

The 3 Traits for Brands to Survive the Future

Part 2: Owning iHumanity

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Rewinding a couple of decades, we mostly owned ‘products’. More specifically, we owned mobiles, shoes, watches, etc. The brand was not as vitally important those days. If a nice looking product fit your needs, you grabbed it from a shelf, walked to a smiling cashier, and after a mathematical exchange of cash, the product had a new owner. Simple! That unpretentious transaction was the limit of our purchasing process.

Around the turn of the century came a new shift, we slowly started to own ‘brands’. We didn’t own smartphones or shoes anymore. Now we owned Samsungs, Nikes, etc. These were days when brand recognition and consumer association galvanized our shopping habits.

Today, brands own us! We continuously sell pieces of our life experiences to brands. As eerie as that chill feels down your spine, this is the ugly truth of our reality. Humans are essentially an amalgamation of experiences. The sensation of excitement, the delight of opening a new product, the yearning for being special; all these small experiences formulate who we are. Today’s shopping habits consists of us giving away those small experiences, and asking a corporation to enhance those experiences with products and services.

Lets take Apple as an example. Regardless of features, benefits, or quality, I will buy an iProduct, not because I want to, but because I just necessary have to. If I can’t do without a brand, might as well I inoculate it within me to the point that I whip myself to love it. No more that frequently heard phrase of ‘*Im an Apple guy*’, this is slowly transmogrifying to ‘*I am Apple*’. A classic case of Stockholm syndrome.

The corporation doesn’t sell mere products anymore. The corporation actually fulfills a spectrum of small life experiences. Starting from that exciting rush to the iStore, that pleasurable contactless purchase, uploading those inane ‘*box-opening*’ videos, up until that first-buyer brag. Those whole chunks of lively existence are what consumers sell to Apple. In turn, the Apple corporation brands all those life fragments as small virtual Apple assets. In other words, Apple does not solely sell exciting products. Rather, the reality is that Apple monopolizes the sensation of excitement for its consumers. To be excited, a consumer needs an iSomething.

Now let us fast-forward a decade into the future, when the iCar, iDoor, iHoover and yes, iDinnerTable, are designed, built and advertised. Will we eventually hit that eminent milestone of an iHome fully equipped with iPods to iKitchens to iEverything? Seeing the progression and trends of today, I would surely think so! However, the more pertinent question is: will consumer’s deeper life experiences grow just as fast and big, as the iProducts we own? More specifically, will we have the possibility to have more intimate wholesome experiences such an iWedding or an iVacation? This is not an illusory notion; it’s a realistic possibility. Lest we forget, we relate so much to our brands today; we actually live through them and by them. If the experience of rushing to an iStore comes with the purchase of an iPhone, is it that ill conceived that the experience of an iWedding comes with the purchase of an iHome? Think about it! Lets just assume that Apple did invest in an iHotel that offered a complete iLifestyle for a week, how many people will rush to book a room the same way they would rush for an iPhone? It is a case of consumers fulfilling a strong craving to sell more chunks of life to their identity brand.

Putting it all together, for brands to persist in the future, companies need to focus on building an infrangible morphing between the brand and its end users. Where buying the brand, using the brand, and being the brand, are one and the same. Corporations need to move away from a methodology of solely finding multiple sales opportunities. Rather, corporations need to focus more on how to own a larger concentration of consumer life experiences. For as more life chunks are cannibalized by the brand, the faster is the metamorphosis between brand and user.