

How to connect emotionally with your consumers

Manufacturing processes can be replicated, products imitated and ideas copied. But, it is not as simple to emulate the authentic relationships consumers share with their favourite brands. Nor is it easy to contest the position these products occupy in the minds of their loyal patrons. In the face of technological innovation, globalisation and a bewildering array of traditional and online media, brands can and often do win... now more than ever before.



Image by 123RF

This is according to Gavin Etheridge, Cape Town Director of Epic MSLGROUP, who says that when a deep emotional connection is cultivated between companies and customers, its brand loyalty and not improved features, augmented services and innovative designs that protect their market share.

A recent study published in September 2015 by Nielsen, suggests that all industries will soon need to start reconsidering how they communicate with their target market and stakeholders. Empowered consumers are fast losing their faith in all forms of traditional paid advertising.

According to the study, six in 10 global respondents say they don't trust adverts on TV, newspapers and magazines, yet eight in 10 (83%) say they completely or somewhat trust the recommendations of friends and family.

In a 2012 Corporate Executive Board study done by Saatchi & Saatchi, 64% of respondents in the cited 'shared values' as the primary reason to build a relationship with a brand.

"Under these circumstances, the reputation of companies, encapsulated within the intangibles of their corporate brand and not the tangible benefits of their products, will become the main determinant of consumer choice," explains Etheridge.

If we accept that a brand is your company's promise, then surely trustworthiness is the foundation of any branding strategy?

"In one sense a brand is a form of assurance," says Etheridge. "A promise of legitimacy and security that

differentiates your offering from the noise and the clutter created by your competitors.

“If you want the market to trust you, there needs to be an emotional connection - not only between the company and its target market - but with each and every stakeholder.”

“Coca-Cola isn’t the best tasting cola. Microsoft doesn’t have the best operating system. But, it’s about the position these brands hold in the mind of the consumer,” says Etheridge, quoting Steve Tobak of Entrepreneur magazine America.

He concludes: “South African consumers don’t buy products, but instead they buy the benefits they derive from them. Loss of market share will not be as a result of uncompetitive products, but a company’s inability to establish an emotional connection with their market.”

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