

THE RACE FOR IDEAS

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By Tim Love

The landscape for global marketing is a race for ideas. As velocity accelerates, rewards in the future will be for those who get better ideas, faster. Mastering this frame-of-reference for perceiving the world and consumers is the biggest challenge facing marketers today.

Apple's Ipod is a good example of an idea that is winning the race. It realized how a new presentation of a mature technology could change the way people enjoyed music.

Adidas' is winning the race for ideas with a manifesto--" impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in a world they've been given, than to explore the power they have to change it." This is the essence behind Adidas' campaign "Impossible is Nothing."

Nissan automobiles has achieved much acclaim for its business turnaround. This started with CEO Carlos Ghosn's challenge that "Every time we touch something, we shift it and every time we shift, we try to make things better." Shift is an idea that imbues everything at Nissan in the race for ideas.

Another remarkable turnaround has been achieved with an idea at Procter & Gamble- "Touching Lives, Improving Life." This inspirational internal program helped galvanize P&G's people worldwide, and has led to dramatic growth over the past four years.

An idea is not an idea, unless it changes someone's perception of the world. Ideas effect peoples' perceptions and, in turn, their beliefs. Beliefs lead people to action. Behavior-change starts with belief-changing ideas.

The race for ideas has always been fueled by advances in global communications technologies. In the late 1960's Marshall McLuhan urged us to understand the interconnectedness of communications technology with human perception and behavior. At the same time, advertising's Howard Gossage cautioned that we could not observe our own landscape objectively, unless we took an "extra-environmental"

view. "On the question of who discovered the water, we know for certain it wasn't the fish." he said.

We need to step back, like the painter at their canvas, to appreciate how unfolding global communications are creating the new perceptual landscape.

WHAT ARE THE KEY DRIVERS IN THE RACE FOR IDEAS?

- Advancements in Communications Technology.

Each change in man's ability to communicate has brought with it, significant alterations in the landscape for marketing. Changes in communications technologies and how consumers use them have a profound effect on people and their relationships.

The most persuasive and powerful medium of all time is "Word-of-Mouth." Today, word-of-mouth is carried by a much faster and more pervasive means. It is the collision of new communications technologies like broadband internet, cell phone, text messaging and satellite broadcasting. More than ever before in human history, an idea, is more transmittable, more broadly perceivable, more able to be benchmarked with other opinion/word-of-mouth, or imitated.

- Changes in Distribution and Accessibility.

Trade consolidation, online shopping and the breaking down of trade barriers have hugely altered the marketing environment. With greater accessibility, consumers demand the ideas they are learning about and have new ways to obtain and experience these ideas.

- Transparency.

With more information, there are more choices for our attention. It requires marketers to discover more than dry hard facts about their products. We must find ways to emotionally connect with consumers.

The environment for communications is more transparent and marketing control has shifted to the consumer. With greater transparency, more information and the growth of blogs and floaters, or overlays, the age-old issue of truth in advertising is even more relevant—to consumers.

- The End of Globalization

Globalization is over. Globalization was as important as any prior age of macro change, like the Renaissance, the Reformation or the Industrial Revolution. Globalization was fueled by expansion of brands

and services into new distribution geographies. It was more about standardization and logistics, rather than individual customization and dialogue with consumers.

The new age for marketing and advertising is the Age of Interculturalism. It reflects the global marketing village. Strict adherence to concepts like borders and nationalism has diminished relevancy. Instead, marketing success is about being sensitive to culture. We see the world adapting to second-hand smoke, and beginning to appreciate the concept of second-hand culture.

WHAT CAPABILITIES ARE NECESSARY TO CREATE VALUE?

-A More Relevant Frame-of-Reference--that fosters enhanced objectivity—"Think Like The Sun"

The secret to global brand-building is the frame-of-reference one adopts to inform their strategic decisions. "Think Global/Act Local" was a stage in the evolving science of the marketing process. It helped global marketers address newly opened trade borders created by the expansion of communications technologies and the socio-political and economic differences in markets like Russia, the Middle East, India and China. However, this frame-of-reference has become obsolete. It assumes marketing communication borders that no longer exist. This conclusion comes from marketing basic everyday products like feminine hygiene pads, shampoo, toothpaste, diapers, laundry powder, and more recently automobiles, to a rapidly expanding global marketplace; in virtually every culture on the planet.

The world changed at the commencement of the new millennium. The first truly global brand experience was Y2K. This event, marked the end of globalization and set the stage for a new age of marketing. There was great anticipation and concern prior to Y2K, which touched more consumers on the planet, than any prior event in the history of mankind.

As Y2K dawned on an island east of New Zealand, advanced communications technologies transmitted the experience to the world's consumers--live. A great sense of awe grew across the planet, with each new celebration. It became a day unlike any consumers had experienced before. The next hyper- global "perception" experiences were, unfortunately, "911" and tragedies since, like the Tsunami in Southeast Asia. A key difference was more people experienced Y2K first hand, beyond observing it in the media.

We know, the Sun actually does not rise and set. It is we here on earth that revolve. In this increasingly smaller, interconnected communications marketplace, consumer perceptions are more borderless. The result is a word-of-mouth community. To anticipate the needs of a world of consumers who are more in touch with each other, "Think Like The Sun" offers a more objective frame-of-reference for creating ideas.

-A Discipline for Creation of Ideas—"Disruption". The art of idea creation is, in itself, the absence of predictability. Disruption is a proprietary process we use at TBWA to constantly encourage doing things differently to get better results. It fits perfectly with the new marketing landscape, because it embraces change, creating new ideas, disrupting conventional wisdom.

-A Technique for Integrated Effectiveness—"Connections Planning". Marketers need tools that allow media-neutrality in the development of an idea. Connections Planning engages consideration of communications technologies with idea development. It embraces the understanding that the consumer has more control over the information they receive. It recognizes the way information is consumed, plays a huge role how a consumer values an idea.

Disruption, is a process for arriving at a belief-changing idea. **Connections Planning** is a technique to connect an idea in the most effective and efficient way. **Think Like the Sun** is the frame-of-reference that can help a global brand, a nation or an individual be more culturally sensitive, relevant and valuable.

Global brand-building has never been a more exciting challenge. In the race for ideas, those who sense the landscape for marketing has evolved to a less nationalistic, more borderless Age of Interculturalism will reap greater rewards.

Tim Love