

the race for ideas

The landscape for global marketing is a race for ideas. As velocity accelerates, rewards 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. The company realized how a new presentation of a mature technology could change the way people enjoyed music.
- Adidas is winning 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 has been recognized for its business revival that started with CEO Carlos Ghosn's challenge: "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.
- At Procter & Gamble, a remarkable turnaround has been achieved with an idea: "Touching lives, improving life." This inspirational internal program helped galvanize P&G's people worldwide and has led to dramatic growth.

An idea is not an idea unless it changes someone's perception of the world. Ideas affect people's 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 1960s, 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.

We need to step back, like the painter at his canvas, to appreciate how unfolding global

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communications are creating the new perceptual landscape for this industry.

what are the key drivers in the race for ideas?

Advancements in communications technology

Each change in man's ability to communicate has brought significant alterations in the marketing landscape. Changes in communications technologies and how consumers use them have a profound effect on people and relationships. The most persuasive and powerful medium of all time is word-of-mouth. Today, word-of-mouth is carried by 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, 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

The communications environment is more transparent, and marketing control has shifted to the consumer.





With greater transparency, more information and the growth of blogs, the age-old issue of truth in advertising is even more relevant.

The end of globalization

Globalization, as important as any prior age of macro change, like the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, is over. Fueled by expansion of brands and services into new distribution geographies, globalization was more about standardization and logistics, rather than individual customization and dialogue with consumers.

The new age is the Age of Interculturalism, reflecting the global marketing village. Strict adherence to concepts like borders and nationalism has diminished relevancy. Instead, marketing success is about being sensitive to 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 make strategic decisions. "Think global/act local" was a stage in 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. However, this frame-of-reference has become obsolete. It assumes marketing communication borders that no longer exist.

The world changed at the commencement of the new millennium with the first truly global brand experience—Y2K. This event marked the end of globalization and set the stage for a new age of marketing. 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

Adidas, Apple, and Nissan are three brands that are winners in the race for ideas.

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grew across the planet with each new celebration. The next hyper-global "perception" experiences were, unfortunately, 9-11 and tragedies since, like the tsunami in Southeast Asia. A key difference was more people experienced Y2K firsthand, 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 borderless and continuous. 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 encourage doing things differently for 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.

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, truly borderless Age of Interculturalism will reap greater rewards. ●

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