

The laws of consumer power in motion

Written by Cheryl Pearson-McNeil
Friday, 18 November 2011 14:37

Let's give a shout out to English mathematician Sir Isaac Newton who, way back in 1687, developed the Theories of Black Consumer Power. Well, ok, if you want to get *technical* about it he didn't name it that. He named it The Three Laws of Motion. But wow, do they explain a lot about your consumer power.

Newton's First Law of Motion, otherwise known as the Law of Inertia, states "an object at rest will remain at rest unless acted on by an unbalanced force." The Second Law of Motion essentially says "motion acceleration is produced when a force acts on a mass. The greater the mass the greater the amount of force needed to move the object." And the Third Law of Motion is "for every action there is an equal (and opposite) reaction." Those of you who read this column regularly, immediately, see the connection between Newton's Three Laws of Motion and your power, right? For those of you who need a little help read on.

Globally, Nielsen measures what consumers like you watch and buy. Our clients -- advertisers, networks, major corporations and retailers -- pay us for this information to help them best determine which programs, services and/or products to provide you. This is a clear case of the Third Law: "for every action (whatever/wherever/whenever you watch or buy something) there is an equal and opposite reaction (companies determine where and whether to provide more or less of a program, product or service or advertising dollars based on your action).

But what if you don't like how a company is reacting to your actions? For example, African-Americans watch 40% more TV than others (action) but we don't often see people who look like us or positive images of ourselves portrayed on television (an opposite reaction). Then you should invoke the First Law which says: An object in motion continues in motion with the same speed and in the same direction *unless acted upon by an unbalanced force.* YOU can be the unbalanced force. Stop watching the programs that don't portray positive images. Tell your kids to stop watching them too! Speak up when products aren't in your stores, or when the stores themselves aren't in your neighborhoods. Unless you do something to throw things off balance they will continue in the same direction.

Nielsen recently released *The State of the African-American Consumer Report*, a groundbreaking, in-depth, first-of-its kind study developed in collaboration with the National Newspaper Publishers Association. It highlights the buying power and areas where Blacks over-index (or use more of) specific products and services.

- We make more shopping trips annually each year (167) than other households
- 1/3 of all African-Americans own a smartphone (that's 14 million of us ya'll!)
- We talk more on our mobile phones than whites (1300 minutes vs. 606)
- We tend to be brand loyal

But companies may not be *reacting* accordingly: In the advertising industry, money spent on television advertising *alone* reached \$69 billion in 2010. But for African-American media? Only \$1.9 billion was spent *totality for all media buys*:

- \$916 million on TV
- \$704 million on spot radio
- \$362 million in national magazines

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When it comes to advertising, some companies are doing it right: Procter & Gamble remained number one in African-American media buys, followed by L'Oreal (SoftSheen Carson by the way is a L'Oreal brand), Johnson & Johnson, General Motors and McDonald's were the top five companies who advertised to the African-American market. Their ads have people who look like us in them and we can find their products and/or services in our neighborhoods.

We have to move other companies in this same positive direction. That's not always easy. But the Second Law of Motion, which I've dubbed The David versus Goliath Law can be helpful. It basically says, the bigger something is the more *force* you're going to have to exert to move it. You or I alone may not be able to get more advertising dollars going to Black Media. You or I alone may not be able to get the images changed on the screen. But collectively, with a projected spending power of \$1.1 trillion by 2015? Lordy, what a force we can be!

What does it take to get you into motion? Download The State of the African American Consumer Report at www.nielsen.com/africanamerican or look for an excerpt of it as an insert in your local Black newspaper. And then get moving. More power to you.

Cheryl Pearson-McNeil is senior vice president of public affairs and government relations for Nielsen. For more information and studies go to www.nielsenwire.com.