

How to become a Lovemark

During recent years consumer behavior has changed, as well as the consumer himself. Evolutions in technology and society cause the rules of the game to change at an increasing pace. I extracted three relatively new shop-phenomenons consumers today appreciate. First, consumers are much more aware, and want to be more aware, of what they buy and what they consume. Knowing where the product is coming from, who is selling it, which price is fair, etc. are aspects of interest which relate to the 'slow shopping' phenomenon, as I like to call it. A second phenomenon relates to the digital revolution. Next to the urge of consumers - especially the young generation - to be connected at all times, consumers are able to search for relevant information whenever they need it. Moreover, they are able to buy products with the same ease as pushing a button. This way of shopping I like to call 'swipe-shopping'. Third, consumers are looking for (new) experiences, increasingly within retail. They want to FEEL something when shopping, they want to experience pleasure (and this is pleasure not derived from the purchase itself) when shopping. More than we might expect, consumers want to interact with a retailer, feel connected and associated with to the store (in scientific literature this phenomenon is called the self-congruity theory). This one I refer to as 'experience shopping'.

These new shopping-phenomenons cause a fundamental change of the context in which retailers need to function. Also, since the economical shift made the consumer the focus of attention, it is challenging for retailers to stay relevant in relation to consumer's changing habits. To motivate the new consumer to visit and buy in physical stores, retailers need to change. The main challenge, for most retailers, is the fact that the customer journey no longer start at the front door of the store. More often another channel like a website or a social media platform initiates the customer journey. Making sure every aspect of each channel, but also each part of the store, is consistent of what the consumers expects of the brand/store is not evident. Nonetheless, in the entire customer journey, stores will remain the most important channel for retailers to tell their story to their customers. The trick is to see the store as a point of communication, as one touch-point in the web of all other media channels.

Off course, a one-size fits all answer is not available. What we do recommend is be GOOD in what you do! Be good in being a retailer, being an entrepreneur. Love your business, love your products and love your customers. Also, know your business, know your products (and yes, you may use internet to search for information when a customer asks information) and know your customers. Be impassioned, be personal, and be original. Offer service and inspiration. Connect with your customers. Make sure you tell them a story, your story, and use your shop (design) to do this. Use and choose the materials, the lighting, etc. Work with logic flows and select sensory elements to tap into this. Do this consistent and coherent in a differentiating way. All with one main goal in mind: to trigger an emotional connection with the customer. Look at Camper for example. They have a star product that is sold by passionate people in beautiful, one-off stores, designed by respected designers. Each store has a very 'touchy' feeling by the use of its materials. It arouses the senses. Customers do not even think about going online to look for a better price when purchasing shoes in these stores. That is the power a store should have, what makes it unique and different from any other channel. Induce loyalty beyond reason, be a Lovemark!