

The reality of perception

 By [Mike Taberner](#) 4 Oct 2016

One of the age-old sayings is that "Perception is reality" and while many brands would like to think that they are immune to this, they are not. Consumer perception of your brand carries infinitely more value than any marketing effort you can conjure up.

As a young marketer I studied consumer behaviour patterns, I focussed on how it was that companies influenced the consumers with their messaging. Smoking was cool; nobody who ate fast food was overweight and with just three brush strokes you had sparkly white teeth!

Aloof and immune

Brands remained largely aloof, because the consumers couldn't get to them, and the messaging to establish perception continued. Brands succeeded! Many brands had perceived realities far exceeding their actual deliverables. Consumer issues were left to agony aunt style activist to resolve and if they were serious enough they made the news.



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Social media has played a massive role in forcing brands to respond to failures, but it has not taken the step to changing brands.

Time and again does not equal change

The reality is that these perceptions were always there, the consumer, through social media, began to have a voice. This voice was never silent, it was just never really heard. The challenge is that while the klaxon sound of the consumer grows, through the megaphone of social media, brands are not changing.

Brands today still have a perception vs. reality issue. There is a perception that they deal with issues, when in reality they are simply surface responses. In truth the change is not real change, it is simply problem solving. Brands are "solving" the same problems time and again and are not addressing the real issues.

Timelines are filled with "once again" or "how many times must we go through this?" or my personal favourite "I would have thought you would have learned from the failure before."

The voice grows stronger

A warning then to brands in general, the consumer voice is set to grow stronger over the coming years. The reality is that will face increasing pressure to change and change we must. If we hope to remain relevant to our consumer base, then we need to ensure that we are taking the consumer feedback on board and that we are in fact changing.

Are you happy with the perceptions about your brand? Are they true?

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