

Pursuit of happiness - brand connections

In a world striving for happiness, our sense of connection and personal attachment is being transposed onto machines; we speak through devices and use machines to express ourselves, not only physically but also on many levels. We seem to be emotionally stuck and have a lesser capability to function in a psychologically balanced manner. This could result in consumers subliminally reaching out to brands for an emotional experience as we typically crave what we feel deprived of.



Image via Fotolia

This need for connection has created a craving or a gap that brands are now looking to fill, but there is also pressure from the consumer, for something more, something different that is going to create a sense of happiness and excitement. We just need to think about why we want brands to make us feel something. Are we turning to brands for some kind of emotional fulfilment? What is the implication?

Ask Afrika explored this in the annual Icon Brands™ survey and explored 'Happyology and the Happiness Industry' (as defined by Will Davies) further, looking at what it means for both brand owners and for individuals. This concept might be stimulating our need to experiment or try new products.

From the perspective of the individual, this endless pursuit of happiness can become difficult. According to the Harvard Business Review, consciously pursuing happiness can actually drain the sense of joy we usually get from the good things we experience. Davies says that the happiness industry becomes exhausting and a moral obligation. Pascal Bruckner says, "Unhappiness is not only unhappiness, it is worse yet, it is a failure to be happy."

Hug Me vending machine

Yet there is a social drive for us not only to appear happy, but an expectation that we should be happy all the time. This results in a search for emotionally fulfilling and sensory experiences through brands. Social and sensory experiences boil down to memorability and happiness has become a brand issue to manage. Coca-Cola came fourth overall in the Ask Afrika Icon Brands awards and its Hug Me vending machine activation is a perfect example of getting the right balance of social and sensory experience through marketing.

"I supposed there is also something to consider if we hug machines and you will probably know of many more instances

and examples where we are migrating basic needs to technology for fulfilment," says Sarina de Beer, MD of Ask Afrika.

Coca Cola are using machines to connect nations through its Happiness campaign, doing this brilliantly with India and Pakistan, [click here to view the video](#).

Cinema produces more 'happiness'

At the recent ESOMAR conference, Ask Afrika shared an interesting study it conducted on happiness per media channel. When looking at print, the researchers found the largest increase in happiness after exposure to a specific media moment, but this increase was from a low base.

Cinema showed the biggest increase after the media moment off the highest base. Cinema is associated with a happy space, we relax, feel happy typically share the moment; it is crucial to capture both social and sensory elements.

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