


"Living Brands signals the beginning of consumer empowerment, as Raymond Nadeau shows the way to a much-needed renaissance in advertising creativity."

—George Lois, legendary advertising pioneer



LIVING BRANDS

collaboration + innovation = customer fascination

Raymond A. Nadeau

CONCLUSION:

TO LOVE IS TO BE LOVED

I would like to conclude this chapter with a case study on one celebrity and cultural icon who, surprisingly, is also one of the best marketers out there. Fabio. Yes, that's right Fabio—the Ford model who has appeared on literally thousands of romance novel covers. He is what I would call a *spontaneous celebrity* and subsequently a *spontaneous brand*—one that was created by the women who loved to see him on book covers and demanded to know more about him. As a celebrity, he is a product of a collective dream. But that is not all. It just so happens that he truly loves women and has translated that love into an extremely successful clothing brand—not through any kind of gimmick but through a genuine understanding and affection for his consumers—women.

THE EVER-FABULOUS FABIO: WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE?

Fabio has successfully parlayed his phenomenal rise to fame as a top Ford model, gracing the covers of thousands of romance novels, into many major advertising and marketing campaigns, as well as into an extremely successful fashion-brand venture, an outerwear garment line sold exclusively at Wal-Mart's Sam's Club.

Fabio's commercial success is attributable largely to the critical role women played in creating both the myth and the reality of the Fabio brand. In fact, Fabio is the very personification of a consumer-created brand. And because women created the brand themselves, they have a vested interest in seeing their brand prosper and grow. Yes, that's right. The Fabio brand model is indeed the wave of the future.

Consider the success of his outerwear line. Created from the concept of an outerwear line that warms both the body and heart, it sells so well that it can hardly be kept in stock. But this does not surprise me after meeting Fabio, the man. On meeting Fabio, one thing becomes immediately apparent (besides the fact that he truly is a hunk in real life!). Fabio genuinely respects and loves women as human beings. This has translated perfectly to fashion. Fabio clearly enjoys making women feel both appreciated and good about themselves.

Fabio gets it. Because he truly loves women, he has been able to embrace them (figuratively) and create a brand, as well as speaking for other brands in a common language—the language of love. It's as simple as that. It does not surprise me that his recent return to the classic “I Can't Believe It's Not Butter” campaign, his fascinatingly charming dual roles in Nationwide Insurance's hugely successful Super Bowl ad, and his “larger than life” role, which included his image featured on a 10-story building façade as part of Oral-B's feminine outreach efforts have only reconfirmed his star and brand power, proving once and for all that romance truly never goes out of style.

The connective thread of this chapter has been that great brands are built on great consumer interaction. I recently came across a press kit containing a reprint of an article in which one of America's fastest-rising celebrities was asked her opinion regarding her views relative to the type of brand she would see herself as. She compared celebrity careers to cars. Although beautiful and shiny when new, cars are known for rapid depreciation. This celebrity has no plans of becoming a car; instead, she would see her career and her brand becoming a house. She noted wisely that with regular maintenance and the occasional upgrade, a career—and a celebrity brand—has the potential to become a house. And, houses, unlike cars, appreciate over time. Frankly, I was very impressed by this insight. Sadly, however,