

TOP STORIES

2009 Trend Forecast: from surviving to thriving

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Brand development consultant Cheryl Swanson offers insights into micro-trends for 2009 in her annual report "From Surviving to Thriving". We look at six key trends.

"Survival of the Fastest" has been a driving socio-cultural macro trend since 1998. Affecting all levels of western culture, and infiltrating developing countries, Survival of the Fastest is characterised by technology becoming our personal sustenance.

Twenty years ago, the US spent \$614-billion on food and beverages and \$2-billion on computers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's a ratio of 300 to 1. That ratio is now at parity - we currently spend the same amount of money on technology as we do on our nutritional needs, and as a result, our lives have been transformed.

We've been living at the speed of technology, being ever more productive, linking and connecting, but also disconnecting from our biological rhythms. Processing information at 400X the rate of our Renaissance ancestors, we have adapted to "living fast" over the past decade, though we have generally felt depleted.

The global economic collapse, combined with the decline of America as the world's superpower, has jolted us out of our hyper-tasking stupor - a bottoming out that is compelling us to focus on the things that really matter. And, the election of Barack Obama has imbued countries around the globe with a cautious optimism that is one of the seedlings recently planted for "thriving" in the next decade.

Most consumers have been operating in "recession-mode" since the end of the second quarter, well before the recession was official, because they were already feeling the pain of house payments, petrol prices, at the grocery store, and lost jobs. Well before the market crash in October, most people had reduced their use of petrol and electricity (67%), cut back on out-of-home entertainment (56%), were spending less on new clothes (55%) and using their cars less often (54%). After covering essential living expenses, Americans are saving whatever is left over, though almost 25% of consumers report having no cash.

These behaviours are seeding the trends for 2009.

We take a look at six of the key "thriving" inspired micro trends for 2009:

1. Legacy: Making Your Mark

Making your mark through support of important causes, whether it's supporting the discovery of new resources, research to vanquish disease or planetary support/recovery causes. "Causism" will replace "consumerism" as people of all ages, genders and backgrounds think about their place in the world - their purpose, contribution, personal legacy.

Brand Implications:

- "Cause marketing" will evolve from niche and promotional status to a more central place in brand communications
- Sustainability will not be an option; cause affiliations will be more prominent for the next several years
- Cause marketing has been primarily female focused, but will evolve to include men, kids, teens

Examples:

Starbucks Affinity Card, Red/Gap/AMEX, LiveStrong/Nike, Campbell Soup/Breast Cancer

2. Fantasy as Fuel

Fantasy will propel us forward... successfully into the future. A recent study by Harvard University determined that our minds need to wander because daydreaming is actually the brains' normal state, rather than a pointless distraction. Daydreaming and fantasy are the fuel for imagination and imagination is what differentiates us and makes us human.

Our fast lives are forcing us to redefine our personal and collective tempos, so fantasy -- spontaneity, creativity and daydreaming - is becoming an antidote to technology. The ability to imagine and liberate our creativity leads to optimism (vs. apathy). In the long

term, fantasy and imaginal wanderings will lead to new discoveries and collective problem solving. Fantasy will ultimately be the cornerstone to a restored economy as new businesses are imagined, then developed that enable us to live non-toxically well into the future.

Brand Implications:

- Brands that liberate our imaginations and reconnect us with our creativity underscore this trend

Examples:

Disney positioning itself to adults (the Annie Liebowitz campaigns) to liberate the "kid who wonders" inside all of us.

3. Science: Expansion & Discovery

A renewed respect for science is burgeoning based on our collective need to understand how to perpetuate and expand our place in the universe. We are expanding into inner space and mapping the human genome to discover ways we can live younger longer AND we are expanding to outer space to discover new resources:

- harvesting the hydrogen from Mars and converting it into water
- mining the inner solar system for water resources

- converting Helium 3 from the moon into alternative fuel

... so we can sustain life here on earth long into the future.

Science expansion is coming from the private sector (in addition to governments) and is becoming "cool" in mainstream culture.

Evidence:

NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg promises \$100 million to fund stem cell research to save the lives of millions.

Google founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page funding resource exploration on the moon.

Brand Implications:

Brands need to think beyond the quarterly numbers and keep their eyes on the bigger picture by exploring and discovering alternative life forces that will propel us into the future.

Brand Examples:

- Café Scientifique: Science cafes and pubs are sprouting across the world, providing lively debates about current science topics between scientists and science aficionados
- TV channels like Discovery, National Geographic and The Science Channel are experiencing record high ratings, with shows about scientific developments and space exploration. Ratings for the Discovery Channel are up 16% this year and 11% among the elusive 25-to-54-year-old male

4. Optimism and Vitality: From 2D to 3D

We have spent a decade staring at computer screens, bent over our Blackberries, wired to a headset, and just generally being over-scheduled. Initially making us want to Escape, we now aspire to Engage... in real, genuine, three-dimensional experiences versus the two-dimensional, flatness of our virtual lives.

Charisma cannot be experienced online; someone's personal vitality can only be experienced in the "real" world.

It transcends momentary experiences and manifests as a desire for memorable, life affirming, life enhancing experiences... to live "full-out" with vitality!

Implications:

Relevant for Boomers who want to "live younger longer!", yet we are seeing evidence of this trend across all age groups. Everyone wants to be their best self and have the energy to engage fully in life.

High impact, fully sensory experiences

Note: After five years of the blogosphere (which has lost its grassroots, individual appeal in favour of mega blogs like the Huffington Post) and the rise of "fast networking" like Twitter and Facebook, people want to get offline and spend time with real people. Facebook is being used to connect virtually AND to connect/reconnect people in the real world.

Brand Examples:

- Ford Mustang: High impact, fully sensorial experiences. "Thrills. Grabs. Exhilarates."

5. Authenticity

This trend has been socio-cultural driver for the past five years and shows no sign of abating. It intersects several aspects of the culture - from the "local" food movement, to human craftsmanship and "real guyness" (no more marketer generated metrosexuals), to heritage brands that have stood the test of time - 'authenticity' reflects our collective desire for "realness" - no hype, no spin, no marketing 'gimmicks'. Particularly when money is tight, people want to believe in the integrity of the brands they buy, even if they pay more for quality and buy less "stuff".

Brand Implications:

Heritage brands are hailed by all generations of consumers as authentic because they have stood the test of time. Leveraging this historical pedigree in a modern, relevant context will be key in the next year.

Brand Examples:

- Coca-Cola Designer Series: Leveraging the visual equities of this classic brand in a new context to capture a new audience. Only distributed at select clubs/lounges throughout the globe; iconic bottle shape used as a 'canvas' for contemporary artists
- Burberry: Leverages iconic Burberry plaid and logo across a rejuvenated, relevant product line.
- Levi's/Damien Hirst: Leveraging the equities of this iconic, heritage brand in tandem with a controversial, real artist for a limited line of Damien Hirst inspired T's and jeans

6. Fun Frugality

This new era of austerity is forcing almost everyone at every economic level to budget. This forced frugality can be fun frugality, however, and many consumers are approaching the 'belt tightening' in an optimistic and creative manner.

Reading What We Have: Instead of impulse buys and paperback sprees, creating "reading contests or groups" at home to read what's there first. Most people admit... there's a lot there that has been forgotten about! (Also intersects with the Home as Heavenly Haven trend).

Public Spaces: Enjoying public spaces like parks, free concerts, art and science museums Repair vs. Replace: Repairing becomes a creative endeavour - restoring old furniture, learning how to rewire a lamp or slipcover an old chair

Get Out the Sewing Machine or Knitting Needles: Creating your own clothes, kids clothes, throws, pillows or gifts is another form of personal expression and creativity (intersects with Home as Heavenly Haven and Art trends)

Thrift Stores: Akin to scavenger hunts for the best finds

Homemade crafts/arts/gifts: This can also involve the whole family and can include everything from baking cookies as gifts, creating your own holiday decorations, DIY home accessorising

Target, Daffy's, BlueFly, e-bay: shopping at mass merchandisers or discounters that have a sense of style and fun or even finding bargains at online auctions like e-bay.

**Brand development consultant Cheryl Swanson founded Toniq in 1998 to*

help develop new brands that can thrive in changing times. Based in New York City, Toniq uses a proprietary "Brand Effervescence" process to bring brands to life. Toniq develops names, positioning and brand essence concepts for leading marketers including: Gillette, Pepsi, Unilever, Kraft, Target, Nestle Purina and GSK. For more information, visit www.Toniq.com