

A diver is shown underwater, holding a net. The scene is set in a clear blue environment with sunlight filtering through the water from above. The diver is wearing a wetsuit and fins, and a rope is attached to their gear. The overall mood is serene and focused.

Provenance storytelling for success

Case Study 1: Candy Abalone
February 2020



AgriFutures™
National Rural
Issues

Storytelling for agribusiness

This case study is one of a series produced for an AgriFutures project to investigate product provenance storytelling used by agriculture producers and businesses.

In addition to the case studies, a Consumer Trends and Storytelling Technologies report is available analysing existing and emerging options and technologies to support the development and communication of provenance and storytelling.

A storytelling guidebook and useful producer templates to assist with platform selection are also available to help Australian agribusinesses tell their own stories.



Learn more agrifutures.com.au/provenance-storytelling

“We are passionate about our home, Tasmania, the ocean environment and what it provides us. We want a secure future for our industry, the people who work in it, and for our children. Our aim is to be the world’s best producer of dried abalone. We tell our story to support our mission.”

- James Polanowski, Director, Candy Abalone



Company overview

Candy Abalone are Tasmanian-owned, dried abalone and seafood producers.

The company's core product is dried abalone. Dried abalone is a niche, premium seafood product, highly sought after by Asian markets, due to its rarity, traditional and cultural associations. Dried abalone is regarded as a 'treasure of the ocean' and commands a high price.

Location

Australia and China

Drying facility and retail shop in Tasmania, Australia.

Abalone experience and culinary centre in Guangzhou, China.

Products

Australian wild-caught seafood

Wild-caught dried abalone from Southern Australia

Dried abalone gift range

Wild-caught fish maw from Tasmania

Sea urchin roe from Tasmania

Other details

Annual Turn-over


Between \$1 and \$5 million

Employees

1-4

Candy Abalone Investment in Storytelling Assets

Approx \$60,000 per year. Including Director's and staff time, consultants, and mentoring. Communications and marketing materials - photography and videography, packaging, graphic design and branding.



“There is something about the ocean and the air of our island Tasmania, that makes remarkable things happen.”

www.candyabalone.com

The story

Candy Abalone Directors Mike Vecchione and James Polanowski draw from the traditions of the past to produce beautiful, dried wild-caught abalone and seafood.

The Candy Abalone family know the ocean, and know their abalone. Candy Abalone Director James is a second generation abalone diver and since he was little remembers the wild excitement of being in the Tasmanian ocean. Learning to dive with his father is where his passion for Australian seafood began. It's a story of adventure, a love for the wild ocean, and most of all, family.

Candy Abalone divers make weekly trips on the search for the best wild abalone, hand harvesting them one by one from the ocean floor. Each abalone is then shucked, hand washed and treated ready for the drying process.

Each abalone is left to soak up the Tasmanian sunshine and regularly checked to ensure the desired 'Candy Heart' is developed, using time-honoured techniques.

Their abalone products are completely organic because they believe that nature and nurture produce the soft texture and sweet taste that make Candy Abalone a cultural delicacy - the best in the world.

The story elements

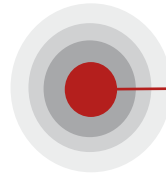


Summary



Industry sector

Seafood



Business size

Micro Business
(1-4 employees)



Customers

Asian tourists and locals
Asian seafood buyers
Chefs, Food and Beverage



Key markets

Primary:

Hong Kong, China
Singapore, Macau

Secondary/emerging:

Malaysia, Korea, Canada,
USA, Australia

Platforms used to tell their story



Social Media



Website



Immersive



Video



Packaging

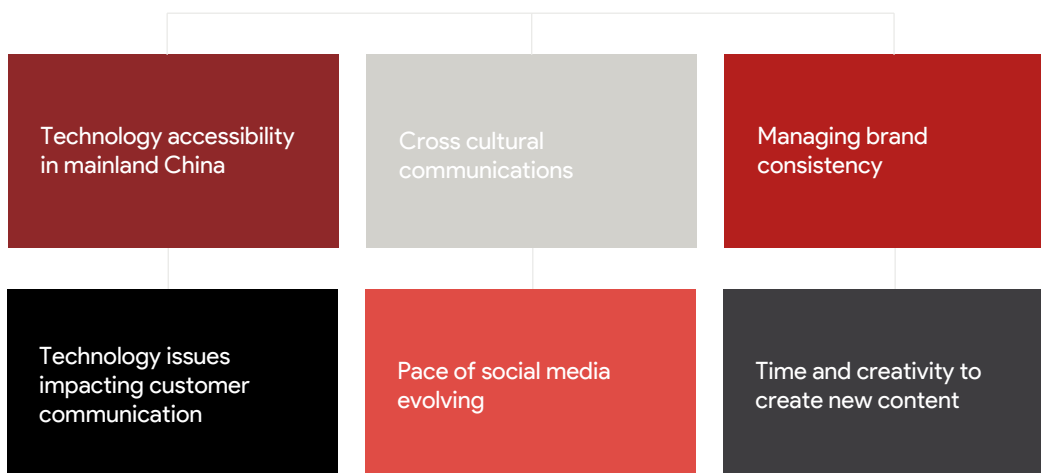


Retail Design



Partnerships

Challenges



Business goals

Candy Abalone began their business seven years ago, selling their products wholesale to China, supplying large Government banquets and the gift giving market through importers and distributors.

Around 2013-14 they felt the impact of a dramatic change in their market, one that completely changed their business. Xi Jinping launched his campaign against corruption in China, over the following years this heavily impacted the Australian abalone industry, and Candy Abalone had to change strategy.

Opportunities were now in the domestic market, in particular visiting and local Asian tourists. They understood that in order to connect with their customers and communicate the value of their product, they needed to define their provenance story and the right platforms to reach their international and domestic customers.

People wanted to know the story behind their product. They wanted to know the source, the art and skill in how their product is caught, and how it's prepared.

The Candy Abalone Directors wanted to share their passion for the ocean, and the way they hand-select and prepare their abalone. This story about dried abalone hadn't been told by the industry before, they wanted to share it with the world and secure their futures.

“We targeted an increase in tourism customer traffic and sales conversions in Australia, while growing our export markets. We needed to increase awareness of our brand and what it stands for, and build a connection with our customers”

- Mike Vecchione, Director Candy Abalone



Build relationships and trust with our customers



Increase in sales



Educate consumers to value products, how it is produced and where it comes from.




Differentiate product from the competition



Support market strategy/ positioning



Support expansion to new markets

A silhouette of a man and a young child looking out at a sunset over the ocean. The man is on the left, and the child is on the right, both facing right towards the horizon. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow that silhouettes their heads and shoulders. The child is wearing a blue and white striped shirt. The background is a soft gradient of orange, yellow, and blue.

**“Telling our story leaves
a lasting legacy for our
families.”**

- James Polanowski, Director Candy Abalone

Provenance storytelling platforms

Candy Abalone use a variety of digital platforms and customer touchpoints to communicate their provenance story. The following pages describe how Candy Abalone use the platforms highlighted in red below.



Social Media

Australia: Facebook
and Instagram
China: WeChat



Website

Website with
translated
Chinese page



Immersive

360 degree video
of production
facilities and shop



Video

YouTube channel,
embedded to website,
social and in-store. Focus
on drying process and
diving/harvesting



Packaging

Gift box packaging
showcasing Tasmania
and story elements.
QR codes on products



Retail Design

Shop design includes
large screen with diving
video and elements of
source - abalone shells
and kelp display



Partnerships

Product collaborations
with local artisans
sharing the similar
values and story



Platform deep dive

360 video technology



Candy Abalone use 360 Technology to offer their international customers an opportunity to walk through their drying facility, take a tour of the shop and feel close to the people in their business.

Candy Abalone introduced 360 Technology to enhance their digital experience and provenance storytelling capabilities.

This initiative was in response to customers wanting to see how the product is processed and their factory environment. It is important to showcase how the dried abalone is produced and prove authenticity.

This technology is mobile optimised, has been embedded into their digital wholesale and retail price list and on the “Our Location” page on their website.

Learn more

https://www.candyabalone.com/buy-seafood-tasmania-location/#candy_abalone_shop


“Our Asian customers in particular want to know that our product is authentic and safe to eat. We must build a trusted relationship with our customers and we use technology like 360 tours to do that.”

- James Polanowski, Director Candy Abalone

360 Video Snapshot



360 degree videos or spherical videos are an immersive technology. They are videos shot using an omni-directional camera (or a number of cameras) where a view is recorded in every direction at the same time. During playback on a flat display or mobile device, the viewer takes control of the viewing direction moving through like a panorama. The video can also be played on a display or projectors arranged in a sphere.



“We believe we are the only company in the world drying abalone using this method so we want to showcase this art and leverage our unique story.”

- Mike Vecchione, Director Candy Abalone

Target audience reached

Asian wholesale and retail consumers, visiting and local Asian tourists.

Investment

Approx. AUD \$2,000 outright cost + plus website integration.

Story elements



Learn more

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Candy+Abalone/@-42.821673,147.500776,15z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x0:0x63b919157b05bec0!8m2!3d-42.821673!4d147.500776>

Impact

Candy Abalone can see visitation analytics, but cannot verify the impact this technology has on sales. They do not have a buy online function currently so there is no sales loop.

Challenges

Google is not always available in Candy Abalone key markets so may be difficult to access for some key Asian customers (e.g Mainland China).

Platform deep dive

Social media - Australia



Candy Abalone launched their Facebook and Instagram platforms to connect with their Australian and Hong Kong customers.

Having limited resources in-house, Candy Abalone have made a conservative investment in a consultancy to run their pages.

Facebook has given them a platform to not only reach customers but also engage with their secondary target audience - the local community and the abalone industry, whose age demographic fits with the Facebook users.

Instagram was a lower priority for the company and the account was only set up in 2018. They felt it was important to showcase their provenance story and some of the beautiful underwater imagery of their process, to a younger audience.

Target audience reached

Hong Kong wholesale and retail, visiting and local Asian tourists, local community.

Story elements



Investment

Approx. \$6,000 p/y plus costs for photography and content.



Instagram
937 Followers
July 2019



Facebook
5,287 followers
July 2019



Impact

Candy Abalone receive product sales enquires through their Australian social media (approx 50 per year). The real impact is from brand awareness and community engagement.

Candy Abalone use these channels to learn about local opportunities for partnerships and collaboration.

Challenges

Facebook and Instagram are not accessible in key markets (China).

Outsourced management means that communication is key to ensure updates are authentic and relevant.

Platform deep dive

Social media - China



Candy Abalone use Chinese social media platform WeChat to connect with their Chinese customers.

This app is a vital tool for sales, to answer customer enquiries and enhance the experience of Chinese customers visiting their retail shop, share provenance and company stories with their customers, and build trust and relationships.

The QR code for Candy Abalone WeChat is available on all digital and print marketing materials.



WeChat
1,370 followers
July 2019



【纯正澳洲美食】即食干鲍|塔州秘方|自然野生无添加

一方面，我们保证所有产品的天然野生属性；同时，为满足广大客户“即享即食”的需求，创新推出“即食干鲍礼盒”产品。



Target audience reached

Chinese wholesale and retail consumers, visiting and local Chinese tourists, existing customers and business relationships.

Story elements



Investment

Approx. 1 day per week: Staff time for article writing, content gathering, translation and enquiry responses.

Impact

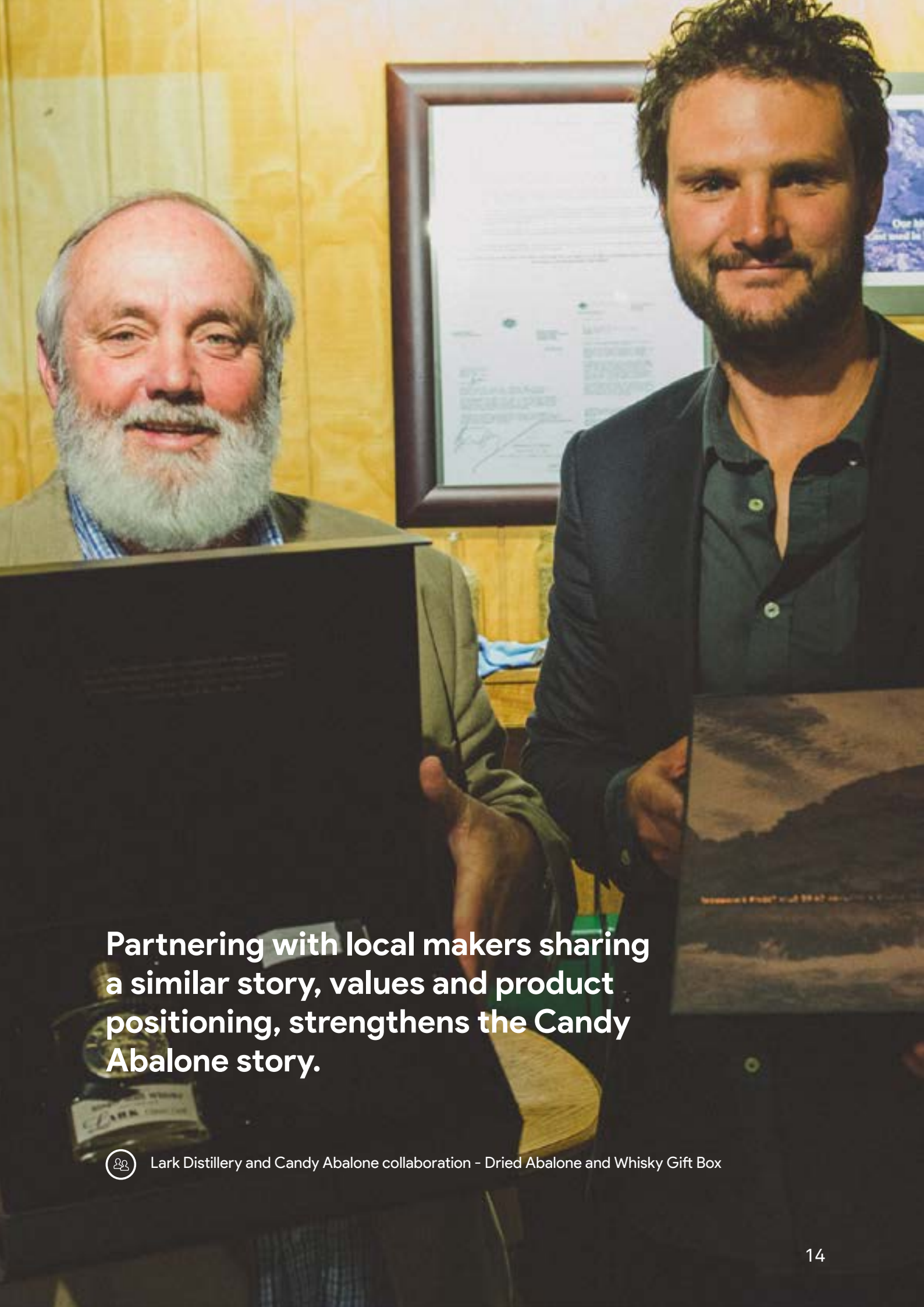
This platform is essential for Candy Abalone sales to China, to connect with the Chinese business partners and consumers.

Approx. \$80,000 sales per year via WeChat enquiries, and shop visitors who reconnect through the app and order when they get home.

Challenges

Language and cultural understanding, including translations.

It is hard to manage the brand and at the same time make it market appropriate.



Partnering with local makers sharing a similar story, values and product positioning, strengthens the Candy Abalone story.



Lark Distillery and Candy Abalone collaboration - Dried Abalone and Whisky Gift Box

Platform deep dive

Provenance partnerships

Candy Abalone choose partners who share elements of their provenance story to strengthen their brand and spread their story.

Candy Abalone have collaborated on product development with a Tasmanian Whisky producer to create a premium gift box, as well as furniture makers and other local artisans.

Product collaboration has resulted in some high price products, which are more aspirational than good sellers, but do lift the company's brand and luxury positioning.

“Harvesting and drying our products the natural way, with care, makes our abalone exceptional. It is important to work with partners that share these values to reinforce our own provenance story.”

- James Polanowski, Director Candy Abalone

Story Elements



Impact

Candy Abalone have seen an increase in engagement on social media and awareness of their story.

Achieved elevation of their product range and brand positioning.

Challenges

Building the right partnerships is important to Candy Abalone, but they have found it difficult with such a niche product to find complimentary products and producers that share the same values and target audience.

Platform deep dive

Retail store



The Candy Abalone retail store and drying factory location has been used as a platform to showcase their provenance story.

The shop has images and video of abalone diving, there is interpretation set up around the factory, and other elements that connect their customer with the source (such as abalone shell and kelp displays).

The drying facility has a glass window which has been an excellent storytelling piece to show the drying process to the customers.



Customer behaviour research

In November 2018 Candy Abalone conducted customer research in their retail store to gain greater insights into their customers, purchasing habits and which parts of their story resonate with them. They found that they needed to provide more detailed information as their customers really wanted to understand their product provenance and journey.

This is particularly important for Asian customers.

Here are the most commonly asked questions from Candy Abalone customers.



1

Is it wild?

2

Is it all made in Tasmania?

3

How do I cook it?

4

Can we do a factory tour?

5

Who do I speak to for information?

As a result of the research Candy Abalone engaged a Chinese speaking retail assistant to work during peak times, and trained them to understand and communicate the Candy Abalone product provenance story. More information about the product source, and production process has been included in store.

Impact

Increase in sales. They achieved record-sales of their 'ready to eat' abalone gift box after integrating more provenance stories in their store experience.

Visual elements to their retail design are shared more regularly on social media.

Challenges

Dramatically fluctuating peak visitor times make it difficult to employ staff full-time.

Communicating across cultures.

Platform deep dive

Packaging



The Candy Abalone packaging has been designed to tell the company and product source story.

All packaging provides a strong representation of their brand and provenance story.

QR codes on packaging and in store

QR codes that link to WeChat are available on all product packaging, and on digital platforms. These encourage customers to engage with the story after a purchase.



“We use every opportunity we can to connect with our customers and educate them about our process and story.”

- Mike Vecchione, Director Candy Abalone

Impact

Increase in sales occurs when QR codes are linked to social media campaigns focused on the product provenance.

Challenges

Premium packaging and store design is expensive.

Finding translators who can convey the brand positioning accurately.

Maintaining consistency in packaging design across markets.

Summary

Impact against business goals

Candy Abalone have assessed the impact of telling their provenance story against their business goals. In particular they have found the impact of telling their provenance story has set them apart from their competitors by

differentiating their product range in the market. They have done this by educating their customers and supply chain about the value in how their products are harvested and produced, assisting them to achieve premium positioning and high prices.

Goal	Description	Impact (star rating 1-5)
	Educate consumers to value products, understand how it is produced and where it comes from	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
	Increase sales	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
	Get higher prices	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
	Support market strategy/positioning	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
	To differentiate the product from competitors	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
	Support expansion to new markets	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆
	Grow market share	Not applicable
	Build relationships and trust	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆



Low to no impact



OK impact



Medium impact



Valuable impact











High impact

Summary

Platform effectiveness

Candy Abalone have assessed the technology platforms they use to communicate their provenance story. They see the value having a mixture of storytelling platforms but social media is still the most effective storytelling tool for their business.

In particular, WeChat has been a highly effective tool to connect with their customers directly and achieve sales. They also use it to build and maintain business relationships in the market and build trust.

Platform	Description	Impact (star rating 1-5)
	360 Technology	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆
	Facebook social media	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
	Instagram social media	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
	WeChat social media	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
	Website with translated page	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
	Provenance partnerships	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆
	Packaging design	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
	Retail design	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆



Low to no impact



OK impact



Medium impact



Valuable impact



High impact



Future plans

Candy Abalone are always searching for new technologies to connect with their customers.

They are investigating Livestreaming, Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality, but the hurdle is often the cost of implementation, and early adoption of technology can impact engagement - what if people don't know what to do?

The Candy Abalone story is authentic and unique, they take great pride in telling it, they also know their key customers are looking for exciting and emotive experiences to engage with them and their product story.

The Candy Abalone provenance story is a critical part of their marketing mix and will help them build a brand legacy and a future for their families.

**Thanks to Candy Abalone Directors
Mike Vecchione and James Polanowski
for their time and contribution to this
case study.**

All images in this document are provided by Candy Abalone.

More information

More information about storytelling and a step by step guide to help producers tell their 'Story For Success' is available on the AgriFutures website agrifutures.com.au/provenance-storytelling

This case study can be viewed at agrifutures.com.au/candy-abalone



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