

Gewohnheiten, Einstellungen, Motive und Erwartungen, die relevant für ein Produkt und eine Marke sind“. (Marketing Lexikon, erweitert)

- “A penetrating, discerning understanding that unlocks an opportunity.” (David Taylor, Added Value)
- “A revelation that makes your management, stockholders, brand team, innovation, R&D, designers, advertising agency and every person on earth go aha!” (Acupoll)

You can make a strong case for any of the above although personally I prefer the last two. This is simply because they not only describe what insights are but also imply that it's only when they are leveraged that they are truly useful.

This brings us, conveniently, to the heart of the issue.

The most interesting paradox in marketing

The concept of “Consumer Insights” is almost as old as marketing itself, which must mean it's approaching its 50th birthday. Most marketing professionals today have a fair understanding of what Consumer Insights are, even if they define them slightly differently – see above. Many, too, realise that insights are a powerful tool when applied properly, so it's rather surprising to realise just how few of the marketing activities these professionals develop actually leverage Consumer Insights. Something doesn't quite add up.

The average 20-spot prime time advertising block contains perhaps one insight-driven film – and remember that prime time tends to be booked by large companies with sizeable marketing departments who presumably are more professional than most. Products and packaging which reflect insights directly are just as rare and if you spot anything that remotely resembles an insight lurking behind the idea for an event, sponsoring deal or a website then you're either far more observant than I am or just plain generous.

So why the paradox? Why is it that something considered to be powerful by most marketers and which is available to everyone is used so rarely? Why is it that when a brand such as Dove bases their whole brand platform on Consumer Insights

and the marketing world applauds their efforts as one, so few other companies end up following their lead?

I believe there are two main reasons for the dissonance between belief and behaviour here. Firstly, strong Consumer Insights are not as easy to find and mould into a manageable form as they first appear. Anyone who works with them regularly will know just how much time and effort is involved before the results are just right - and time is in short supply.

Secondly, even strong insights rarely "make it to market." Before they can find themselves reflected in marketing activities, they have to surmount a veritable obstacle course in the development process. An insight is often in competition with other criteria that "simply have to be" fulfilled by the activities being developed. And, as reflecting them is not the easiest criterion to fulfil when developing marketing activities, insights often simply drop off the radar, maintaining an existence only in documents and briefings - but not in any real-life activities to which consumers are exposed.

The most interesting paradox in marketing need not continue to exist. If enough marketing professionals understand that leveraging insights is a "must" rather than a "nice-to-do" then it will simply disappear. And, as a result, the world of marketing activities will be far more interesting for both consumers and marketers.