

Opinionated Branding

Have you ever heard about a brand rejecting customers? Probably not – every brand we know is desperate to attract more customers – and the customers know it – so when finally a brand follows the opposite trend, there might be something in it.

Some years ago I developed the concept for a relaunch of the Pepsi website. The big question was – how do you create a website which goal is to promote a sticky soft drink – which at the same time had to be cool, relevant and make you drink even more? As easy as it might sound for some – just as difficult it is – without abusing the usual advertising solutions like games, screensavers and music news. It's kind of overdone – and hardly builds the brand... well unless you happen to be in the gaming or music industry.

Any kid loves challenges – which created the basis for a highly unusual brief – aiming to reject the Pepsi customers instead of bidding everyone welcome. Entering the site any visitor simply had to pass by an intelligent test. If your answers weren't clever enough, quick enough or simply just failed to answer correctly – you were rejected to visit the site. It might be relevant to state that the first prize was a trip out in space ... yep a real one – shared with 6 other people.

This was the day I learned that reverse marketing something isn't that bad anyway. Thousands of kids tried daily to enter the site – and thousands of the rejected visitors – started to spread rumours on how to enter the site – by bypassing the test. It became an instant hit – where the Pepsi challenge – suddenly was to challenge the customers – and probably the first time in a corporate brand's history – reject most of them to enter the commercial site.

Through the whole site the truth was the catching point. If you were doing well – you would slowly be rewarded – if you failed during the stay at the site – the risk would be for you to be kicked out – or at least be told that you were uttermost dumb.

However this story is not about Pepsi but about how branding which rejects being political correct often not only catches the attention of the audience but creates loyal customers. You see none of us are politically correct, now and then a piece of personality shines through – making us laugh, listen or debate. Unfortunately the corporate world of branding has reached a point where we are desperately afraid of telling the truth. Of showing political incorrect opinions, advertising with personality and attitude. But isn't that what human beings are all about – having attitude – at least I hate when talking with people without any opinions, which

always agree with me and in general avoid any heated discussion.

And this is exactly what the future brand trends are going to be all about. Branding with attitude – brands that leave the world of bland branding – and start to show opinions on the home page, in ads and on TV.

Sounds easy? Hardly – you see today most of the corporate decision making process is formed in such a way that any opinionated branding campaign is creamed out – and rejected. However the problem is that they all are leaving only nice, boring but very correct campaigns left. But isn't branding about creating strong brand personalities, identifiable, and memorable for life? If you happen to agree – reject – the reject rules and let the future brand show its true personality.



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