



B *k* R *e* A *y* N *s* D

## 15 Trends for 2015

**NEW YORK, NY, November 24, 2014** – The new year 2015 will soon be upon us. In numerology 15 is the combination of the number 1 (representing leadership and forward movement) and the number 5 (numeric for business and finance), thus 15 becomes the fusion of leadership and forward momentum for brands and marketers.

When it comes to the future, it's been said that there are three kinds of marketers: those who let it happen, those who make it happen, and those who wonder what happened. As we do every year, insights from Brand Keys' validated and predictive loyalty and engagement metrics were collected from over 100,000 consumers this year.

Here are 15 critical trends that will become brand realities in 2015:

- 1. Every One of a Kind**  
Consumers more and more crave – and expect – more and more customized and personalized products, services and experiences. This will be fueled by . . .
- 2. Magnified Human Technology**  
Digital and mobile in all forms will fuel the sense of empowerment and possibility for the individual consumer.
- 3. Real Brand Engagement**  
Awareness is a given. Marketers will link “engagement” to how well the brand is perceived versus its’ category’s Ideal, rather than counting “likes” or just trying to leverage imagery.
- 4. The Everything Expectation**  
The ability for brands to accurately measure unarticulated and constantly-expanding emotional consumer expectations will provide significant advantages to engage, delight, and profit.
- 5. Real Time Becomes Real Important**  
Increased real-time expectations already subsume brand and will spread to areas of product availability, delivery, and customer service, all becoming important influencers in purchase decisions.
- 6. It's Still The Brand, Stupid:**  
Increased consumer expectations will be accompanied by enhanced perceptions of products and services as commodities.

Brands will need to differentiate and 'stand for something' meaningful, emotional, and important to consumers. Oh, and. . .

7. **Category is King:**

To engage those smarter, high-expectation consumers, brand need to be smarter about their own category-specific emotional values that they can leverage and own.

8. **Brands Will Get Emotional:**

Successful brands need to identify the emotional values in the category in which they compete, and utilize them as a foundation for meaningful positioning, differentiation, and authentic storytelling.

9. **Non-Fiction Storytelling:**

Storytelling is fine, but the stories brands tell must reflect real brand values and category realities and meet consumers' believability criteria, otherwise marketers will entertain rather than engage.

10. **The Closing of the Showroom:**

The consumer will use five or more online sources to facilitate purchase decisions, reducing reliance on traditional brick-and-mortar retail. But having identified that trend. . .

11. **High-End Shoppers Expect High-Tech Shopping Experiences:**

Retail will include a seamless transition from human-only service to digital assistants and virtual valets. Watch for more RFID, beacons, and touchscreens to supercharge the shopping experience.

12. **Much More Multiculturalism:**

As ethnic groups grow, brands and retailers will integrate a sense of culture and culture-specific brand experience with all forms of outreach.

13. **Online Authenticity:**

As 'The Internet of All Things' matures, consumers will expect greater security as regards personal purchase data, which will act as a confidence builder for online sources and the brands using them.

14. **Dead-On Digital:**

Brands will shift their digital platform question from, "should I be here?" to "what should I do now that I am here?" with success linked not to outreach alone, but contextual relevance.

15. **Going Native:**

Content marketing will continue to become a specialty unto itself while tools like the Digital Platform GPS will optimize placement and resolve issues related to native advertising, digital delivery platforms and shorter consumer attention spans. Metrics will move away from

counting the number of views, shares and likes toward real brand engagement (see Trend #3).

One doesn't need predictive metrics to observe that every day marketers face new challenges. But, as the saying goes, if you want to do something new, you have to stop doing something old. These 15 trends provide brands with the opportunity to break old habits and embrace new methods of brand engagement, new business models, new technologies, and profitable opportunities for the coming year. Best wishes.

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