



Necessity is the mother of invention

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MediaCom's Chris Binns reveals three emerging patterns from hardship that can provide advantage.

Pattern Recognition

History repeats itself. Patterns emerge. Patterns can and should provide brands with an advantage. You can see these patterns if you look hard enough – see them in search data, see them in human behaviour, see them in the world around you.

One of the most significant meta-patterns right now is hardship leading to creativity and innovation. The actions of a previous generation leading to a reaction in the next. Necessity being the mother of invention. Or reinvention.

As everyone dusts off their guide to spending your way out of a recession, these patterns offer an opportunity beyond marketing orthodoxy, an opportunity to get beyond the cookie cutter category behaviour and cut through.

Robin Bew (MD of The Economist Intelligence Unit) said in a recent interview “I’m not seeing enough companies being creative enough, quickly enough”.

So, here are some patterns we should be mining for insight. Insight that will be the fuel for creativity and innovation.

Pattern #1 – Accelerating with adjacencies

In the era of measurement and accountability, how to communicate in a category has become so well defined that this is the table stakes. This can lead to everyone’s media plan, or everyone’s creative, looking and feeling the same. For every category there are adjacencies – actions and behaviours in a different category that precede or influence it and offer an opportunity for more creative execution.

Example: Travel search patterns are more focused on domestic tourism right now. A great opportunity for travel companies, but a better one for car brands. Fancy driving across the country in your old car or maybe you should upgrade with some of the money you’ve saved by not going abroad?

Pattern #2 – Embrace the emergences

Emergences are changes that you can see over time: Behaviour change, attitude change, category change. Here, trending data becomes pivotal.

As we move from global hibernation to whatever comes next, you need to closely watch the audiences that come back into your category. Who are they, what are the emerging signs of normalcy and how has their behaviour and attitudes changed? These observations will offer important focal points for creativity and innovation.

Example: People are more likely to run their first marathon in the final year of any decade. They are staring a new decade in the face and want to feel like they have achieved something in the last. This isn't what we have traditionally called lifestage and isn't just about sport. If people consistently change their behaviour in these moments how are you winning when they do?

Pattern #3 – Propel with Peaks

Peaks are the elements of an experience which stay with a consumer, which define their relationship with you, which mask the average and the troughs (covered in Chip & Dan Heath's '*The Power of Moments*').

This is especially important as people emerge out of hibernation and start interacting with brands, retail and our surroundings again. What are the opportunities for category peaks? Where is there an opportunity to delight in a way that will never be forgotten? What are the new peaks and, importantly, how can they help you create a closer relationship with people?

Example: Shopping. Shopping is a leisure activity the world over. Yet the eCommerce experience has become a warehouse environment that doesn't create the same kind of engagement and possibly not the same depth of relationship. As physical retail emerges once again, how do we use that interaction to surprise and delight at the same time as building a better eCommerce experience for those who really matter to you?

In summary, we are about to see an expansion of creativity and innovation in all sorts of areas and through a myriad of ways. However, in media, insight derived from Pattern Recognition will be how you stay ahead of the game, ahead of your competitors and get some cut-through of your own.

OPINION