Fusion Affinities: What is Consumerism?

Thursday 10 July, 2014

Bristol-based sales and marketing firm Fusion Affinities discuss the pros and cons of consumerism and the impact big brands are having on small communities and their businesses.

There have been many debates concerning consumerism and the ripple effect a big brand can have on the public after releasing a new product. With so much money put into creating a buzz around a brand and its products, many are asking whether purchase decisions are a truly free choice, or whether every purchase is influenced in some way.

The brand that is almost impossible to ignore when discussing consumerism is technology giants Apple. No other brand in recent years have been able to reach the heights of Apple, with hundreds if not thousands of loyal consumers camping outside stores to get their hands on the newest iPhone. Apple is a powerhouse in branding and hype. In the ongoing Mac vs PC debate, macs are seen as current and cool and in many cases more expensive, yet despite this they have a massive consumer base willing to only part with their money for Apple products.

The key to this may lie in their ability to expertly tap into the youth market. According to research those under 30 are still, be it subconsciously or not establishing their own identity and use brands with a similar outlook to theirs as a means to express themselves and connect to other like-minded people. It's this fresh and innovative message that Apple embody that sets them apart from the competition who may be offering a similar product for less.

This all may seem slightly negative, however there are some pros to consumerism and the effect products can have on people. As humans we are hard wired to be wary of change. A brand can't survive on a positive message alone, it has to have a reliable product and service and by providing this brands are catering to peoples' need for the familiar and gaining loyal happy customers in the process.

It's also important to recognise that the hype surrounding certain products isn't always a bad thing. Many brands have a positive message such as promoting a healthy lifestyle or environmental concerns, and being brand leaders means being able to spread that message to a loyal audience.

With pros and cons aside it's hard to ignore the fact that small businesses have definitely felt the strain of big brands and the consumer pull they have. However with more people choosing to shop locally in recent months, thanks to well publicised scandals surrounding certain brands and chain stores, can small businesses benefit from consumerism too?

Small businesses are the heart of communities and their success is instantly reflected in their local area, with many a substantial part of their profits going back into the community through their work with other local businesses and local taxes. Fusion Affinities strongly support small enterprises and believe that they add a vibrancy and diversity to local high streets. With a growing trend in shopping locally it appears that now is the time for small businesses to establish themselves as an honest and relevant enterprise in order to attract the trend following consumers.

Fusion Affinities believes the key to small businesses survival lies in ensuring they, much like the worldwide market leader, have a clear and current brand message. Through developing their brand, small businesses can reap the rewards of being a trusted and honest brand, whilst supporting their local community. This winning combination of brand values and community awareness is sure to appeal to many consumers and may even be enough to draw them away from the big brands.

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