



In his first speech after becoming Labour leader, Ed Miliband prompted the phrase 'squeezed middle'. This has been picked up to such an extent that the Oxford English Dictionary has nominated it as 'word (phrase?) of the year' in 2011!

In the world of marketing and communications, the issue of the 'squeezed middle' has been with us for many years. There are examples in numerous sectors where those products or services occupying the middle ground have struggled to establish and maintain a sustainable rationale and, ultimately, to justify their existence.

Two topical examples spring to mind

1. High Street Stores

Unfortunate failures in retail are blamed on a variety of circumstances; at the moment, typically, 'tough economic conditions'. There is no doubt that economic conditions are tough but the retailers that survive and thrive are those that stay closest to their customers and are able to develop and articulate a clear offering and proposition to a well-targeted group of customers.

The middle ground is particularly unforgiving when times are tough and most of the retailers who have fallen by the wayside in recent months, without naming names, have consciously or otherwise occupied this space.

2. Mainstream Universities

The rise in tuition fees from this autumn in Higher Education is already posing a challenge for universities. To the outside world, and particularly prospective students, many universities seem the same, in terms of their courses and general offering.

The marketing challenge for these institutions, really for the first time, will therefore increasingly be to develop a strategy and proposition which creates a meaningful differentiated positioning, and then to promote this consistently to their target audiences. Those universities that continue to fall in the middle will be in most danger of lack of saliency and, as a result, declining numbers and commercial viability.

These are just two examples; more generally, all organisations, whether in the public, private or voluntary sector, should regularly review their customer proposition and ensure its clarity and saliency. Importantly, this should be done from the 'outside : in', from the customer's perspective, rather than from 'inside : out'.

You won't be surprised to hear that proposition development and positioning are core Quadrant capabilities, and that we adopt a customer-centric approach when addressing client requirements. If you want to make sure you avoid, or thrive in, the 'squeezed middle' in 2012, why not talk to us?

What we do and who we work for

Quadrant is a well established provider of marketing and communications solutions and resource, since 1988.

We deliver research, evaluation, insight, breakthroughs, marketing plans and resource for the public and private sectors, often through our framework places with Buying Solutions and the COI.

We have worked with over 200 clients across a variety of sectors. For case studies related to clients featured here, please go to www.qcl.co.uk/case_studies.html

If you think we might be able to help you with your challenges, call William Annandale on 020 7240 7200 or email william.annandale@qcl.co.uk We will be happy to arrange a no obligation meeting.

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