

## Money can buy you love

### Are we being manipulated into buying brands?

<sup>1</sup> BRANDS are accused of all sorts of evils, from threatening our health and destroying our environment to corrupting our children. Brands are so powerful, it is said, that they force us to look alike, eat alike and be alike.

<sup>2</sup> This grim picture has been made popular by many recent anti-branding books. The argument has been most forcefully stated in Naomi Klein's book *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. Its argument runs something like this. In the new global economy, brands represent a huge portion of the value of a company and, increasingly, its biggest source of profits. So companies are switching from showcasing product features to marketing aspirations and the dream of a more exciting lifestyle.

<sup>3</sup> Historically, building a brand was rather simple. A logo was a straightforward guarantee of quality and consistency, or it was a signal that a product was something new. For that, consumers were prepared to pay a premium. Building a brand nationally required little more

than an occasional advertisement on a handful of television or radio stations showing how the product tasted better or drove faster. There was little regulation. It was easy for brands such as Coca-Cola, Kodak and Marlboro to become hugely powerful. Because shopping was still a local business and competition limited, a successful brand could maintain its lead and high prices for years. A strong brand acted as an effective barrier to entry for competing products.

<sup>4</sup> Consumers are now bombarded with choices. They are also harder to reach. They are busier, more distracted and have more media to choose from. They are "commercials veterans" experiencing up to 1,500 pitches a day. They are more cynical than ever about marketing and less responsive to messages to buy. Jonathan Bond and Richard Kirshenbaum, authors of *Under The Radar - Talking To Today's Cynical Consumers*, say "some of the most cynical consumers are the young." Nearly half of all US college students have

### Glossary

**manipulated** influenced to do what someone else wants

**corrupt** make morally bad

**aspirations** hopes and wishes

**bombarded** repeatedly attacked

**veterans** very experienced people

taken marketing courses and "know the enemy". For them, "shooting down advertising has become a kind of sport."

<sup>5</sup> Marketers have to take some of the blame. While consumers have changed beyond recognition, marketing has not. Even in the USA, home to nine of the world's ten most valuable brands, it can be a shockingly old-fashioned business. Marketing theory is still largely based on the days when Procter & Gamble's brands dominated the USA, and its advertising agencies wrote the rules. Those rules focused on the product and where to sell it, not the customer. The new marketing approach is to develop a brand not a product - to sell a lifestyle or a personality, to appeal to emotions. (It is a much harder task than describing the features and benefits of a product.) However, brands of the future will have to stand for all of this and more. Not only will they need to be a stamp of product quality and a promise of a more desirable lifestyle but they will also have to project an image of social responsibility ■

Read the text and match the headings a - f with paragraphs 1 - 5. There is an extra heading.

a Brands past	_____
b Advertising brands	_____
c The new consumers	_____
d Guilty	_____
e The case against brands	_____
f The importance of brands	_____

Read paragraph three again. Are these statements True or False?

- 1 It was relatively easy in the past to create a new brand.
- 2 Buying a branded product did not cost customers more.
- 3 Brands were developed for the international market.
- 4 The government closely controlled the markets at home.
- 5 Brands deterred other companies from entering the market.

Find words in the text to complete the wordmap below.



Complete the magazine article with the following words:

Cynical consumers competition markets effective pitches customers  
marketers impressed



# Saying 'I do', to the marketers

When young couples get married in the USA they also receive a gift bag marked 'newly-wed kit'.

In a world of ever increasing <sup>1</sup> competition many companies are happy to use this new way to reach <sup>2</sup> customers. Corporate <sup>3</sup> marketers say that certain points in life make people especially vulnerable to sales <sup>4</sup> impressed. Companies

such as Procter & Gamble have found this to be a very <sup>5</sup> cynical way to target extremely profitable <sup>6</sup> consumers such as young couples. US newly-weds spend an average of \$70bn in the first year of marriage. One study shows that 67 per cent of women wear the same perfume they wore when they got married and a Bride's magazine study showed that after three years of marriage women were still

<sup>7</sup> impressed of the same stores they had shopped in before the wedding. While the gift bags do appeal to a lot of young couples, others are a little less <sup>8</sup> impressed. As one rather <sup>9</sup> impressed young man said when he found a sample of deodorant and an offer for a new chequebook in his gift bag, 'does this mean that marriage stands for body odour and financial worries? This stuff seems better suited for a divorce kit!'

### **The importance of brands**

Pat Hill is a brand strategy consultant. Listen to her talk about the importance of brands and answer the questions.

1. Why do companies need to create brands?
  
2. What are the five most important characteristic of a brand?

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3. What has channel N° 5 brand been successful for so long?
  
4. What helped establish the N°5 brand in the 1960?