Storytelling

What is Storytelling?

Designers use storytelling to get insight into users, build empathy and reach them emotionally. Designers create personas to represent target users and add conflict to stories that reflect their user journeys and problems. Crafting stories, designers can better understand what users want from a solution.

How Storytelling Works in Design:

Good stories always captivate audiences. In user experience (UX) design, you use storytelling throughout the design process to ensure that all work focuses on the users' needs and the value you want to give those users. After completing design research to understand your users' needs and desires, you use your insights to tell a story about who your users are, what they need and how you'll provide that. This story makes it easy for everyone involved in the project to empathize with the users and ensure that their work matches the story. Having a story throughout your project means marketing the design at the end of the design process is also straightforward, as you already know exactly which story to tell to show how your product provides value.

"People think that stories are shaped by people. In fact, it's the other way around."

—Terry Pratchett, Famous fantasy author

What Makes Good Stories?

Aristotle's 7 Elements of Good Storytelling

Dialogue	Décor	Melody	Spectacle

Theme
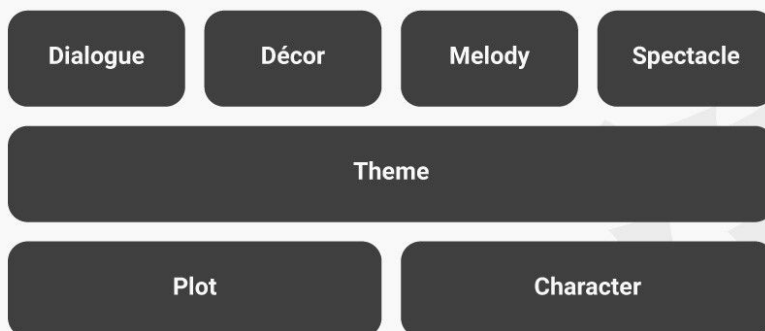
Plot	Character

The renowned philosopher Aristotle wrote extensively on storytelling. His formula is a checklist for what your stories should contain.

1. **Plot** – *What* are users trying to *achieve/overcome*?
2. **Character** – *Who* are the users: not just demographically, but *what insights* do you need to understand what they (and their needs) are *truly* like?
3. **Theme** – *How* can you establish a *trustworthy presence* to them and still set yourself apart from competitors? *How* will you reflect the overall obstacles users must overcome?
4. **Dialogue/Diction** – *What* will your design *say* to users and *how*? Does a formal/informal tone match their expectations? How much text is appropriate?
5. **Melody** – *How* will the overall *design pattern* appear *pleasant and predictable* to users, *moving* them emotionally?
6. **Décor** – *How* will you *present* everything so the graphics match the *setting* the users can sense? Would a classic design or stylized, niche layout meet their expectations?
7. **Spectacle** – *How* can you make your design *outstanding* so users will remember it?

How to Reach Users through Stories

You can use storytelling in your design process to present your user research results in an engaging way and create empathy with your target users. This will help you steer the design process and keep it user-centric. Here's what you can do:

1. **Define your target users with personas** – to envision users' likely experiences and gain empathic insights. Personas are based on user research but tell a story about your insights. An example persona might be "Rick", a 47-year-old manager struggling with his work–family-life balance. He even works on his train commutes. Feeling drained, he wants better control of his life.
2. **Create a plot, with conflict** – to make the personas heroes and envision how they can overcome specific problems using your design. Make this a mapped-out journey or storyboard with each persona's aim/s clearly defined. E.g.:

a. Rick discovers your (yet-to-be-designed) time-management app online. He downloads it and completes your questionnaire about work commitments, family, outgoings, etc.
b. He starts using your app, letting it collect data from his phone and fitness tracker about time on various tasks/activities, stress levels, alertness, etc.
c. After a week, your app charts his tasks and activities, including sleep, heart-rate data, etc.
d. Tapping a phone tab, Rick sees time-management suggestions on how to become more productive, well-rested, etc.
e. He has the option to continue or suspend monitoring (e.g., if on holiday/vacation).
3. **Give your design the supporting role** – show it improving your persona's/user's life and how easy it is to use. For example, consider how many steps Rick needs to use your app and if voice-controlled devices at home might influence its suggestions.

4. **Work with the setting** –When and where users use your design is vital for building empathy. For Rick, it's the home, train and workplace. But what about (e.g.) busy professionals working from home?
5. **Tailor the look/feel** – Your design's appearance is vital regardless of its functional benefits, so design the most appropriate (e.g.) layout, colors, typography. For example, Rick prioritizes an at-a-glance, easy-to-use design, but soothing colors would complement larger fonts, etc.

Always Consider

- **The What** – The user problem/s you define: E.g., They work too much overtime because of…? Budgeting problems at home?
- **The Who** – The users themselves, envisioned through personas. This includes people who play influential roles in the main user's/persona's story. You can identify them using customer journey maps.
- **The How** – Your story arc, with a beginning, middle and end. From introducing the player/s at the beginning, you build towards their biggest problems (which many factors can affect) and finish with the happy ending your design delivers.

Your story narratives are "magic mirrors"—proving fine-tuned empathy and connection with users' values—where users discover how to make their own happy endings.

Ultimately, **your design should predict your target users' actions at every level possible**. Testing will help confirm how successful it is.

Vaccine Hesitancy & Storytelling in Different Parts of India:

Vaccine hesitancy *(having doubts about the vaccine and its benefits that led to avoiding vaccination)* prevailed in many parts of India especially during the early stages of the vaccination drive. One can imagine the gravity of the situation in far-off places such as semi-rural and rural, tribal parts of India where the awareness is minimal, electronic communication is always a challenge. The situation became extremely complex when the matter was related to vaccine – the only life-saving weapon in fight against the pandemic. People having hesitation simply won't accept its benefits. In such situations, there was a need to understand the 'persona' of these citizens – their backgrounds, their ethnicity, their overall social behavior & then try to address the fears they had in terms of vaccines. Vaccination influencers latched on this & then the magic unleashed.

Usage of local dialect

Dr. Chandan Pimparkar, one of the doctors of the primary health centre adopted the usage of Korku – one of the endangered languages of the world and spoken by less than 6 lakh people,

while interacting with residents of Tembhrusonda village. The village is located on the periphery of Melghat tiger reserve in Maharashtra. The area is predominantly is a tribal belt. The villagers resonated with Dr.Chandan as if he was one of their own. Dr.Chandan also roped in local political leaders to lead awareness meetings and clear people's doubts regarding the vaccines.

Influencers, Local leaders interacting with villagers to quell myths.

Several videos were also uploaded on the Youtube channel owned by the Integrated Tribal Development Project in Korku language. Within a matter of time, the adoption of the vaccines improved & couple of villages in some blocks showed 100% vaccination rollout.

Similarly in Nasik district of Maharashtra , the district authority resorted to using local dialects to clear misconceptions about vaccines. CEO of the Zilla Parishad said that several audio-video clips in local dialects were made to drive home the point of vaccination.

Memes woo people for vaccination

In the northern part of India in Rajasthan, district administrators took help of social content creators & YouTubers to create content to illustrate the importance of vaccination. They created content in the local Wagdi language in forms of posters, catchy songs and even memes. That helped to bust the myths surrounding the vaccines.

An image depicting a couple asking folks to get themselves vaccinated.

Catchy rhyming messages such as *"Kaka Jaju, Kaki Jaju, vaccination Karvi Avju" (Kaka and Kaki please come for the vaccination)* became hit. A senior official said that people feared vaccination may cause impotency. Tribals usually resort to quacks & don't like outsiders. But communication in their own language helped a lot to quell doubts and they proved effective.

Folk Art comes to rescue

Cultural troupes across Goa and Maharashtra adopted to street plays in several districts of the states to increase the outreach and effectiveness of vaccination communication. That helped to find the resonance in local communities.

Performers go "vocal for local" for to use local languages to promote safe behaviours and remove vaccine hesitancy in Thane, Maharashtra

Folks artist addressing citizens to opt for vaccination.

WHO NPSP teams are providing support for capacity building of artistes performing street plays to address concerns and counter infodemics around vaccination in Thane

Folks artist interacting with a group of people.

The script revolved around latest information about the disease and vaccination details to address the concerns that fueled vaccine hesitancy. This advocacy initiative was run by the regional Outreach Bureau of Maharashtra and Goa falling under the IB Ministry of Government of India in collaboration with WHO Country office for India, UNICEF.

If we carefully see all the above stories, an important common element is the adoption of local language & only that language could have calmed an already anxious 'persona' who has half-baked information. Communication in local language, influencers dressed in local attire, doctors speaking in their dialect all matched with a typical 'cluster persona'. Folks felt someone from them was speaking & that quelled the hesitancy. So, only storytelling to drive home the point won't be that productive until the influencers deeply study & arrive at the persona/cluster-persona that they are trying to interact. Only then, the exercise of storytelling will yield aspired outcomes.