

**MILLENNIALS AND WHOLE PERSON MARKETING:
HOW THE SHIFT FROM A PROTECTED AND CONFIDENT GENERATION TO CYNICAL
PHILOSOPHERS IS CHANGING HOW BRANDS ARE PERCEIVED**

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ABSTRACT

Millennials are the next rising generation; the children of the Baby Boomers are on track to dominate the twenty-first century. This article analyzes how Millennials and their values may cause corporations to rethink the role of philanthropy in their marketing strategies. This study explores the Millennial experience during the three years they participated in the National Mentoring Program. This experience enabled the researchers to discover the concept of whole person marketing--the next generation of cause-related marketing efforts--and its subsequent use as a corporate tool to enhance brand trust and satisfaction for Millennials.

INTRODUCTION

The term "Millennials" is a generational description of children born between 1982 and 2003 (Winograd and Hais, 2008, p.121). Millennials are the first generation to grow up with cause-related marketing (CRM) as a given in the marketing mix. As the Millennials grew up and developed a culture that is primarily team-based in its problem-solving approach (Howe and Strauss, 2000), so too did corporate CRM. The present reality for Millennials, as indicated from the research introduced in this paper, is that cause-related marketing has evolved into whole person marketing. Whole person marketing occurs in five stages: awareness, satisfaction, experience, belief and value. Further, these states are driven by social, emotional and physical experiences. When these experiences are deployed with systematic methodology by a corporation, the result is an increase in loyalty and trust in the firm's commitment to community, consumers and sustainability (Hutton, 2007; Smith, 1999; McElhaney, 2007). Therefore, the intent of this

paper is to introduce the concept of whole person marketing, and its value to corporations through the alignment to Millennials' perceptions and values. This research is based on the experiences of Millennials participating in the National Mentoring Program (NMP) while working at a beer company (Molson Coors), 2007 to 2010. Our research will demonstrate that Millennials respond to and align themselves with a brand when they participate both in the stages of whole person marketing and while experiencing physical, social, and emotional components.

BACKGROUND

In the 1980's, articles began to appear describing the benefits of community donations to corporations. Varadarajan and Menon (1988) published the watershed article that justified philanthropy in the eyes of business and marketing. The article defined cause-related marketing, its characteristics, and the way corporations can produce benefits for both non-profit organizations and corporations by donating funds to charities. Cause-related marketing developed from a single donation based marketing tool in the 1980's, to a CEO donation brand-building tool in the 1990's, to the current environment in which the physical, social and emotional experience or whole person marketing is required. Presented below is an overview of cause-related marketing from 2005 to present, which primarily focuses on transparency and sustainability and whole person marketing.

An emerging trend indicates that corporations with good reputations are also corporations with a solid return on investment. A 2006 study that polled 282 analysts in North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific found a strong correlation between reputation and

return on shareholder value (Sudhaman, 2006). This study indicates that a relationship between corporations' social responsibility (CSR) and profitability exists. In 1988, a study of 32 companies found that "firms deemed satisfactory in social performance were also profitable at average or above average levels for their industry" (Cogill, 1991, p. 45). The study also indicates that companies that did not reach a satisfactory rating did not have a profitable year. When corporations invest in social performance and align with their brand the practice is profitable (Cohan, 2004; Sudhaman, 2006).

Whole Person Marketing. Northrop Frye suggests that education involves more than just engaging the mind; it engages the "whole person" (Frye, 1963, p. 66). Marketing, too, engages the whole person. "Millennials are civic, partisan unifiers" (Winograd & Haas, 2008, p.34). Whole person marketing moves consumers through five stages, using physical, social and emotional experiences to establish and maintain brand loyalty (Donohue, 2009). Previous studies have found that, when deployed correctly, whole person marketing creates an increase in CSR media. For example, for the Molson Coors media mix, there was an increase in CSR media from 2% in 2006 to 11% in 2009. Trust in the brand increased 9% in 2007 from 2005 (Financial Post, 2007). It appears that when physical, social, and emotional connections are made with the brand, long-term positive effects for the brand include trust, loyalty and an increase in positive communication about the brand. Millennials, align with these CSP associated values and appear to reward brands that invest in their communities and help others. Mission and values are no longer as important as actions and follow-through that demonstrate transparency and community sustainability (Donohue, Carter, Jensen, 2010). In turn, this engages Millennials with the brand and, in turn, overall positively effects for the brand increase.

METHOD

The NMP study follows a qualitative research direction. Qualitative research is recommended for probative discovery objectives (Strauss, 1990). Qualitative methods are particularly effective in educational settings (Hatch, 2002), such as the collegiate NMP arrangement. Based on the classification of research designs (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000), a thematic design is used to provide extensive discussion about the major themes that supported the research. Recognizing that this paper provides general qualitative findings from the NMP

study, the discussion is framed in terms of content analysis feedback from student interviews and concept application based on deductive logic and the literature.

An individual cross-sectional survey was conducted using a self-report questionnaire instrument. A convenience sampling approach was used to administer the interviews, which allowed for a combination of personal, mail, and electronic contact. The basic nature of the questions is intended to facilitate easy and informal interview responses. Qualitative content analysis was also used to reach original findings about the favorability of the brand experience and perception of the brand. Students were interviewed on the phone (Appendix A) and were sent an online questionnaire pre-mentoring experience (Appendix B). Post-mentoring experience students were interviewed, when possible, in person, or on the phone. Students were also sent a questionnaire via email post-mentoring experience. Interview and survey questions were the same for pre- and post-interviews and for the three years of the program.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The intent of this paper is to introduce the concept of whole person marketing and its value to corporations in aligning with the perceptions and values of Millennials. This section describes the impact of the NMP experiences on Millennials and their perception of the Molson Coors Brand. This impact took place over five stages of perception, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Each stage identified from the interviews and questionnaires that indicated Millennials moved through each stage of perception based on success with physical, emotional or social experiences. The NMP was the frame through which these experiences were deployed systematically. The results indicate that Millennials' loyalty and trust in the Molson Coors commitment to community, consumers and sustainability increased. They believed in and became loyal to the brand primarily due to their whole person marketing experience.

FIGURE 1

The 5 Stages of Perception



We found that, by creating a program that built awareness of the brand and its mission while physically engaging the Millennials in conversation

both on and off line, the brewer began to build brand awareness with this target audience. For the majority of the Millennials, overall satisfaction with brand increased. When asked about their view of Molson Coors social responsibility before and after their experience with the company through the NMP, the students agreed or strongly agreed that they saw the company as more socially responsible.

Once satisfied that the NMP was not just an exercise in public relations, Millennials, while working at the charities, began to see, feel and understand the impact of the brand's dollars on society. The Millennials experienced this impact not just on themselves, but on the communities they worked in. Towards the final month of the program, the Millennials reaffirmed their beliefs in themselves and in the corporation's ability to do good. The Millennials emotional, physical and social experience of the community led them to value and become loyal to the brand. As one student said during a party, "Nobody in my family will ever drink anything other than Molson: they helped me pay for school, saved our soccer field and gave me a mentor for life."

CONCLUSION

The experience of The National Mentoring Program indicates that Millennials and cause-related marketing have developed because of the cultural

chaos that has characterized the last 10 years. Unethical behavior and failure to punish wrongdoers are driving Millennials to adopt values that resemble their grandparents' morals. This same chaos has redirected brands'/corporations' cause-related marketing from aligning with a cause to engaging Millennials in community change. This evolved marketing practice has been titled Whole Person Marketing because it engages the whole consumer through physical, social and emotional activities. Whole Person Marketing occurs in five stages: awareness, satisfaction, experience, belief and value with each stage being driven by a physical, social and emotional activity with the brand. When these experiences are deployed with a systematic methodology that moves consumers through all five perception frames, the result is a sustained increase in consumers' value and belief in the brand. Millennials have shifted from being protected and confident consumers to cynical philosophers, who share the morals and values of the GI generation. This shift is causing corporations to rethink how they engage Millennials. We tested a Whole Person Marketing campaign. Whole Person Marketing is valuable to corporations because research predicts that by aligning with the perceptions and values of Millennials through physical, social and emotional interaction, Millennials will understand that the brand shares their moral purpose and they will, therefore, engage positively with the brand rather than distrust it.