

interview

Kristina Dryza, Trends Consultant:
the future of branding

How do you see brands changing in the future?

In the West, brands will become less relevant as we find other means for self-expression. There'll be a focus on other organisations that give us an identity, like our family and volunteering groups. Brands will become a means to an end – no longer will they be an end in themselves. There's a realisation that brands give little life satisfaction – that is what people do.

What will be the relationship between the customer and the brand?

As more people begin to define their personal value systems, and live their lives according to those beliefs, it'll be easier for us as consumers to choose, relate and buy brands that serve our quest for a meaningful and purposeful existence. We know what brands fit into our world view, and those that don't.

Basically consumers are getting cleverer – we know most brands won't give us a sense of contentment or purpose. We won't expect a brand to give us that emotional fulfilment. We'll look elsewhere for it.

Do you believe that people are seeking authenticity and meaning from brands?

We're seeking authenticity and meaning from brands as we've yet to learn how to find it in ourselves. Losing our ego in the West is a difficult thing to do, but we're starting to shift our focus to personal assets, like family, friends and experiences, rather than material possessions. Branded goods don't show you love, or help you build your character. There's been a reinterpretation of authenticity to something deeper, and that is truth.

How will this express itself in reality?

I think occasion branding will become more important in the coming years as it's all about truth. Occasions are expressions of time, energy and space; whether they're formal like a wedding or informal, say, meeting a girlfriend for a coffee. Brands that are connected to occasions – like food, music, stationery and linen brands – will become more relevant to consumers' lives as they'll be where laughter and love occur. We'll turn to brands that help us celebrate the rituals of life.

How does a brand address this search for truth? What does it mean for those working in branding?

Brands obviously need to be truthful themselves. At some point they'll have to go back to the essence of themselves – what it is that they stand for and why the brand exists.

But brands that act truthfully will be those that increase our enjoyment of life. They'll help us live simply, get us back to nature and help us to develop our character and potential. People are turning to those rare few brands that have a human component.

The brand marketers need to understand that people are craving freedom from social pressures and conformity. They need to try to understand an individual's varying definitions of happiness and introduce more sensitivity into the brand's communications. But they should not expect the brands to be the ultimate source of love for people.

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