POST-DEMOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVES

Demographics are dead. Adapt your strategy or perish.
“...real-world situations and authenticity appeal most to consumers between 35-54.”

NIELSEN, NOVEMBER 2012
“Millennials put a premium on authenticity...”

NIELSEN, AUGUST 2014
“...for brands looking to engage Gen Z, authenticity rules”

ADWEEK, MAY 2015
And you can stop panicking about how the next generation is even more entrepreneurial and even more connected. If you try to delight consumers with insights attributed to groups of 80 million plus, you won’t get to know them very intimately <cough> Whole Foods’ millennial play <cough>.

Shocked to hear a trend firm advise against generational generalizations? Not if you read our November 2014 Trend Briefing POST-DEMOGRAPHIC CONSUMERISM (PDC), which outlined why the traditional demographic model of consumer behavior is broken. In it we said...

Gen X, Y, Zzz...

You needn’t be a futurist to predict whether a chorus of market research is going to announce the generation after Gen Z “craves authenticity”. They will.
People – of all ages and in all markets – are constructing their own identities more freely than ever. As a result, consumption patterns are no longer defined by ‘traditional’ demographic segments such as age, gender, location, income, family status and more.
67% of men have changed jobs or said they would be willing to do so to better balance family life, versus 57% of women.

EY AND HARRIS INTERACTIVE, APRIL 2015
Asked to plot themselves on a ‘sexuality scale’, 49% of British 18-24 year olds choose something other than 100% heterosexual.

YOGOV, AUGUST 2015
74% of Chinese shoppers are likely to consider whether a product is fair trade, environmentally friendly or donates a portion of proceeds to charity when buying, a higher proportion than in Australia or New Zealand.

MASTERCARD, APRIL 2015
Out of the thousands of applicants on a waitlist for free coding classes at New York Public Library, 73% are women.

NY PUBLIC LIBRARY, JUNE 2015
Four POST-DEMOGRAPHIC strategies

In last November’s Trend Briefing we identified four areas of innovation opportunity in a POST-DEMOGRAPHIC world.

1. NEW NORMAL: Embrace and celebrate new racial, social, cultural and sexual norms.

2. HERITAGE HERESY: Be prepared to re-examine or even overturn your brand heritage.

3. CROSS-DEMOGRAPHIC FERTILIZATION: Look to seemingly foreign or disparate demographics for inspiration.

4. HYPER-DEMOGRAPHIC IRONY: Focus on ever smaller niches of interest rather than circumstance.

Let’s take a look at some recent examples of brands pursuing these four opportunities:
1. NEW NORMAL

& Other Stories

Campaign’s models and creative team are transgender
2. HERITAGE HERESY

Eton
UK-based boarding school provides online courses specifically for Chinese students
3. CROSS-DEMOGRAPHIC FERTILIZATION

Public Dance Classics
App teaches people to dance like Chinese grannies
Lululemon & Vancouver's Stanley Park Brewing
Collaboration leads to limited edition beer for yoga enthusiasts
BUT WAIT, THERE’S MORE!

Those strategies remain rich in opportunity, but now let's examine three further POST-DEMOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVES. These underline why PDC is perhaps our most important trend yet, and why you urgently need it on your radar.
(i) The accelerating development of new technologies (from algorithms to big data to programmatic) gives brands the power to treat customers as the individuals they are, rather than as members of generic segments.

(ii) Continued urbanization means ever more people have the social freedom, economic means and diversity of product/service/experience choices they need to be themselves. Urbanites are your early adopters and your toughest critics. Meet their accelerating expectations or perish.

(iii) But remember, despite people's heightening aspirations, there are still repressed groups who are ignored or purposefully sidelined by institutions and brands. Recognize them, and then empower them to be themselves.

Yes, we know it can be hard to throw off the demographic blinkers and see a more complex reality. But looking away is no answer.
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THREE IMPERATIVES

Utilize the power of new technologies. Tackle the skyrocketing expectations of urbanites. Empower those who aren't able to pursue their identity. These POST-DEMOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVES insist you answer their call!
When NikeID launched in 1999 (yep, last century!), customization was a surprising, fun status play. Since then, it’s gone from ‘nice to have’ to vital. Consumers with POST-DEMOGRAPHIC expectations are accustomed to brands that speak to and serve them at a personal level.

The good news? The ability and POST-DEMOGRAPHIC imperative to target a ‘segment of one’ is finally becoming a real possibility, thanks to new technologies and the vast amounts of personal data that they’re spinning off. You must use this data and tailor your offering accordingly.

Not one of you is safe from this expectation. Bespoke offerings may come more easily to etailers or digital media providers (from Netflix to Spotify), but even physical products will soon evolve beyond customization at the moment of production (like these custom grip knives), to become rich, contextual, dynamic experiences* that are unique to the individual.

* Yup, all the trend buzzwords, but that’s where things are headed ;)

IMPERATIVE 1/3

TASTE-LED TARGETING

Use technology to tailor your marketing, products and services so that no consumer experiences them the same way.
“Everyone’s instinct was, ‘Yeah, if you find out their age and gender data, that’s fantastic’. But what we learned is: it’s almost useless...”

TODD YELLIN, NETFLIX
“...it’s not who they are in a superficial sense – like gender, age, even geography. It’s not even what they tell you. It’s what they do.”

TODD YELLIN, NETFLIX
FEATURED INNOVATION: TASTE-LED TARGETING

Spotify
Personal playlists delivered weekly to users
FEATURED INNOVATION: TASTE-LED TARGETING

Axe
Online film changes to match viewer’s interests
FEATURED INNOVATION: TASTE-LED TARGETING

TAM Airlines
Airline produces personalized on-board magazines for each passenger
FEATURED INNOVATION: TASTE-LED TARGETING

Knewton
Personalized, adaptive learning platform is free to access

Cities are one of the central drivers of POST-DEMOGRAPHIC CONSUMERISM, and they are also where this trend finds its purest expression.

In large and rapidly growing cities, consumers can pursue the lifestyles they desire: not only are cities more permissive of tradition-eschewing pursuits than rural areas, they also provide access to a diverse range of products, services and experiences. Meanwhile, greater economic opportunities and higher incomes increase residents' ability to pay for these lifestyles, and a competitive culture around collecting unique experiences enhances the desire for them.

The tribes within cities are delightfully diverse, yet there are common pursuits (for convenience, unique experiences, and for holistic self-improvement) and shared problems (congestion, pollution, time-constraints and stress) that can be catered to: by you!
FEATURED INNOVATION: POST-DEMOGRAPHIC CITYSUMERS

Factory Fresh
Locally-sourced healthy meals delivered daily to customers' doorsteps
FEATURED INNOVATION: POST-DEMOGRAPHIC CITIESUMERS

UberRELAX
On-demand massages available through app
Public Transport Victoria

Commuters tap transport cards to donate to homelessness
**FEATURED INNOVATION: POST-DEMOGRAPHIC CITYSUMERS**

**Bybi**

City residents invited to create ‘Bee Superhighway’
There are billions of individuals around the world – from a female entrepreneur facing gender bias from investors, to an undocumented migrant in a new city – who face obstacles and are unable to pursue their desired lifestyles.

The causes of these restrictions, such as poverty, corruption or discrimination, vary wildly. But those facing obstacles still yearn for the POST-DEMOGRAPHIC freedom to choose their own lives – and it’s an IMPERATIVE that you listen and act!

People will celebrate brands that empower them to realize their aspirations. In some cases it’s as simple as your business paying attention to a section of society that is overlooked (by you and your competitors).

That's right, we aren't yet in a world of total POST-DEMOGRAPHIC CONSUMERISM. But you can get us closer, and build a better world – and a more powerful brand – in the process.
FEATURED INNOVATIONS POST-DEMOGRAPHIC EMPOWERMENT

KPN

People from repressive countries able to virtually participate in gay pride parade
LA Times
Newspaper hires journalist to cover Black Twitter
FEATURED INNOVATIONS POST-DEMOGRAPHIC EMPOWERMENT

Always

Personal care brand’s educational program boosts girls’ confidence
Alibaba and Blued

Competition brings Chinese LGBT couples to California to wed
NEXT!
There are many routes to POST-DEMOGRAPHIC success...

We're not saying that you'll never again use research that applies at a nationwide, generational, or even global level. Sometimes that's necessary, and it might even lead to a great new product idea. But the idea of forcing all your thinking into the outdated frameworks of yesteryear should now feel wholly inadequate, if not downright dangerous.
It’s IMPERATIVE you act!

Instead, embrace the freedom, creativity and opportunities available to those who dive into the POST-DEMOGRAPHIC reality. Treat your customers like the multi-faceted people they are. They deserve it, and increasingly, they demand it. Good luck!
If you have any comments, suggestions or questions then please do let us know. Just email:

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