

COLUMNS

New language of anti-authenticity

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From Detroit to Brooklyn and Austin to Mill Valley and even Paris, you will experience or over-experience the hipster revival, where words such as "heritage," "provenance," "curated," "artisanal" and "authentic" are grossly overused.

The notion of "authentic" no longer resonates with me and probably most of the jaded urban consumers who are associating it with insincerity and cash-grabbing. Maybe it is time to reconsider the language of anti-authenticity.

Show and sell

Anti-authentic does not mean that brands should disown those characteristics all together.

Instead of making lofty claims such as "authentic" or "artisanal," brands should focus on making simple and realistic claims while maintaining those qualities so they are apparent and implicit to the customer.

The new language of anti-authenticity means bringing the brand experience front and center much like the RX bar's no BS packaging.

Show, don't tell or do, don't tell.

We know it is not all about the packaging and the language used in self-promotion.

Let us take for example, Mast Brothers Chocolate and their scandal in 2015. Its success was mainly credited to the authentic bean-to-bar language used. However, when the product did not support the claims, it became largely associated with insincerity.

With this kind of distrust and scrutiny becoming more common, claims of authenticity will not work. However, you can show authenticity.

Following the chocolate example, it is about transparency, showing the process of production, such as Jacques Torres' factory, or letting people experience the craft for themselves such as La Maison du Chocolat's chocolate classes. It is letting people experience the brand for themselves.

And, naturally, consumers will share.

Shop talk

Experiences are only becoming more front-and-center as consumers continue to adopt more social media channels because they are opportunities to craft unique stories to share.

The rarer the experience, the better it is for social sharing. Think about coffee it is one of the most popular topics on the Internet. Everyone posts about coffee, but it is no longer just photos of the ubiquitous Starbucks cup.

Increasingly, people are turning to the "artisanal coffee" experience. It is the beautiful latte art, indie decor, local charitable initiatives, cat sanctuary zones, dog companionship.

The more specifically the experience aligns with your brand, the more authentic the brand is automatically perceived to be. And imagine that coffee shop chain Starbucks in 2018 will open a true coffee experience in New York's Chelsea district, with a 20,000-square-foot roaster that is one of its biggest stores nationwide.

CONSUMERS SEEK out brands with visions and pillars that are aligned with their aspirations, interests and what resonates with them on a deeper level.

Embrace your own ethos and the right consumers will show up to support you.

The best example of a brand that should make the embrace is McDonald's with its "artisanal chicken sandwich." Instead of trying to be something that it is not, McDonald's should probably just call it like it is: a late night/stressful day/drunken guilty pleasure.

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