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Living Brands: Where the Future of Beauty Begins

[Wed 19/11/2008 09:30:14]

by Raymond Nadeau

Despite the beauty industry's size and ability to reinvent itself within its own and related industries, there are surprisingly few marketers. Of those involved in product development, brand management, sales, advertising, design, technology or public relations, seldom few have taken the time to truly honor the expertise of our category; one of the world's most dynamic.

I want to change all that - and have via my book, Living Brands, Collaboration + Fascination = Customer Fascination, (McGraw Hill) I have drawn upon my experience working on both the agency and client sides of companies including L'Oreal, and Coty Inc., where I was Vice President of New Ideas, Global Creative Director and involved in the turn-around of not only many of their traditional brands, but also integrally associated with the rebirth of what has been lauded and criticised as the beauty industry's new-take on celebrity brands. These included brands launched around stars such as Jennifer Lopez and Celine Dion.

With the help of a few of my friends and renowned trend and consumer intelligence resources/collaborators, I have traced overlapping consumer predictions across a range of dimensions, including major societal trends influencing not only the beauty industry, but all industries - both in the near and short terms; thus, creating a roadmap for success as it relates to brand creation and innovation. It was not that long ago that the former CEO of L'Oreal was quoted as saying words to the effect that the majority of new beauty brands would be purchases, not created. Drawing upon the opportunities I outline, I defy that thinking and have provided what I hope will function as an antidote. In addition, I propose a radical shift in thinking that could have only come out of an industry, like the beauty industry - an industry that has always maintained an intimate consumer relationship.

The four mega-trends that I identify represent the overlap of five of the worlds' most acclaimed trend and consumer intelligence experts. These experts include:

- Sputnik Inc.
- Genius Insight
- GDR Creative Intelligence
- Trend Union
- · Mirror Mirror Beauty Futurology

Beauty Beyond Today - Forecasts for Tomorrow - Snapshots of What to Watch

#1 Mood and Experience Enhancement

While this phenomenon touches upon our lust for entertainment and culture's apparent adrenaline addiction, it makes sense of what has been called, but not really fully explained, as experiential marketing. What this first trend refers to, has, of late, been explained as a sort of "MetaGame" - including the cultural and individual quest to experience more. Some refer to it as the game of the game. It explains the popularity of MySpace.com as well as Secondlife.com. We will not only need to account for this in our communication - it will allow us to tap directly into the hearts and minds of our consumers through direct intimate contact utilising technological advances - and thus greatly influence product development.

Translations: People will purchase entertainment-based and entertaining brands not because of idol worship. People will purchase these brands in an effort to make themselves idols - stars within the stories of their lives. And, perhaps more importantly, no longer will we need to rely on outmoded methods of determining consumer needs like focus groups - we can now conduct direct conversations with our consumers increasing the probability of new product success and challenging the death phase of what we have previously referred to as the natural progression of the brand life cycle.

#2 Humanised Technology - The Quest for Physical and Psychological Perfection The era of ageing gracefully is over. Like it or not, ageing is now viewed as a curable disease and the future of beauty will require our close observation of the Human Genome Project as much, or more so, than it will require us to monitor changing runway directions. Beauty is no longer skin deep, and it will take the right products, the right technologies and the right communication to address that reality. Mood enhancement, performance enhancement and plastic surgery are only now being acknowledged by the beauty industry - and sometimes in negative ways. In the "real" world, the stigma is lifting - much as it has almost completely lifted when referenced within the context of medicine. In fact, the future of beauty may change its face entirely - to the point that what has been called an evolution into cosmeceuticals will finally be acknowledged for what it is - a full fledged foray into the wonderful, world of hardcore pharmaceuticals. So, what does humanised technology mean? Organic? Probably. Traditionally natural? Probably not. After all, what really is natural?

#3 Everyman Empowerment, Self Creation and Personal Expression

While many of us working in the beauty and fashion industries are patting ourselves on the back for finally realising that beauty comes in diverse sizes, shapes and colors - we can't really take all the credit. The fact is that seething right beneath the surface is an undercurrent of consumer resentment. As technology now enables consumers to literally create spontaneous brands almost overnight, so, too, will it allow disgruntled consumers to destroy brands that dare take diversity for granted. And make no mistake - diversity is everything and everywhere. One need only look at some of the more popular celebrities shaping contemporary culture and notions of beauty in order to confirm this. In addition, and amplifying this trend is the concurrent fact that real life and media are merging and will continue to do so until they have almost merged. The era of marketing as "theater" will celebrate a fully diverse cast reflective of more than one positive outcome - one kind

4 The Luxury of Ethics

While some beauty brands will milk the notion of overlaying ethics as a method of differentiation for as long as they can (and I hope they do) - the fact is that ethics and guilt-free luxury are broad concepts which, in the longer term, will be minimum costs of doing business. Unethical business practices will be more transparent than ever before and no amount of crisis management or slick public relations will compensate for a new era of balanced commerce - that is to say - commerce that neither compromises the human or environmental heart and soul of the planet. Included in this whole notion is the continued and ever-increasing thirst for fine design and an aversion to condescension of any kind. Claims will read less like poetry and more like what they are - facts that consumers deserve to know. Culturally shared wit along with, honest emotion and sensuality will all have their important places, but through increased co-branding between the profit and not-for-profit sectors, greater respect for the consumer and the monetisation of "good" in the broadest possible sense will grow.

Responding to four little trends would seem easy. But these are not your ordinary, run-ofthe-mill trends. They represent a shift in perceptions of reality and human consciousness. As such, we are embarking upon what may be a new, truly golden age of beauty marketing. Or, if we ignore the signals, we should prepare to wave goodbye to our industry. The choice is really ours. It's probably the only choice from now on that we will be making alone.

For more information contact Raymond Nadeau at madeau@nyc.rr.com or visit www.livingbrandslivingmedia.com.

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