

The Retail World's Response to Queen Elizabeth II's Passing

How did retail react to the death of the biggest brand of all?

On 8 September 2022 Queen Elizabeth II, Britain's longest ever reigning monarch, passed away at Balmoral Castle aged 96. Tributes inevitably poured in from all across the globe as millions expressed condolences for her family, whilst also paying homage to a woman who was undoubtedly a quintessential British symbol during her time as queen. Alongside world leaders, musicians and actors, the world of retail joined in paying their respects.

Britain's biggest retailer Tesco tweeted: "We are deeply saddened by the death of Her Majesty The Queen. Our thoughts and condolences are with the Royal Family, as we mourn the loss of our longest-serving British monarch. We are indebted to her dedicated service to this country." Whilst M&S chief executive Stuart Machin aptly described the Queen as "our nation's strength and stay. Our rock." The Royal Mint, just 5 months after having released a special commemorative platinum jubilee coin, expressed their pride in having "struck every coin of Her Majesty's reign".

Considering the enormity of the figure being commemorated many of the tributes conveyed a sense of great admiration for the life lived by Queen Elizabeth II. A number of retail heavyweights opted to offer their own personal feelings in regard to the Queen's death. Curry's chief executive Alex Baldock stated "In mourning her death today, I'm not only mourning the person, but also reflecting on a model of selfless leadership and service from which many of us can learn. We'll be fortunate to see its like again." Former Dragon's Den judge Theo Paphitis tweeted an image of

the Queen adding: “Your picture has shone brightly in my private office for many years and will continue to do so.”

Inevitably, a number of tributes were greeted with equal parts confusion and ridicule. And admittedly there were some brands who struggled to express their condolences in the same dignified and respectful manner that most managed to. However, collectively the brand tributes succeeded in reflecting the sombre, shocked and reflective mood Britain and large parts of the world found themselves in upon learning of Queen Elizabeth II’s passing.

Symbolic of Queen Elizabeth’s II global appeal the tributes weren’t just limited to the British high street. American pizza chain Domino’s shared a blacked out image alongside a muted black logo stating ‘Everyone at Domino’s joins the nation and the world in mourning the death of Queen Elizabeth II’. It was an appropriate message considering that the unprecedented number of tributes came from each corner of the globe. From German toy giant Playmobil to American defence contractor Raytheon messages of respect and sadness flooded into social media from unexpected sources. A phenomenon illustrative of how Queen Elizabeth’s II appeal transcended geographical borders and PR conventions.

It’s been argued that Queen Elizabeth II herself had become somewhat of a brand for Britain, especially during the later years of her reign. With some marketing experts commenting that more than being a monarch she represented a global brand that has, to some extent, defined and promoted Britain across the world. In 2021 data provided by Statista showed that the Queen’s positive mentions in the media were six times that of social media queen Kim Kardashian, and a startling sixteen

times bigger than self-appointed pop queen Beyonce. It's possible that all this data does is reveal something that was already common knowledge - Queen Elizabeth II consistently maintained one of the largest global brands ever documented.