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Daily Insight Article:

3 UNEXPECTED THINGS BRANDS ARE DOING TO ATTRACT YOUNG CONSUMERS

BRANDS ARE TAKING SOME NEW APPROACHES TO IMPRESS MILLENNIALS AND TEENS—AND WE PROMISE WE’RE NOT GOING TO SAY “GOING DIGITAL.”

Pleasing young consumers today is no easy feat. Retailers’ have had [hits and misses](#) with Millennials thanks to their shifting interests and priorities. Some tactics that have worked for brands include embracing social consciousness, going anti-Photoshop, prioritizing diversity, and, of course, modernizing to offer more seamless, easy, and tech-centric experiences. But CSR and digitizing aren’t the only things that brands are doing to attract young consumers today. Here are five things that brands are trying out to impress Millennials and teens right now:

1. PAYING OFF THEIR STUDENT LOANS

Enrollment at U.S. colleges and graduate schools [rose by](#) 24% from 2002 to 2012, but the total outstanding student debt has quadrupled since 2000 to \$1.2 trillion today. Millions of students have been left unable to repay their debt. For many, many Millennials, that student debt is a huge burden that has delayed their abilities to buy a house or get married. Now workplaces and other brands are stepping up to help solve one of their biggest challenges: Fidelity [has begun](#) offering full time employees up to \$2,000 a year toward student loans, with a cap of \$10,000. At the moment only three percent of companies offer this perk, but the number is expected to increase with more companies like Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Chegg, and LendEDU leading the way. Meanwhile, Boston-based Radius Bank [is offering](#) a program that puts 1% of all purchases (with no limit) towards paying down student loans. The plan is a partnership with tech-startup Gradifi Inc., which manages student loan repayment benefits, and says, “We’re trying to build an ecosystem for Millennials” and “provide our members with another innovative way to get out of debt faster.”

2. DITCHING COOKIE-CUTTER DESIGN

According to Ypulse’s [Unique Is The New Cool](#) research, 79% of 13-33-year-olds would rather eat at a restaurant that is “one of a kind, unlike other restaurants” than “reliable and consistent like a chain restaurant.” Chains like Shake Shack have been expanding while prioritizing uniqueness, amassing Millennial fans who want a more unique in-store experience. Each location is designed to tell the brand’s story, with information on local food sources prominently displayed, perks like employee-curated playlist downloads, and “non-chain” feeling décor. The brand’s director of marketing and communications told Campaign, “Everything about our physical settings exudes our brand. We tell stories about our local food purveyors on our menus, specials boards and the digital signs hanging on the wall. Your table at a Shack is probably made from wood recycled from old bowling alley lanes — and it says so right on the top of it.” Now long-standing chains are also ditching the cookie-cutter design that so many currently use. Taco Bell [has announced](#) plans to completely rebrand their locations, introducing not one but four new restaurant designs: Heritage, Modern Explorer,

California Sol, and Urban Edge. The brand [has chosen](#) a variety of styles because “it’s no longer one size fits all,” and “consumers are looking for localized, customized and personalized experiences that reflect the diversity of their communities.” While they’ll look different, all locations will feature an “open kitchen” to showcase fresh foods and “community tables designed for friends to hang out.”

3. SHRINKING INDULGENT PRODUCTS

As we’ve [said before](#), Millennials’ interest in healthy eating is a complex one. Yes, there is no doubt that they want to eat healthy: a Ypulse monthly survey [found that](#) 54% say they eat healthy, even when no one’s watching and 91% say they care about their health and being healthy. But they’re also a generation that celebrates all kinds of foods, and prioritize taste above all: 48% [say that](#) they make eating foods that taste good a priority in their life, and 59% [say they](#) care more about how foods taste than how healthy they are. Ypulse’s research [has shown](#) 78% let themselves indulge in unhealthy food. In other words, while they might be prioritizing health, they’re not giving up indulgences and trying to strike a balance. So what if those indulgent treats were available in more good-for-you sizes? According to [Adweek](#), in response to shifting views on healthy eating, many food brands are “introducing smaller versions of signature offerings.” McDonald’s is piloting the Mac Jr., Starbucks has bought back mini Frappuccinos for a limited time, Coke and Pepsi are offering mini cans, and Oreo has introduced Oreo Thins. Starbucks even announced that they created the mini Frappuccino because of customer requests. Smaller products allow for mini health “cheats,” and could also improve brand’s images as they fight to convince consumers they have their best interests at heart...even though they’re not very good for them.

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