



Home » Archives » 2009 » Oct » 05 » 10 Branding Trends: Value is the New Black...

## 10 Branding Trends: Value is the New Black



BrandKeys

Though US economists are cautiously predicting an uptick in consumer spending next year, the post-recession landscape will present brand marketers with new challenges, new engagement realities and new rules, and will increase pressure to prove how and why branded products deliver value, [according to](#) (pdf) Dr. Robert Passikoff, president of [Brand Keys](#) (via [MarketingCharts](#)).

Using what Passikoff calls "predictive loyalty metrics" gleaned from consumer data his firm collects, Brandkeys analyzed the likely consumer values, needs and expectations for the next 12-18 months and offered the following 10 trends:

### 1. Value is the new black:

Consumer spending, even on sale items, will continue to be replaced by a reason-to-buy at all. This may spell trouble for brands with no authentic meaning, whether high-end or low.


2. **Brands are increasingly a surrogate for value:** What makes goods and services valuable will increasingly be what's wrapped up in the brand and what it stands for.
3. **Brand differentiation is brand value:** The unique meaning of a brand will increase in importance as generic features continue to propagate in the brand landscape. Awareness as a meaningful market force has long been obsolete, and differentiation will be critical for sales and profitability.
4. **"Because I said so" is over:** Brand values can be established as a brand identity, but they must believably exist in the mind of the consumer. A brand can't just say it stands for something and make it so. The consumer will decide, making it more important than ever for a brand to have measures of authenticity that will aid in brand differentiation and consumer engagement.
5. **Consumer expectations are growing:** Brands are barely keeping up with consumer expectations now. Every day consumers adopt and devour the latest technologies and innovations, and hunger for more. Smarter marketers will identify and capitalize on unmet expectations. Those brands that understand where the strongest expectations exist will be the brands that survive and prosper.
6. **Old tricks don't - and won't - work anymore:** Consumers are on to brands trying to play their emotions for profit. In the wake of the financial debacle of this past year, people are more aware than ever of the hollowness of bank ads that claim "we're all in this together" when those same banks have rescinded their credit and turned their retirement plan into case studies. The same is true for insincere celebrity pairings - such as Seinfeld & Microsoft or Tiger Woods & Buick. Celebrity values and brand values instead need to be in concert.
7. **Consumers won't need to know a brand to love it:** As the buying space becomes even more online-driven and international (and uncontrolled by brands and corporations), front-end awareness will become less important. A brand with the right street credibility can go viral in days, with awareness following - not leading - the conversation.
8. **It's not just buzz:** Conversation and community is increasingly important, and if consumers trust the community, they will extend trust to the brand. This means not just word of mouth, but the right word of mouth within the community. This has significant implications for future of customer service.
9. **Consumers talk with each other before talking with brands:** Social networking and exchange of information outside of the brand space will increase. This - at least in theory - will mean more opportunities for brands to get involved in these spaces and meet customers where they are.
10. **Engagement is not a fad; It's the way today's consumers do business:** Marketers will come to accept that there are four engagement methods: The platform (TV; online), the context (program; webpage), the message (ad or communication), and the experience (store/event). At the same time, they also will realize that brand engagement will become

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impossible using out-dated attitudinal models.

Passikoff believes that accommodating all of these trends will require some companies to undergo significant paradigm shifts, which will likely be painful but necessary. Either way, change in the brand marketing pace will be inevitable. "Whether a brand does something about it or not, the future is where it's going to spend the rest of its life. How long that life lasts is up to the brand, determined by how it responds to today's reality," he said.

Recent research from Penn State University found that one in five Tweets is brand related, and appears to support the belief that there is an increasing desire for brand engagement and customer service on more community-based media. Another study from Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, similarly proclaims that "value is the new black," predicting that post-recession shoppers will transform into "value hunters" as they look for true value and meaning from brands, rather than just discounts.

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