



“Penny Skateboards, since forever.”

A Customer Experience Reflection
By
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My interest and fascination with skateboarding started when I was around 9 years old and I got my first board when I was 11. However, I didn't get my first Penny Board until I was 17. I still remember the excitement of customizing my board and the anticipation I felt waiting for it! It has been, hands down one of the best purchases I have made in my life!

Penny's are everywhere, "from **Canberra to California**, it seems that any child who's worth a dime – or, penny, to be precise – is tearing around the neighbourhood on a Penny Skateboard".^[1] So why have Penny been so successful in resurrecting the plastic board and sparking an international skateboarding phenomenon? Just like any movement, it starts with a story.

About Penny

The story starts in 1970's Australia, with a 5-year-old **Ben Mackay** receiving his first skateboard. It was a small plastic board purchased by his father at a local garage sale. He, along with his father took the board apart and customized it, thus sparked the beginning of his love for the sport and the craft.



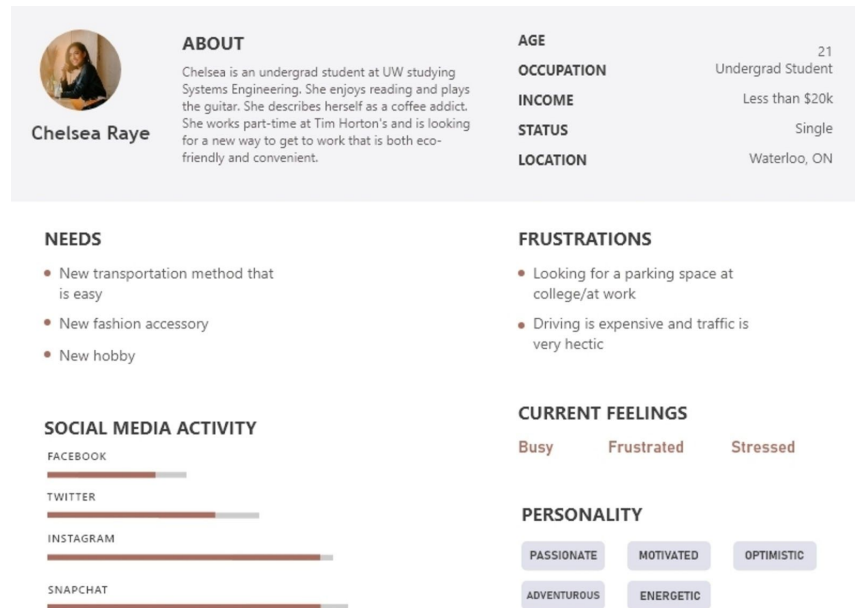
Over the course of his teenage years and into early adulthood, he began customizing his own boards, which ignited his passion and drive to make something out of this "hobby".

Fast forward to 2010, Mackay, now the owner of a small skateboard manufacturing company had noticed that there was a gap in the market for skateboards similar to the one his dad got him when he was 5. He wanted to bring that 70's style board but, with **improved durability, more speed and a super-responsive grip – all the while exuding fun**. He began experimenting with various plastics and prototypes before creating the plastic board known today as the 'Penny board'.



Purchasing the board - A Customer Journey

Every customer journey starts with a customer. So I have created a persona that represents a typical member of Penny's demographic.



Close-up Persona Image

Now that we have a persona it's time to document her journey and the perfect way to do that is using the Customer Journey Map.



Close-up Customer Journey Map



Why is Penny so Popular?

A. Skateboarding is for Everyone

For a while, skateboarding had been perceived as a male-only activity and it was quite difficult for anyone else to really get into the sport and the community. What makes Penny so special is the fact that it's just **all about fun**. Mackay has said, "**It's encouraging people who'd never even want to skate to skate without pressure.**" The primary reason Mackay founded Penny was to bring back the feeling he had when he got his first board in the hopes of making others feel the same way.

It is very obvious that they have been successful in introducing a whole new generation to skateboarding by making it fashionable and trendy. Needless to say, it is a very instagrammable accessory.

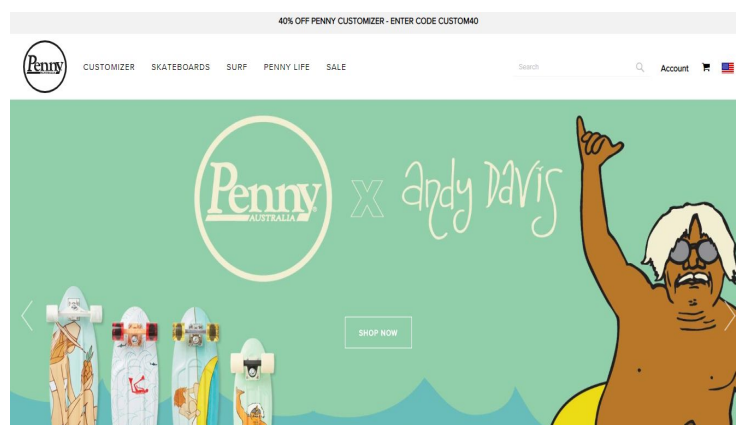
They also achieve this by collaborating with various creators, celebrities and even popular films like **Star Wars** and TV. Shows like **The Simpsons**. By doing this they increase their audience reach by capturing their attention with something that's already familiar.

B. Customer Engagement

Successful businesses and brands know how to interact with their customers effectively through different channels. Penny's main channels are their website and their Instagram account.

Website

Every business needs a website but successful businesses take that website and make it an experience. Because Penny Skateboards don't have brick-and-mortar locations the website must fulfil the needs not being met in that in that area. In my opinion, they



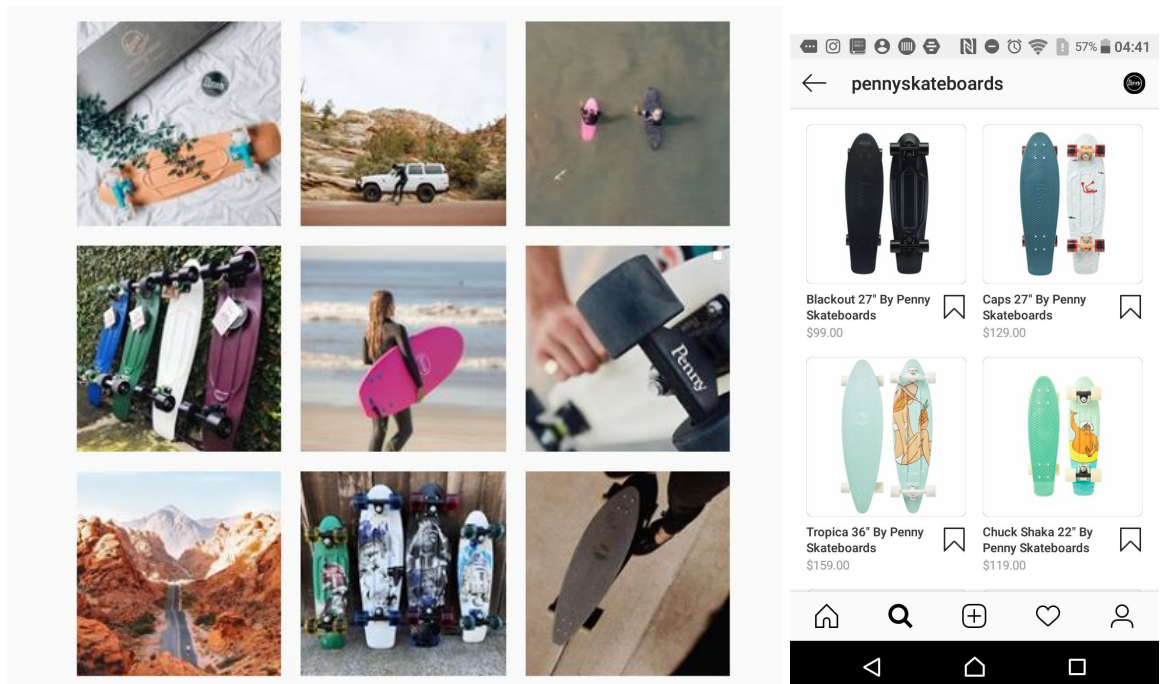
do a great job of doing that. From the online skateboard customizer to the Penny life blogs and videos you are getting fully immersed in the Penny culture. They also have



their Instagram feed available right there on the website to provide inspiration to its customers.

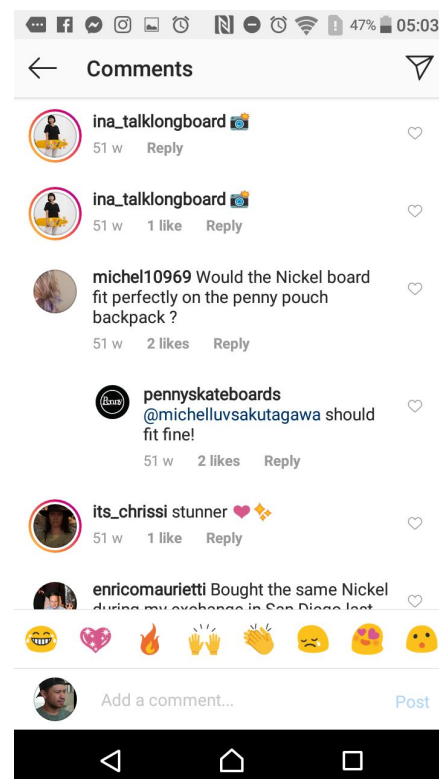
Instagram

Instagram is one of the most popular social media apps on the planet. Any smart Business would set up an active account. Thankfully for Penny, their product is perfect for Instagram and they really capitalize on that. Their feed is very aesthetic and is used to regularly advertise their new boards and introduce their followers to new creatives whether that be an artist, musician or photographer.



They make great use of the Instashop feature making it easier to shop while scrolling through their feed on Instagram. Penny really makes up for not having a physical location by making sure that they are very active on their social media. They regularly reply to comments and answer questions making their customers feel heard and valued.





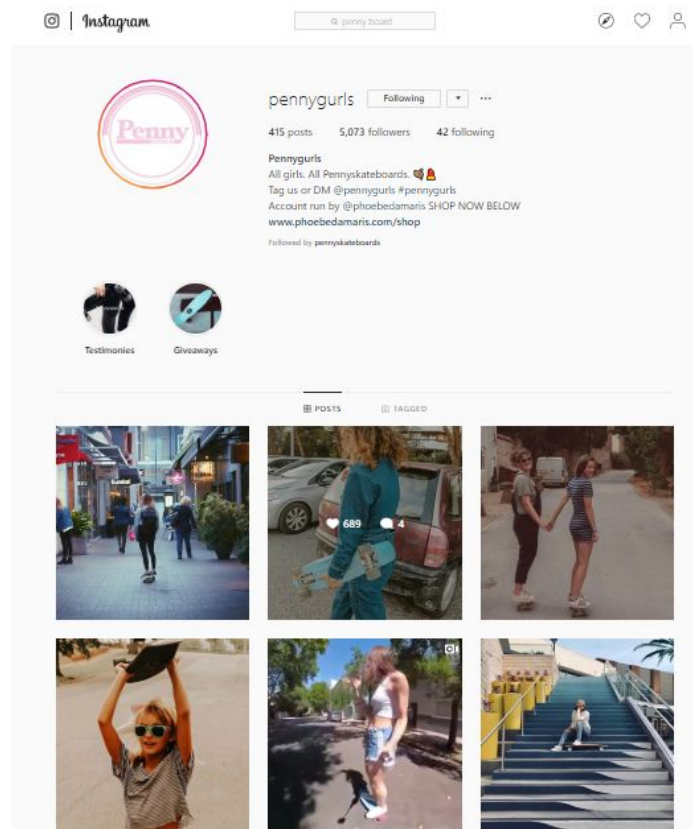
Some Instagram interactions



C. Individuality & Community

The great thing about Penny boards is the complete freedom you have in customizing your own Penny experience, especially the board. The 3D Customizer is the best feature on the website as you have complete control of the final outcome of **YOUR** board. The brand is all about individuality and expression which is something that is becoming increasingly popular especially among **Gen Z and millennials**. This notion of individuality doesn't just stop with the 3D Customizer, Penny also brings the same energy to their Instagram page.

They regularly feature their customers on their page. You don't have to be an Instagram influencer to get a spot on the page which is cool and encourages people to document their Penny travels. Their page is not just for advertising their products but they also encourage people to interact with each other creating a sense of community.



Here a screenshot of the Penny female skater community. It's a place for female skaters to showcase their talent and build a strong female community. The page was not started by Penny themselves but by one of their customers and it has garnered over 5k followers as well as support from Penny themselves.



Improvements

The reason Penny is doing so well is that they understand and listen to their target audience. When riders asked for bigger boards Penny went into manufacturing Longboards, which are now just as successful as their cruisers. They keep up with the trends and make sure that their riders feel good and look good while using their boards.

However, nothing is perfect, there is always room for improvement.

Physical Location

Penny actually has no in-store experience. They merely manufacture the boards and then distribute them to local skate/sports stores worldwide. This does deprive customers of customized customer service in person. Not all distributors understand or even have the knowledge of how to maintain and keep a Penny board in good shape, which is very important for users. It would be really nice to be able to go into a store that is completely dedicated to everything Penny.

This then leads to the problem of the distributors being unable to fully mirror Penny's online catalogue due to the fact they have other brands and products to sell in their stores. It would be physically impossible to advertise and sell only Penny products. The whole aspect of customization is taken out of the in-person experience making it inconsistent with the rest of the system. That is why a lot of their customers opt for the online experience.

It would be nice to eventually get Penny stores worldwide, regardless they are doing a great job of creating not just a product but a culture and community.



References

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2. <http://www.boardsportsource.com/2017/08/10/penny-skateboards-appoints-gung-ho-uk-print-online-pr-services/>
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