How Great Brands Anticipate Trends?

Collect latest consumer product images as much as possible—Arrange them—Find a pattern—Understand the latest styling trends—Present the visuals, insights to the client and tell a story of the latest FAD … sorry…Hottest style sense. Incorporate those elements in our consumer electronic product. The design was done. Yes, many of us are still doing this.

Pinterest is a designer's porn site. Inspiration. Lemanoosh—Great textured surfaces to get inspired. If we design based on the visual insights from other products(Not related directly to our field), are we not just following the trends rather leading the trends? If we are a Trend responder than Trend driver, how can we make our brand a leader in our product category?

Following trends -

- It's a huge temptation to go with the crowd, an easier one to do. *When everyone's doing it, how wrong can it be?—An effect of SOCIAL PROOF*
- The most direct and simplest way to gain short term revenue
- Quicker to the market
- Minimal risk involved as the product has been already tested in the market *(You've got an original idea, but dump it…. The idea may be great. But my confidence is low)*

  Seeking Trends, following insights from those trends, may bring novelty to the product, but it kills Innovation.

Do you think Apple looks at other competitor product's Visual language? The company creates its own design language every time and makes sure that they are new, distinct from the competitor.

Look at the difference in design—Apple's G3(launched in 1998) was radical in design in those times. Nobody visualised computer in such a form. Translucent plastic—Nobody could imagine the remote possibility of using the plastics shown by Apple.

G4 in 1999 — Even now this design can make heads turn. If they were collecting images of other products in the market, do you think they would have created a product like G4?

The beautiful anodised aluminium finish on Apple Macbook

Similarly, Nike, south-west airlines, Cirque de Soleil, Starbucks etc.. ignore the existing trends and create a new one.

> All great brands are good Trend Drivers.

How to drive a trend? What are the parameters to guide us to create a trend?

The answer is -

- Follow and Anticipate CULTURAL Movements
- Track changing Behaviour and Attitude
- Focus on Next generation of customers
- Focus on Non-Customers (Steve jobs himself was a non-customer for those existing competitor products in the market)
- Be the extreme User — (Steve Jobs was an extreme user for Apple's products)
- Identify the new meanings in people's life
- Follow the technology — in 1960's mouse was invented, but launched in the 1980s. So, keep tracking.
- Look at the innovations in other fields — How Uber killed traditional taxi services

CULTURAL MOVEMENTS

Cultural movements play a major role in driving the trends.

NIKE encourages its designers to run in the footsteps of young athletes so that they can think and feel the same way a 16-year ol do. This empathy has helped designers to develop a passion for meeting the needs of users. This passion helped to see Nike itself as not just making the shoes, but inspire the athlete in all of us.

In 1980s Nike commanded a majority of the market share. Its dominance in the performance market left little room to grow further.

> When you are the number one athletic company in the world, there are only so many people left who aren't already buying your shoes. — Dave Schenone, NIKE

NIKE team focussed on "Next generation of Young Athletes" to understand the next cultural movement. By continuous observation, the designers got following insights

- College students love to express their identity through what they wear
- Nike has to reframe its business from making sports gear to making the gear of sports culture
- Nike team observed that the fashion world that time had a phenomenon of black everywhere. "Window displays — Black, Suit, Shirt, Tie, Handkerchief -Black. It was weird"

NIKE team looking at the black phenomenon movement guessed that the people are going to soon become interested in bright colours again. How about a shade of bright orange or greento an all black outfit? **They**

anticipated the next cultural movement.

Nike team create the shoe with eight individual colours, including bright red, orange and green. They called the concept "Nike Presto". As soon as it is launched, it was an overnight sensation.

STARBUCKS noted the cultural movement of increased isolation in American Society. They anticipated that there would be a need for casual social interaction. Starbucks caught hold of the movement and became a driver. In the last decade, they have been using digital tools to help them build a more integral relationship.

MacLaren noted the movement of changing parental roles in taking care of newborn babies. More men are staying at home to take care of babies. Men influence purchase decisions which used to be controlled by women. Maclaren understood this cultural movement and designed BMW Buggy Baby Stroller with a focus on Men.

References: Wired to Care by Dev Patnaik, Designing for Growth by Tim Ogilvie and Jeanne Liedtka, What Great Brands do by Denise Lee, Brand Portfolio Strategy by David A. Aaker, Unconscious Branding by Douglas Van Praet, Blue Ocean Strategy W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne,