

Final press release

Global research reveals five transformational trends that brands need to embrace in 2014

Consumers turn to brands to help improve society through 'Brand Citizenship'

London, November 2013 – New research from strategic brand and planning consultancy Onesixtyfourth, reveals five transformational trends for 2014, which businesses need to embrace if they want to be brand-leaders. Findings from CultureQ, a longitudinal research project run by Onesixtyfourth, which looks into the attitudes of adults in the UK and US, shows that people believe brands rather than traditional institutions are better placed to improve quality of life, progress society and sustain the planet.

CultureQ, now in its third year, tracks the changing attitudes, values and hopes of consumers and findings from the latest round of research show that although many respondents believe the government should support its citizens, they have little trust in current politicians' ability to do so. Instead, people are looking to brands to help improve society and deliver good corporate citizenship.

Onesixtyfourth has identified five key trends from the research which detail how businesses can step up and use their influence to enrich individual lives and better society. It believes that the only brands to succeed in the future will be those that embrace their Brand Citizenship, by aligning sustainable and ethical business practices with branding and reputation management initiatives as a means to foster loyalty and increase brand advocacy.

The five key trends are:

1. The great lifestyle merger

As people continue to deal with the effects of the recession, many are forced to let go of fixed lifestyle behaviours. As a result, brands will work to inspire people to think about their lives differently and give consumers the confidence to discover new possibilities.

2. Rise of the Personal Responsibility Officer

Traditional institutions, such as hospitals, schools and banks have lost the confidence of consumers and this has led to a general feeling of distrust and scepticism. As a result, brands will help to fill this void by working to gain consumers' respect and loyalty by improving communications and offering greater benefits.

3. Know 'me' over 'brand me'

In the aftermath of the technology revolution, 'meaningful experiences' and tailored offerings from brands are now very much expected by consumers in the modern world. As a result brands will cultivate precise relationships based upon individual quirks, preferences, passions and motivations.

4. Me before 'we'

As economic stagnation and a social culture of charity endeavours increase, there is an increased expectation

across generations for brands to operate fairly and ethically with an overall aim to simplify a consumer's daily life. As a result, brands will work collaboratively to develop solutions that will improve the quality of people's daily lives. More will also use education to help consumers see the personal benefits of social responsibility efforts.

5. The science of social purpose

Across the generations, people want to take a more proactive role in improving society – political and societal changes have let the younger generations down and there is an increased desire for children to have a strong foundation for the future. As a result, brands will facilitate work groups focused on developing sustainable projects that fulfil a social purpose, helping to improve brand advocacy and leave a meaningful legacy

Commenting on the trends, Anne Bahr Thompson, Founding Partner of Onesixtyfourth, said: "Having an understanding of how peoples' relationships with brands are shifting, and having the foresight into their changing expectations is essential for brands as we move into 2014.

"Recent political and world events continue to highlight the lack of leadership in society. This research has found that people are turning to brands to step-up and use their influence to enrich individuals' lives and better society. As a result, this presents a clear opportunity for brands, that doesn't necessarily involve big, flashy event sponsorships or Corporate Social Responsibility [CSR] initiatives.

"The top attribute we have found that consumers value is a brand's ability to do 'good business'. This can be broken down into three key areas: a business that respects the environment, treats its employees well and is honest in what they say and do. Up until now, these have often come under the umbrella term CSR, however, Brand Citizenship is about the entire organisation living and delivering on an ethos, fully manifesting a promise and placing the consumer at the centre of the brand.

"The five trends outlined here are the key cultural shifts that brands must embrace in 2014 to ensure they meet expectations, remain relevant and successful. Brand Citizenship can no longer be ignored by brands and corporations that embrace it will be leaders, cultivating greater loyalty and ultimately gaining bigger returns in the long-term too."

For more information about CultureQ, visit www.onesixtyfourth.com.

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About Onesixtyfourth:

Onesixtyfourth is a trend-based, brand and communications strategy boutique that uses its in-depth understanding of cultural shifts and social movements to help brands communicate better, innovate and grow.

For more information visit: www.onesixtyfourth.com

About CultureQ

CultureQ is an ongoing research study that synthesises qualitative and quantitative research with street-level observation to uncover trends, motivations and behaviors as they are evolving, rather than after they have happened.

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