The Lever of Culture
Moving from Preference To Relevance

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Competition is fierce
Parity Products

Fast Followers

Hey Samsung.

Think different.
Fighting for incremental share points...

(Source: Mintel)

...up...down...up...down...
Their points of difference are often weak, minor or unimportant to the consumer. Why should they care?
This happens when the brand’s marketing is locked in the category context.
The problem:
The brand idea that emerges is positioned only in relation to the category it competes in.
But consumers don’t live in the category. They live in the real world.
You can’t show them this and expect them to care.
Jeez, how’d we get here?

BUY OUR PRODUCT
(we’re on a billboard).
Many marketers are stuck here

About the Product

Commodities

Brands

Brands w/ Product Differentiation

Brands w/ Image Differentiation

Brands Creating Advocates

Brands w/ Social Meaning

About the Message
About the Product

Preference
- Brands
  - Commodities

Brands w/ Product Differentiation

Relevance
- Brands w/ Image Differentiation
- Brands Creating Advocates
- Brands w/ Social Meaning

About the Message
Many marketers are stuck here

Prominence
Is there an alternative way to compete, breaking out of the category?
When relevance or prominence is the goal, the reference point needs to be different.

Consumers eat, sleep and breathe the cultural moments that surround them.
Culture is ___________.

Lever
Culture is a catalyst for relevance.
Two schools of thought:

LEANING INTO CULTURE

MESSING WITH CULTURE

Culture
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LEANING INTO CULTURE

MESSING WITH CULTURE

Culture

MONKEES

THE BEATLES
The “Messing” school of thought:

“The search for the future is an exercise in edge finding.”

Grant McCracken, *Culturematic*
The “Messing” school of thought:

It’s not hard to shift culture in your favor. You just have to get your brand to believe in the benefits.

Surpassed sales projections by 20% and earned 80% awareness in one year after U.S. Launch

MINI spent roughly $567,000 for each percentage point of awareness. The other 12 brands in MINI’s competitive set spent an average of $5,973,000 (or more than 10 times as much) to do the same.

The fastest-growing QSR with over three years of same-store sales growth and a stock value increase of over 600%.

CEO acknowledged as CEO of Year in 2011.

Sales performance increased substantially in stores with a higher Hispanic population density (%ACV = 21–40%), with lifts of +6.8% for Blue Box and +8.5% for Big Blue.
Culture always wants to change

Style
Technology’s Role
Nutritional Wisdom
Automotive Engineering
How We Play
Generational Values
Travel Hotspots
Photography (Ansel/Instagram)
Memes
Culture isn’t always what’s happening today.
Rum was once a familiar spirit to restless souls. It was consumed aboard warships, rationed to visionary explorers and enjoyed by the Founding Fathers as they plotted revolution. Rum was consumed by people who were shaping their world. Now fast forward 300 years, and rum has become a mainstay of resort and cruise ship culture where people kick back to escape their world.
Following Category Conventions Does Not Lead to Breakthrough Ideas
Shaped by an authentic adventure icon:
Making a Private Buzz Public

Launching a New Brand No One Would to Talk About
This is going to be awkward…
This is a story about bikini-hair maintenance, a topic many feel uncomfortable talking about. But that’s OK, we understand. When Schick set out to launch an all-in-one bikini trimmer and razor, we set out to make it OK for people to talk about it.
Confronting two communications hurdles

1) Schick could not compete with Gillette’s share of voice
   - Across all brands Gillette outspends Schick 3-to-1

2) Women were uncomfortable talking about bikini trimming openly
   - There is a natural stigma to talking about this private area in public
   - It’s why Oprah says “Vajayjay”
When it comes to “down there,” mum’s the word

- Most women don’t talk about what Quattro Trimstyle was made for

  The majority of women occasionally would talk to their “best friend” about it

  Only 4% said they’d be comfortable talking to any acquaintance about it

  We had to make women comfortable talking to anyone and everyone about Quattro Trimstyle

SOURCE: JWT SONAR DATA
In Schick’s qualitative research, women loved the convenience of the Trimstyle’s all-in-one design.

However, “convenience” wouldn’t permeate and provoke consumer conversations about this topic.

We recommended one more piece of research—online quantitative.

We leveraged JWT’s proprietary online panel called SONAR.
They could finally tell someone about:

- The first time they awkwardly attempted to trim their “patch”
- The date they wanted to have sex on but couldn’t because their “bush was in bloom”
- The day at the beach when they had to keep their shorts on

The anonymous veil of quantitative got people talking.
Discovering a metaphoric Trojan horse

The vital question:

Q: “If you were talking to a friend about bikini hair or bikini-area trimming, shaving or removal—what words or phrases might you use?”

A: “Ladiescaping Language”

This would be the language planning would harness
A conversational theme emerged

We noted that they all predominately used metaphors related to things that grow naturally:

*Tending the garden, trimming the shrubs, maintaining my fur-arri, mowing the lawn*

We learned there was an entire metaphoric language women used to code their coyness (transcending age, relationship status, etc.)

This code made it OK for women to talk about their “topiary”
Our Strategic Stimulus

The big idea became “Transform Your Topiary”

We’d use this encoded language to celebrate the new Schick Quattro Trimstyle brand loudly and proudly

We could now be as playful as they are when talking about the labor of feminine landscaping
Google-Insights for Search show a massive spike in consumer-search interest around the topic of “mow the lawn” at the exact period of time we launched the Schick Quattro Trimstyle. And in case you’re wondering, this spike can’t be confused with interest in spring yard work since the data shows that for the past five years actual lawn-mowing interest has been minimal.
A growing brand…mowing down the competition

**Impact on Sales**

11.5% growth in Schick’s women’s business (vs. YA)

Walmart quickly requested additional displays

Sales teams reported the razor was moving more quickly at a premium $10.99 than expected

The “Your Style” TVC scored over double the Copy Effectiveness Index (CEI). The highest scoring piece of communication in Schick history

Source: Sales data from the four weeks ending in 4/25/09
The “lever” of cultural tension is powerful
What is Tension?

A crack in culture we can exploit. A shift that’s waiting to happen, or that we can instigate.

Meant to create focus and a POV

The conflict between an honest, natural “real world” way consumers think about the brand.

A powder keg awaiting “discharge”
Powder Keg at your local Burger King
Tension can’t be ignored

“People tend to categorize everything to keep complexity down. The brain would rather not think about things. It’s predisposed to toss things away.”

- Dr. Stephen Sands, Chief Science Officer, Sands Research
What cultural levers could you pull to get BMW, Audi, Mercedes and Lexus drivers to consider a Tesla?
Someday, archaeologists will find this and scratch their heads.

From: Tesla Advertisement

The text beneath the image reads: "Pave your path from dependence on gasoline. With an 80-kilowatt battery system, your Tesla Model S or Model X electric vehicle can go 300 miles on a single charge. It’s quick, it’s smooth, and it uses no fossil fuels. It’s electric, it’s sustainable, it’s something you’ll be proud to drive."
Language
Cuisine
Social Structure
Gov't
Religion
Social Conventions
Science
Fiction
Recreation
Technology
Politics
Values/Ideologies
Gender Roles/Sexual Mores
Media
Pop Culture
Commercial Practices
Aesthetics/Arts
Science
Science Fiction
Thank You