



‘IT’S ABOUT BRANDS BEING A LITTLE BIT BOLD, A LITTLE BIT QUIRKY, AND RISQUÉ, AND NOT BEING AFRAID TO SHOCK CONSUMERS ... BY PLAYING IT SAFE ALL THE TIME, SOME BRANDS ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING A WHOLE GENERATION OF CONSUMERS’

CHRIS Turner and his colleagues at Trendwatching.com have their finger on the pulse. They and their ‘spotters network’ of 500-plus in 120 countries have been keeping an eye on global consumer trends since 2002, to much acclaim. He spoke to us about their 10 Crucial Consumer Trends for 2010.

BUSINESS AS UNUSUAL

“Business as Unusual reflects a much more demanding consumer, and the need to adapt to their expectations,” says Turner. “It’s about greater honesty and transparency, and conversations with customers rather than one-way advertising.”

Much can be learnt from those big brands already doing this, he says, citing Google, Virgin and Zappos as examples. “It’s really about doing things that little bit differently.”

URBANY

A century ago, less than 5pc of the world’s population lived in cities. In 2008, that figure exceeded 50pc. “This is where the majority of these more demanding, more aware consumers are emerging from, these huge urban, wired centres,” says Turner.

An important sub-trend of this is ‘Urban Pride’, he says. “So you see consumers forming peer groups, which take pride in their urban identity. There are brands doing some really clever things to reflect that identity.” Turner cites Bank Machine in London, which offers a Cockney rhyming slang language option on its ATMs, and the Absolut Vodka’s city series, which includes Absolut New Orleans and Absolut Boston.

REAL-TIME REVIEWS

Via Twitter, Facebook and the rest of the social-media outlets, consumers are posting their own product reviews in real-time, and sharing their views, says Turner.

“Everything’s vulnerable to real-time scrutiny now, so transparency is vital. This is a trend that will grow and grow.”

Right on trend

WE SPEAK TO CHRIS TURNER, SENIOR ANALYST WITH TRENDWATCHING.COM, ABOUT THE CONSUMER TRENDS THAT WILL SHAPE THE MARKET IN 2010 AND BEYOND

(F)LUXURY

The concept of luxury has radically changed for many consumers, he says. “It’s no longer about a big gold watch being the definition of luxury. Not that the traditional luxury goods will disappear, but now it will be more about scarcity or uniqueness.”

Here the concept of ‘limited edition’ works well, says Turner, and its sub-trend: ‘limited locations’. Fragrances brand Le Labo produces scents exclusive to the cities in which it has stores, such as in London, Las Vegas and Tokyo, for example.

MASS MINGLING

A nice twist to the online world has been the reversal of predictions that we would all become ‘hermits’ glued to our PCs.

“People are using online to connect with other people, and the online services are driving them to meet up in the real world.

“People are always going to need face-to-face time with other people and new technologies are enabling that via online prompts to meet up. You’ll see this grow and grow. The opportunity is obvious for businesses that enable customers to partake in real-life ‘mobs and crowds,’” he says.

ECO-EASY

The environmental imperative will continue to engage consumers, says Turner. “Eco-Easy is about making it easy for the consumer to be eco-friendly. A great example is UK sandwich chain Pret A Manger, which simply stopped stocking tuna sandwiches when an Earth Day 2009 documentary exposed over-fishing.”

TRACKING AND ALERTING

When you think of tracking and alerting, you probably think of DHL or UPS, but this

is an online trend that offers great future opportunities, says Turner.

“Young consumers will expect not to have to actively search when they want information. They’ll expect brands to provide it to them with minimum input from themselves.”

A great example is Kogi Korean BBQ in Los Angeles, he says. “It has two trucks that constantly move around LA and it ‘tweets’ its location on Twitter, so customers know when and where to find them.”

EMBEDDED GENEROSITY

Just like Eco-Easy, this is about brands making it easy for their customers to be generous. “Tom’s Shoes is great example of a brand doing this to huge success,” says Turner. “It donates a pair of shoes to a child in need for every pair it sells online. As of August last year, Tom’s Shoes had donated 150,000 pairs of shoes!”

PROFILE MYNING

“Yes, that’s MYning, not mining,” says Turner. “We know all about big brands trying to ‘mine’ the growing number of profiles online. We’re actually predicting a future where an intermediary may represent the savvy consumer who is willing to disclose parts of their purchasing behaviours, their profile, and invite companies to bid for them.”

MATURALISM

This ties back to ‘Business as Unusual’, says Turner. “It’s about brands being a little bit bold, a little bit quirky, and risqué, and not being afraid to shock consumers. It’s almost a generational thing – by playing it safe all the time, some brands are in danger of losing a whole generation of consumers.”

He points to the successful Icecreamists, the UK ice cream brand that has positioned itself using premium ‘x-rated’ flavours. Its Sex Pistol flavour was available exclusively in London’s Selfridges last year. “This is something you are going to see more and more of,” says Turner. Food for thought ...