


Focus



The Travelers Collection

26/08/2010
Reemé IdrisSearching for a story to sell
Creative Commons, Hector Garcia (2008) © **Scope**

The Travelers Collection asks travellers to nominate the most inspiring finds from around the world for sale on the site. If approved by the site's experts, the items are sourced and the finders awarded a percentage of net sales.

The business hinges on the insight that gaining experiences is often more rewarding than ownership of products in itself, and that telling stories is a compelling way to attract new custom.

The Travelers Collection is a new crowdsourced e-commerce venture, through which travel enthusiasts can share 'finds' from their trips, accompanied by a personal story in the hope of inspiring demand in others for the same items.

The site attempts to add an extra layer of meaning to the products stocked by going beyond commerce, publishing travel-related content from a select group of bloggers. Each product contains a short description of the trip during which it was found in an attempt to attach and project emotional significance onto material goods, as a hook for potential buyers.

Context

The Travelers Collection represents a wider development in the dynamic face of online fashion retail, focusing on careful curation of the products and their presentation. Another example is Not Just A Label (NJAL) which founder Stefan Siegel hopes will prove to source the talents of tomorrow. It's a site where independent designers can submit their own work, as long as it demonstrably fits within the realm of 'avant garde' fashion. The Travelers Collection is a similar platform for unsung talent, but focuses on the skill of finding 'gems' rather than designing them, with a focus on the far flung and hard-to-find.

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Although artisans can submit their own work, the site predominantly asks travellers to share the fruits of their discovery with others and, in turn, build on the story of the traditional artisan.

Whilst it is motivating that there is a nominal financial reward for anyone who recommends a supplier, this is unlikely to be the sole reason for the site's appeal - the status acquired through having your finds selected for sale is the real reward, as well as a contribution to a wider community which shares your values for products with a story. The site actively emphasizes the continued importance of sharing and storytelling in retail.

The site might be relatively gender neutral in design, but its gender bias is hinted at in terms of audience – evidenced by the partner charity, Vital Voices, for female entrepreneurs in emerging markets. Recent research into the female affinity for sharing meaningful content online and building long term, deeper relationships with websites has been documented by WPP and analysed [here](#). The kind of community building that The Travelers Collection provides is a great example of the type of online content that women especially are keen to engage with.

Whilst many of the featured products on the site are nice, they are actually not obviously exotic or unique. This is interesting in light of the way the site generates a feeling of authenticity and exclusivity. Clearly giving items a personal story makes them more appealing to other likeminded browsers, as part of projection theory – that which appeals to others like me, I'll like too. The degree to which attaching stories to content or products as a gimmick is used is being scrutinised more and more by savvy consumers, but niche offerings such as this can maintain credibility with more success than big brands.

Insights and opportunities

Recent findings from psychologists in the US posit that the level of consumer satisfaction gained from spending on experiences is higher than that which comes from spending on goods (1). The Travelers Collection exemplifies this point by taking our natural inclination to attach positive experiences to products and giving us a platform to share them with others.

Brands can learn from consumers higher affinity with experiences over product – especially where experiences aren't absorbed in one gulp, but reminisced upon and recollected fondly even once they're over. Turning memories into something which provides a functional tool for local vendors and artisans, often those less fortunate than the traveller themselves, provides individuals with a feeling of productivity in an otherwise self indulgent experience, as well as meeting the needs of the contributor – making their voice heard as part of a like-minded community, and finding desirable items to boot.

Sources

1. Stephanie Rosenbloom, 'But Will it Make You Happy?', Nytimes.com, 7 August 2010. Available [here](#)

Further reading

thetravelerscollection.com

Related on Canvas8

Sam Shaw, 'Packabook', 22 July 2010. Available [here](#)
 Jenny Winfield, 'The Human Nature Collection', 14 July 2010. Available [here](#)
 Jenny Winfield, 'Women and digital', 25 June 2010. Available [here](#)

Industry	Leisure & tourism Retail
Location	Global
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internet of things with the benefits of a community to help find lost items.



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