

The 3 Traits for Brands to Survive the Future

Part 1: How the Tables Have Turned

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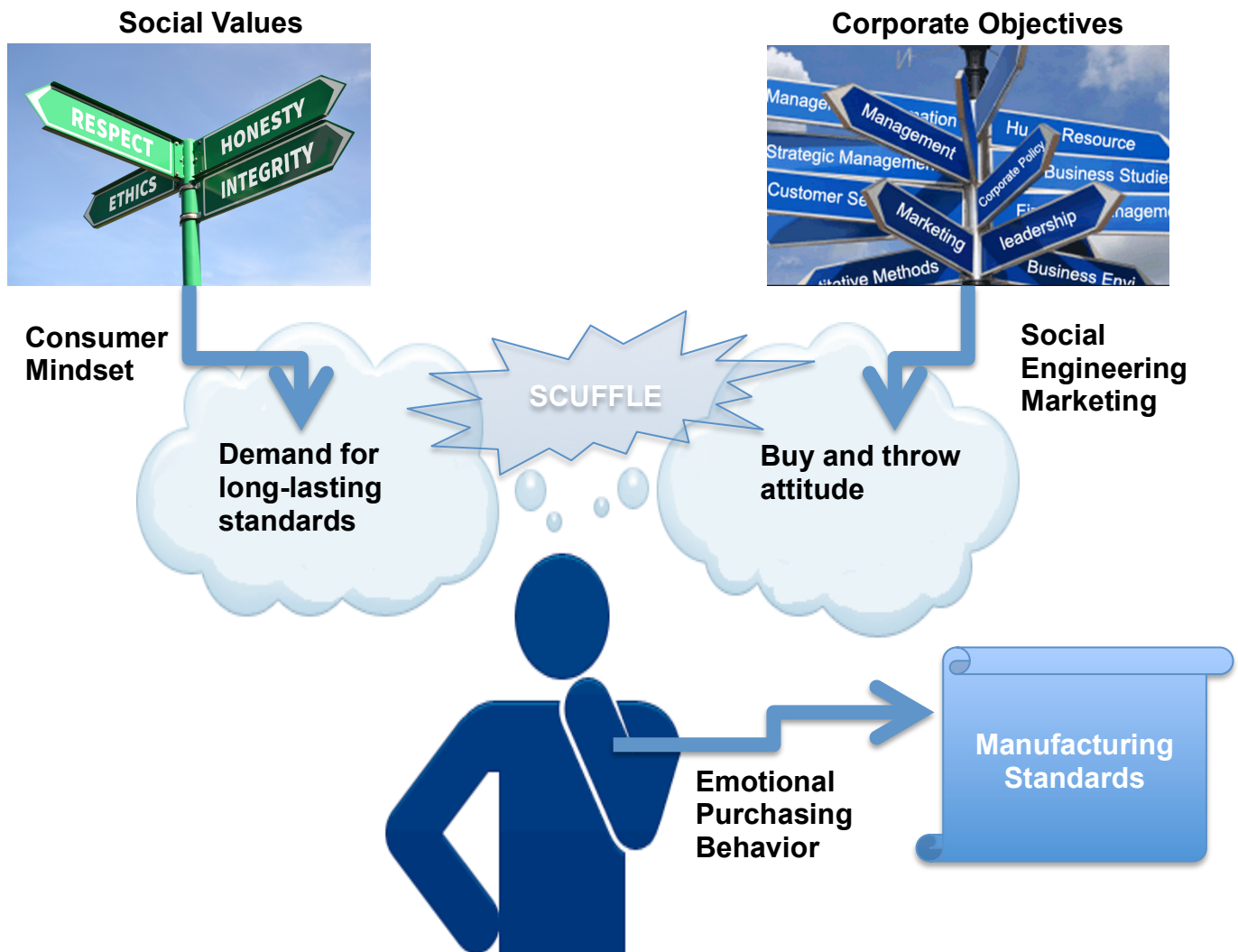
I always was most creative working on the family dinner table. Since my childhood, that infamous piece of furniture was such an ultimate comfort zone. A utopia of free ideas forged in the crucible of parenthood. The inauguration of that *old looking* table is still engraved in my brain somewhere. The weeks of parental discussion, the sight of my father carrying it down the stairs, the sound of my mother's panicky Hoover, all those table memories never seem to fade away.

20 years of countless meals, arguments, guests, grandchildren, and celebrations have passed. Yet, until this day, that table defiantly stands in the exact same spot. Admittedly, it's once magnanimous style did etch away with every fresh IKEA ad. Still, the quality of its make is self-evident to last the onslaught of those 2 decades.

I was truly indifferent to know the table's brand though. I think deep down, I knew the manufacturing firm would most probably not build tables like they used to. Wood is still wood, steel is still steel, engineering is still engineering. Yet, I contemplate the question: Why are tables, phones, fridges, etc. of today, not built to the same standards as their ancestral counterparts? After funneling root-causes, I have reached a personal conclusion that the real change is not within quality standards as such. Rather, it is through a process of a coarse social interactivity that I call: **"The Social Ethos vs Brand Influence Scuffle"**.

A decade ago, societal values (i.e. religion, tradition, culture) translated to consumer mindset. Consumer mindset conversely translated to purchasing habits. These habits would then inevitably dictate required quality standards to manufacturers. Back then, if a dinner table broke down within 5 years, it was deemed as substandard. In an era prior to social media, where word of mouth was king, a brand's reputation could easily be lambasted to its grave.

How the tables have turned today (pun intended!). With the aim of fueling shareholder enthusiasm, sustaining short-term margins, and curtailing manufacturing costs, corporations today have taken the driver seat. Equipped with subconscious marketing to the point of social engineering, and incubating sales opportunities deep into every daily routine, a consumer's daily decisional process has been intrinsically entangled with brand saliences. It's no secret; brand marketing has sophisticated itself to the point of consumer intimidation. As the Sales guru Robert Ashton puts it: *"people use emotion to make buying decisions then use logic to justify them"*. To that end, the chronological market process has effectively turned on its head. No longer do manufacturers succumb to purchasing moods dictated by communal values. Today, it is corporations shoving society towards a well-marketed *'buy and throw'* attitude.



This brings up the following subsequent questions: How will this scuffle between corporate branding, and societal values, evolve in the decades to come? In other words, what traits will today's brands need to possess to be relevant in the future? Analyzing these questions through extrapolation and future precognition, the following articles consist my personal prognosis.