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Global research reveals shift in the traditional roles played by brands and consumers

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The first insights from a global longitudinal research programme into attitudes of adults around the world, and how they impact the way brands operate, has been revealed by strategic brand and planning consultancy Onesixtyfourth.

Analysing learnings from its proprietary research, from global client studies and daily observations of cultural and social norms, Onesixtyfourth has identified that Millennials (those born between 1908 and 1995) are more comfortable living in a society perceived as being black 'and' white, compared to previous generations.



Generation Y has grown up with the attitude that opposites can co-exist, whether it's mixed cultural backgrounds, hybrid cars, mash-ups, mingled fashion styles or multi tasking, for example. Simply, the world is no longer about being 'either' black 'or' white.

The basis of the study was formed from CultureQ, a multinational, synthesised trend research programme, launched for the first time in the UK as a subscription service. The study, which will provide quarterly updates to brands, is designed to constantly evolve and shift in terms of themes and content to reflect the changes in society itself.

Its use of multi-media channels will maintain a constant dialogue with participants, providing insights into how people react to, and their attitudes toward, a range of topical issues.

Onesixtyfourth believes this change in society has led to a shift in the traditional roles played by brands and consumers.

Today, brands that are more likely to succeed are those that go further than just providing transactional engagement and communication and move towards a more equal level of interaction with people about wider topics, such as political issues, causes etc. Gen Y-ers are masters at contriving 'authentic' identities for themselves and as such, expect transparency from brands.

Because they're comfortable living with paradoxes, they know brands will make mistakes and not always behave consistently with their values. The challenge is for brands to be truthful about their behaviour and not mask it through well-crafted 'genuineness'.

"CultureQ is an exciting way of undertaking trend research and understanding the Zeitgeist," says Anne Bahr Thompson, founding partner, Onesixtyfourth.

"It sets insights based on what we learn is important to people and the social and cultural movements we see. The societal shifts we've unearthed to date from our conversations are hugely important and underpin how brands need to interact with consumers to continually adapt to our evolving world. The power now lies with people, and brands need to develop based on criteria that meet Generation Y's expectations."

Onesixtyfourth has identified three factors that brands need to embody to connect with people:

- **Engaging:** brands need to collaborate with audiences, initiate dialogue and meaningful interactions that set the product or service in a wider concept, by having a point of view on topical issues, world events, etc.
- **Fluid:** bringing out a brand's personality, the diversity and incongruity, being spontaneous and surprising, consistency (but not 'sameness')
- **Sincere:** brands need to be honest and about claims, transparent about mistakes, and not hide behind words, people or PR

Bahr Thompson adds: "Our panel of Millennials has told us that the brands they favour are those they feel a deep, personal connection with; those that surpass just promoting a product or service. They name Apple, Innocent Drinks, Nike, Stella Artois, Ugg and Google as brands that in different ways embody the new criteria."

CultureQ is available as a subscription service with opportunities for customisation. Subscribers will receive quarterly updates on the ongoing research with Millennials and also periodic research with other socio-demographic groups across the US and UK. Onesixtyfourth has plans to expand CultureQ to Europe, Asia and Australia.