POST-DEMOGRAPHIC CONSUMERISM

Time to throw out the traditional (and tired) demographic models of consumer behavior!
You’re not the only one who’s confused by consumer behavior. Consumers themselves aren’t behaving as they ‘should’.
In the UK, women now account for the majority of video game players, and there are more gamers aged over 44 than under 18.

INTERNET ADVERTISING BUREAU, SEPTEMBER 2014
The luxury Mandarin Oriental hotel launched its ‘Selfie in Paris’ initiative in August 2014, offering guests a tour of the French capital’s best selfie spots with a private car and driver.
Twitter’s fastest growing demographic between 2012 and 2013 was the 55-64 year age bracket, growing 79%.

BUFFER, JULY 2013
Asilo Padre Cacique, a retirement home in Porto Alegre, Brazil, hosted an activity day for its elderly residents in September 2014, featuring a skateboard exhibition and graffiti artists.
Four – seemingly unconnected – glimpses of where consumerism is headed.

But it’s not somewhere that many brands can easily navigate to using the demographic-centered models they’ve so finely honed over the past decades.
Yes, younger, affluent consumers are still (usually) the earliest adopters of new products and services. They are more open, more experimental and have fewer commitments.

But now any and all revolutionary – or simply just compelling – innovations will be rapidly adopted by, and/or almost instantly reshape the expectations of, any and all demographics.

Society is now too fluid, ideas now too available, the market now too efficient, the risk and cost of trying new things now too low (led by the digital world, but increasingly the case for physical products too) for this not to be the case.

DEFINITION

POST-DEMOGRAPHIC CONSUMERISM |
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.
WHY NOW?

A host of factors are combining, feeding off each other and manifesting themselves in four increasingly POST-DEMOGRAPHIC dimensions.

1. **ACCESS**: Ubiquitous global information and collective brand familiarity is fostering an increasingly universal POST-DEMOGRAPHIC experience.

2. **PERMISSION**: Increased freedom is driving the collapse of 'natural' convention after convention, and the formation of POST-DEMOGRAPHIC identities.

3. **ABILITY**: The ability to experiment and identify with a wider variety of brands and products is fueling increased POST-DEMOGRAPHIC personalization.

4. **DESIRE**: The eroding connection between financial resources and social status is giving rise to a more democratic POST-DEMOGRAPHIC status, and changing the balance of power between generations.
WHY NOW?
Consumers – of all demographics and in all markets – increasingly buy and use products and services from the same mega-brands: Apple, Facebook, Amazon (the technology sector is especially universal), IKEA, McDonald’s, Uniqlo, Nike and more.

The ubiquity and collective familiarity with these global mega-brands, when combined with the global reach of consumer information, has also created if not a shared consciousness then certainly a new level of POST-DEMOGRAPHIC shared experience for consumers, from 16 to 60 and from Boston to Beijing.
UNIQLO. MADE FOR ALL

It doesn’t matter who you are or where you live, UNIQLO makes clothes that transcend all categories and social groups. Our clothes are made for all, going beyond age, gender, occupation, ethnicity and all the other ways that define people. Our clothes are simple and essential yet universal, so people can freely combine them with their own unique styles, in any way they choose, every day of the year.
WHY NOW?

2. PERMISSION

Increased freedom is driving the collapse of ‘natural’ convention after convention, and the formation of POST-DEMOGRAPHIC identities.

Perhaps not always politically, and certainly not uniformly, but in the past decades societies around the world have become more socially liberal as many ‘natural’ conventions – from family structures to gender roles – have collapsed.

Cities, with their greater social freedoms and exposure to alternative lifestyle choices are a key factor (as shown by the statistic on the next page). **The choice and freedom found in cities gives the world’s now 3.9 billion urbanites ever more opportunities to construct their own identities outside of the traditions of their specific demographic.**
87% of BRIC millennials feel that living in a city has expanded their worldview, while 85% like the freedom of city life.

JWT, SEPTEMBER 2013
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WHY NOW?

3. ABILITY

The ability to experiment and identify with a wider variety of brands and products is fueling increased POST-DEMOGRAPHIC personalization.

Individuals are able to personalize – and express themselves through – their consumption to a greater degree than ever before.

This is being driven at a macro level by the global expansion of the consumer class and the explosion of product choice in mature markets. But it's being driven at the level of the individual, too, with digital experimentation allowing for a greater range of experiences at lower cost, and online social networks (enthusiastically used by all demographics) allowing people to identify with brands, products and services – even those that they don’t or can’t purchase.
4. DESIRE

The eroding connection between financial resources and social status is giving rise to a more democratic POST-DEMOGRAPHIC status, and changing the balance of power between generations.

Consumerism and status have always been inextricably linked. ‘Old’ status symbols (material goods) need money to obtain, and were therefore often the preserve of old demographics, with higher spending power. ‘New’ status symbols (experiences, authenticity, connection, health, ethical and sustainable lifestyles etc.) are more ephemeral and democratic, making the POST-DEMOGRAPHIC STATUSPHERE open to all, regardless of age, income and location.

Indeed, POST-DEMOGRAPHIC status is often a total reverse of traditional status, with younger generations living higher status but lower-spending lifestyles, while older and wealthier demographics rush to keep up ;)

www.trendwatching.com/trends/post-demographic-consumerism
While 48% of those who had used ‘neo-sharing’ collaborative consumption platforms (such as Airbnb, Zipcar and Kickstarter) were aged 18-34, 33% were aged 35-54 and 19% were aged over 55.

CROWD COMPANIES, MARCH 2014
As a result of the above: consumers can (and increasingly do) pick and choose what products and services they purchase and the brands they identify with, without any regard to demographic ‘conventions’.
“If you look at the list of the 1,000 favourite artists for 60-year-olds and the 1,000 favourite artists for 13-year-olds, there is a 40% overlap.”

GEORGE ERGATOUDIS (HEAD OF MUSIC, BBC RADIO 1), MAY 2014
SO WHAT?

Trends are about opportunities. Here are four to run with.
1. NEW NORMAL

See how these brands and businesses are SACRIFICING to reduce negative impacts on consumer wellbeing.
FEATURED INNOVATION: NEW NORMAL

Coca-Cola

Multi-racial/lingual/cultural “America the Beautiful” campaign causes controversy
FEATURED INNOVATION: NEW NORMAL

Honey Maid

US graham cracker maker celebrates post-divorce families in #NotBroken campaign
FEATURED INNOVATION: NEW NORMAL

Facebook

Argentina is first Latin American country to add expanded gender options
FEATURED INNOVATION: NEW NORMAL

Tanishq, Airtel, PC Jeweller

Indian brands reflect new cultural sensibilities
SO WHAT?

2. HERITAGE HERESY

Be prepared to reimagine or even overturn decades of brand history and tradition, to attract tomorrow’s younger-yet-experienced and wealthy-yet-irreverent consumers.
FEATURED INNOVATION: HERITAGE HERESY

Rolls-Royce & Microsoft's Xbox

Luxury automaker makes its video game debut
FEATURED INNOVATION: HERITAGE HERESY

Sotheby's & eBay
Auctioneer partners with eBay to provide shoppable livestreams from its New York auctions
FEATURED INNOVATION: HERITAGE HERESY

SHUT

New York skate brand unveils luxury gold-plated skateboard
FEATURED INNOVATION: HERITAGE HERESY

Thug Kitchen
Healthy vegan food gets a sweary, aggressive makeover
So What?

3. Cross-Demographic Fertilization

Shared taste and aspiration mean the opportunities to transfer innovations from a core demographic to another have never been greater.
FEATURED INNOVATION: CROSS-DEMOGRAPHIC FERTILIZATION

CNA language school
Connecting Brazilian students with retired Americans via webcam for language lessons

www.trendwatching.com/trends/post-demographic-consumerism
FEATURED INNOVATION: CROSS-DEMOGRAPHIC FERTILIZATION

P'tit Vélib
Paris launches world’s first bike-sharing scheme for kids
FEATURED INNOVATION: CROSS-DEMOGRAPHIC FERTILIZATION

PandaBed

Airbnb-style service for Asia lets homeowners find lodgers with a cultural match
4. HYPER-DEMOGRAPHIC IRONY

Target and cater to ever smaller (and ever more accurate) interest-based segments, instead of the over-general traditional demographics.
FEATURED INNOVATION: HYPER-DEMOGRAPHIC IRONY

Lean Machine Ale
Canadian low calorie beer aids post-workout recovery
FEATURED INNOVATION: HYPER-DEMOGRAPHIC IRONY

Sberbank

Russian bank offers new mortgage customers a cat loan while moving into a new home
FEATURED INNOVATION: HYPER-DEMOGRAPHIC IRONY

Vogmask & Face Slap
Stylish anti-pollution masks launched at Hong Kong fashion week
Demographics are dead...

Successful products, services and brands will transcend their initial demographics almost instantaneously. As a result, executives who continue to attempt to navigate using demographic maps, with borders defined by age, gender, location, income will be ill-prepared for the speed, scale and direction of change.
Understanding consumers’ needs and wants remains critical. However, it will be those that take a broad view and learn from innovations that are delighting consumers in seemingly dissimilar or even opposing demographics that will succeed, regardless of which ‘traditional’ demographic(s) they serve.

GOOD LUCK!
Consumer Trend Canvas

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