers' interest. Your audience will be eager to find out more and more, and by the time the big day rolls around, you'll have an audience lined up and ready to buy tickets for your event or buy your new product. Zana does a great countdown to launches of upcoming products.

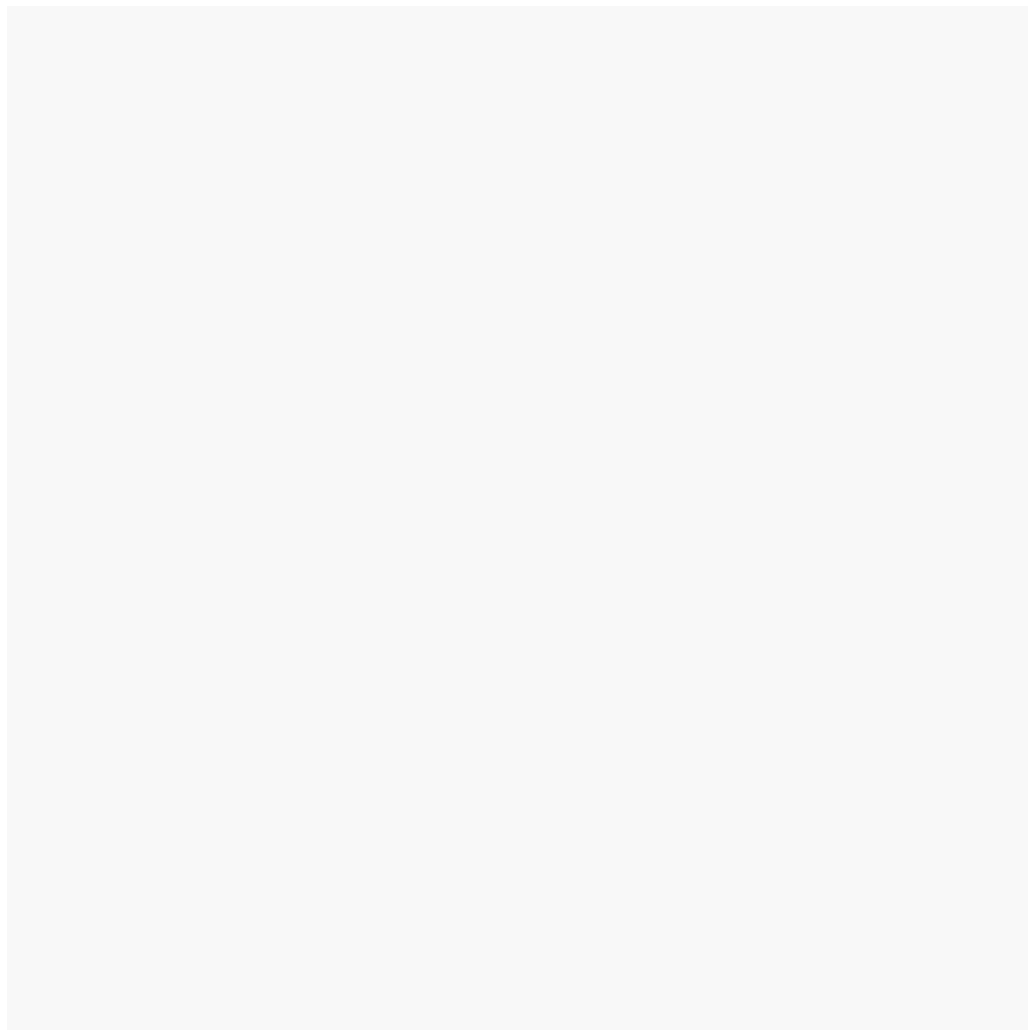
Live stream

Instagram Stories has many fun features that allow users (and brands) to play with the app and make interesting, vibe content. The Instagram Live stream feature is one of these, it allows you to livestream an event, and give your followers a front row seat to what's happening at the event. Live streaming became popular first on Meerkat, and then with Twitter's Periscope feature. Vertical videos blew up then and are all the rage now, with Instagram Stories and Snapchat as prime examples of this. You can use the Instagram Live feature to tease followers to join a Facebook Live or a live stream hosted on your website or Twitter page. Cross promoting content via Stories is a great way to tease an event and build up anticipation and viewership for another platform where you might not have such a large following.

Polls

If your brand is on Instagram, then you should be pretty excited to trial the new Poll feature on Instagram Stories. The feature is available through the Instagram stickers section, you select "Poll" and it'll add the poll to your photo or video. The poll only has space for two choices, which you can both edit. The polls are meant to be in a "x or y" format, choosing one or the other. You can then edit and personalise the question and the options. You should be able to have some fun with this feature, you can also find out what your followers' preferences are based on their responses. If you own a bakery for example, you can ask if your followers prefer croissants or cream buns – and a myriad of other easy questions that will engage your audience and allow them to have fun with your brand! Doritos' latest #BringTheBold campaign, where they asked the community to choose between two flavours, would have been ideal for trialing Instagram's new poll feature.

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» [Full version & results in my story! Comment "💎💎" if you voted! #igstorypolls #storypolls #poll #instagrampolls #storygames #stories #fun #games](#)

A post shared by 💎💎 Instagram Story Polls (@igstorypolls) on Oct 4, 2017 at 2:49pm PDT

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Have you tried Instagram or Facebook Stories on your brand's page? Do you have any key learning's that you're keen to share about how brands can better tell their brand story using Stories? I'd love to hear from you.

ABOUT BABALWA NYEMBEZI

Babalwa is a Rhodes University-trained journalist turned storyteller who believes that social media has the potential to change the world as we know it. She is an award-winning Social Media Consultant who has worked on brands including Coca-Cola, Vodacom, Uber, Lead SA and currently is the lead Senior Social Consultant for Standard Bank campaigns at VML. Connect and engage with her on Twitter: @babs_nyembezi.

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