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Future of garden centres in the hands of a new shopper



LEADING consumer and shopper behaviouralist Ken Hughes is speaking at the 2016 Garden Centre Association's (GCA) annual conference next week (January 24 until 27, 2016) to talk about the customer of the future.

Ken blends expertise in consumer psychology, social anthropology, behavioural economics and neuromarketing to answer the question: Why do shoppers buy and how can we make them buy more?

He says: "The digital native of today is 35, has children and a garden. These are not pre-family urbanites and they make up more and more of a garden centre's core target every day.

"The technology shifts are of course interesting, but they are only the catalysts for what is really happening. There is a new shopper and consumer DNA emerging, fundamentally different from anything that has come before. The future of the garden centre business is in the hands of this consumer generation, with all other life-stages also heavily influenced by digital interaction.

“These consumers are hard-wired differently. They will not react to the same stimulus that has worked for the previous generations. It is time to future proof and understand what this will mean for your industry and for your very survival as a business.

“Using a blend of social, cultural and digital anthropology, retail futurology and global consumer behaviour shifts, it’s time to examine where this could all be heading. If your shopper DNA is changing, don’t you think it makes sense to examine this new blueprint to truly understand the implications to your business?”

Ken, who is the CEO of Glacier Consulting, is acknowledged as one of the most respected thought leaders on Shopper Marketing and Shopper Centricity, Omnichannel & Digital Strategy alongside Retail Futurology.

He added: “Most organisations put the focus of an omnichannel strategy too heavily on the available technologies – the tablets and smartphones, the apps and social media. But technology is only ever an enabler for us to build better connections with our shoppers and consumers. Technology itself is never what we should be focusing on.

“The real change is taking place in the global shifts within social and cultural norms. There are huge differences in expectations between consumers born Before Google (BG) and After Google (AG). As these Digital Natives (born in the 1980s) are now entering their 30s, we are set to witness one of the biggest shifts in global consumer behaviour, perhaps since the invention of the teenager in the US during the 1950s.

“What do this generation expect from life, relationships, brands and retailers? What will they demand from a consumption and purchase experience? And most importantly how we must prepare to meet these needs in the house, home and garden centre business.”

As well as running his own business, Ken is also a part-time professor in consumer behaviour and a board member & strategic advisor to many organisations on the future of consumerism and shopper trends.

Iain Wylie, Chief Executive of the GCA, said: “We’re delighted Ken is joining us at this year’s conference. His consumer insight organisation, Glacier Consulting, began life as a market research agency, but he soon identified his key area of interest was people, not markets.

“How humans express their desires and expectations through how and what we buy has become his sole focus, resulting in his agency advising a global client base of some of the world’s biggest brands - Unilever, 3M, IKEA, Coca-Cola, AXA and Heineken to name a few.

“He is famous for his inspiring keynote speeches, which he delivers in a captivating and highly energetic manner, all served with a generous helping of Irish wit!”

The GCA’s annual conference will be held at The Grand Hotel in Brighton from January 24 until 27, 2016. More than 300 delegates are expected to attend the event.

For further information, please call 0118 930 8918. Alternatively, log on to

www.facebook.com/GardenCentreAssociation or follow the organisation on Twitter at www.twitter.com/GC_Association.

Photograph: Consumer and shopper behaviouralist and CEO of Glacier Consulting Ken Hughes who will be speaking at the GCA Conference next week.