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Understanding the love index - by Diana Podaski

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As we kick off yet another wedding season, love is in the air. However, it's streaming farther than Cape Cod nuptials and making its way to our industry. As marketers, we are talking about the "love index" – essentially, putting into context the feelings people get from a brand experience.

As Herculano Rodrigues, associate director of locations and analytics of the Javelin Group out of London told us at ICSC RECon, after conducting research, his study revealed five dimensions for actually measuring customer's feelings. The five love index dimensions include; fun, relevant, engaging, social and helpful.

- Fun – Holds people's attention in an entertaining way.
- Relevant – Provides clear and customized information.
- Engaging – Identifies with individual needs and wants.
- Social – Connects people with each other.
- Helpful – Is efficient, easy and adapts over time.

Now, in order for a brand to succeed, Herculano described, the brand must meet at least two of the five love index dimensions. He noted Walmart as an example, qualifying for both "relevant" and "helpful" categories. The big box brand is keeping very relevant these days as it is in the process of buying out the trendy men's clothing retailer, Bonobos (for \$310 million) in order to compete with Amazon's fashion sector. And on the "helpful" scale, just this spring, Walmart scored a patent for an in-store drone system to be used like messenger pigeons so customers don't have to walk across the large footprint to get a product or wait on staff to return from back rooms.

We're also seeing Hennes & Mauritz (H&M brands) adapt to change and up the love index, as its adding "80 stores from the company's half-dozen smaller brands this year vs more H&M outlets," according to Bloomberg. This includes a new concept called Arket, a higher-end store with not just

clothes but home goods and a café, launching this fall in London.

As retailers adapt to more technology and social media I think we'll see this love index become more and more pertinent. We now have 4-D movie theatres (fun & relevant), fitness classes at workout apparel stores (fun & engaging), sharing communities like Rent the Runway (social & helpful) and work-sharing businesses utilizing restaurants (helpful & relevant). The common theme is change based on pleasing the customer and keeping them engaged.

Think about your brand, your audiences and whether or not you're hitting any of the five love index dimensions. It's time to invest in perception.

Fun Fact: Our average walking speed has increased by 10% in the last 20 years. Sourced from Robert Colvile.

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