

MarketWise



January 2008

Every year we are hit with a plethora of prognosticators that try to predict what is going to happen. I think this is particularly important to all of us in the marketing communication business. What think tanks like Faith Popcorn's Brain Reserve have to say influences all of us.

We need to pay special attention to the changes in the consumer attitudes. We also need to attune to the changes in communication distribution patterns, products and services and the economy if we are to be in a position to advise our clients on marketing strategies and tactics that will work.

On the next several pages I've re-printed, with permission, Faith Popcorn's predictions for 2006-07 and what her group is forecasting for 2008.

I found it interesting to go back and look at what the Brain Reserve predicted, what trends surfaced and which ones didn't.

Dave Wood, AMR

Faith Popcorn Predicts the Mindset and Lifestyle Trends For 2008

Trend guru Faith Popcorn has been identifying the major cultural trends in the American lifestyle for more than 30 years. That information drives the marketing you see from billboards to television shows.

It is worth your time to review her predictions and evaluate how they are impacting your business. Here are the mindset and lifestyle trends for 2008, 2007 and 2006 from Popcorn and her BrainReserve trend consultancy.

Overall, the consultancy says this will be a transitional year, as a turbulent, global society seeks a

new core focus. With unrest and uncertainty rife, war and developing tensions overseas, the uber-movement of the culture will be trend-anchoring, or reaching back to our spiritual roots, taking what was secure from the past to be ready for the future.

MINDSET

The *collective* mindset is characterized by the current DissedTrust; people continue to reject the establishment (government, commerce, religion, etc.) because they expect it to lie, to cheat and abuse employees, communities and the environment.

There will be rich rewards for any institution that can reach the bar of trust; but most will find that measure simply too high to attain.

BEHAVIOR

There *are* two trends emerging: "pleasure revenge," people having a secret bacchanal. They're mad as hell and they want to cut loose again, and "cashing out," or working people questioning personal/ career satisfaction and goals, opting for simpler living. The overall culture will tip to the latter, guided ultimately by economic imperatives.

This will manifest in two ways:

Detox *retox*: Taking their cues from the celebrity culture, we'll see people rid themselves of the ill effects of overindulgence, only to binge again on all that is bad. The cure will be transient; there will be no expectation of permanent recovery.

As the health care system becomes the new Big Brother because of increasing costs, consumers' lifestyles will be highly monitored. Only the rich will be able to afford to binge on life's vices. The fat will be the new rich and celebrated as a status symbol.

FantasyReality: As virtual experience becomes more prevalent and more commonly attainable, we'll see more of it seep into our everyday reality and personalities. It will scream our desire to chuck it all and

cut loose. It's easier in our conventional heads to fulfill our increasingly polyamorous desires in a parallel universe, where a virtual being is one of our lovers. The notion of indulgence without consequences is becoming increasingly attractive, and fulfilling.

Cashing out will manifest differently:

Lagom: From the Swedish, most commonly translated as "just enough," it's an approach to both design and consumption that explains the essence of brands like IKEA and Volvo.

We see notions of minimalism and sustainability taking on significant currency, as even Americans reject hyperconsumption as not just excessive, but actually damaging to themselves, others and to the planet.

KarmaCapitalism: As Cashing out rises to this level of prominence, we'll see a basic shift in the identity/mentality of people, as they + make the transition from consumer to citizen.

Every act of consumption has cost and consequence beyond the transaction, and that every transaction is a vote in favor of the offering entity, and against the options not chosen. Companies are going to have to weave goodness as a fundamental intent into their corporate culture.

Activism is now the new narcissism. People will go from wearing their cause bracelets on their wrists to posting their causes and beliefs on their resumes and business cards. Employers and prospective hires will court their perfect (cause) match.

Faith Popcorn's Consumer Trends 2007

Faith Popcorn a leading future-focused consultancy has some interesting predictions for 2007 on how they see consumers and brands evolve in the next few years. They are talking of a new identity called The New Networked Self. Take a look:

- **Identity Flux**

Technology has enabled us to experiment with different personalities, leading to a much more fluid sense of who we are. Having tasted the nectar of virtual liberation, we're beginning to reject the singularly defined roles we're expected to play in society.

The Future: Gender-neutrality goes mainstream. People list skills on their business cards rather than title, and dress up in various costumes depending on who they feel like being that day.

- **Liquid Brands**

Today's consumers are capricious and non-committal. Brands will have to become more liquid to keep up with their constantly moving targets.

The Future: Chameleon-like brands focus less on communicating a static message and more on being the right thing for the right persona at the right time. Constantly morphing retailers carry products until they sell out and never restock.

- **Virtual Immortality**

Consumers globally are creating fully fleshed out existences in the virtual world-dressing up their avatars, making friends, having affairs and buying property for their pixelated alter-egos. And now that people have multiple lives, who says you can't live forever?

The Future: While some let their avatars drift away to online purgatory, many more leave behind specific instructions on how their virtual selves should proceed. Services offering avatar surrogates flourish, and we bequeath avatars to friends and family in our wills.

- **EnvironMENTAL Movement**

Like the movement to combat environmental pollution, the next consumer-led reaction will be against the mental pollution caused by marketers. With every corner of the world both real and virtual becoming plastered with marketing messages, bombarded consumers are starting to say they've had enough. The current attack against marketing to kids is just the beginning.

The Future: Companies are expected to reduce the amount of damage they are doing to our minds. Savvy companies sponsor marketing-free white spaces in lieu of polluting the environment with models and logos.

- **Product PLACement**

In the globally networked age, consumers are much more concerned about the consequences of consumption. Is my garbage poisoning someone in a developing country? How much fuel was burned in order to get these strawberries to my local supermarket?

The Future: Enviro-biographies are attached to just about everything, letting consumers know the entire life story of a product: where the materials were harvested, where it was constructed, how far it traveled, and where it ended up after being thrown away or recycled.

- **Brand-Aides**

The government has let us down when it comes to providing the social services we had once expected from it. Brands are stepping in to take over where the

government left off. Companies are already finding there's profit to be made from providing affordable healthcare to the masses.

The Future: Socially responsible brands make a buck while providing desperately needed services. Communities are revived by Target daycare, Starbucks learning centers, and Avis transportation services for the elderly.

- **Moral Status Anxiety**

In today's increasingly philanthropic climate, expect conspicuous self-indulgence to go straight to the social guillotine. The globally conscious consumer regards altruistic activities as a necessary part of self-improvement.

The Future: A person's net worth is no longer measured by dollars earned, but by improvements made. Families compete with each other on how many people they fed while on vacation, and the most envied house on the block is not the biggest, but the most sustainable.

- **Oldies but Goodies**

Our culture is suffering from an experience deficit. With the availability of online knowledge, we're claiming expertise based only on secondary experience. Now that everyone's a web-educated know-it-all, we're secretly longing for authority figures to guide and assure us with indispensable nuggets of wisdom that could only come from having actually accumulated life experience.

Faith Popcorn's Predictions for 2006 – Creating Our Control

This article is datelined New York, NY, December 2005. America's leading Futurist Faith Popcorn anticipates a wave of confusion and coping as consumers question what is right and wrong. From the Boomers' first taste of old age to privacy's last gasp to the ethical ups and downs of modern business and government; consumers' cultural anchors have come loose. Our moral compass is spinning and we are searching for new guideposts.

As consumers struggle to come to terms with growing ambiguity and change, and with the growing information and opportunities technology has brought as close as the nearest hotspot, they are finding new ways to create and exercise their own control. Two Trends will cycle high in our culture: Cocooning, our desire to shelter ourselves from the harsh realities of

our world; and Fantasy Adventure, our hunger for the new and unconventional. We are torn between security and experimentation. Do we hide from our problems or embrace our hyper-enabled desires?

Popcorn predicts that in the coming years we will do a heavy dose of both.

- **Skin Deeper**

On the cutting edge of the developed world, our material opulence has bred isolation and left us emotionally starving. We crave physical contact. The fad for 'cuddle parties' is only the beginning; as our work hours mount and our friendships become virtual, we will seek simple physicality wherever we can find it. Doctors' offices and hospitals will begin keeping animals on hand to comfort recovering patients. Airports will discover that positive touches increase retail traffic and will hire actors to welcome you with a hug as you deplane. Mechanized 'hugging' booths will take the place of pay-phones in many cities. Even the most reserved financial advisors will literally hold your hand through tough times.

- **BrainFitness**

Having lavished so much time on improving our bodies, we now want the mind to match. A mental fitness boom is brewing, driven by a bevy of new research and the boomers' desire to hide their mental age. Like hair-coloring and contact lenses, mental agility is the newest shortcut to a youthful impression. Ginseng will fall off the market as the demand for brain workouts surges and delivers results. Expect brain trainers to exercise your recall, retort coaches to sharpen your wit, and the gym lunch break to become a cerebral drill session.

- **Secondhand Nostalgia**

Our FutureTENSE Trend tells us that people find modern life more and more difficult and the potential risks of the future horrific. We are scrambling for a safe place, and without the comfort of present or future, we are retreating to the past. But it is an idealized past that none of us actually lived through. Didn't you go to a roller-rink and eat KFC when you were a kid? It doesn't matter; we all share the same icons thanks to decades of media saturation. Don't be surprised by a surge in popularity of 1950s slang and demand for digital alterations of family photos as we rewrite our own personal histories. "Mechanized 'hugging' booths will take the place of pay-phones in many cities." (Not NYC, I bet!)

- **America's Next Top Surgery**

Just as the first face transplant has turned its recipient

into an overnight celebrity, cutting edge medical advances will become a spectator sport. Our Fantasy Adventure Trend indicates that people will become obsessed with the success or failure of risky but life-saving organ transplants, skin grafts and limb replacements. Reality television will chronicle participants' lives before and after, and magazines will speculate endlessly on who will be the next patient selected. The medical-hopeful will compete in American-Idol-like auditions to prove that they are the most deserving. It's survival of the media-friendliest.

- **No Olds Barred**

Today's Baby Boomers define 'old age' as starting at 80—three years after the average person is dead. Tomorrow, Boomers won't acknowledge 'old' at all. Terms like 'elderly' and 'mature' will become insults, tantamount to harassment. Boomers will demand recognition of their special needs but not to be treated like 'special people;' imagine large, stylishly iconic but easy-to-read buttons gracing luxury cars like the Infinity and BMW. Even death will get a make-over: The generation that shuns pity will transform hospices into hot-spots as funerals become 'going-away parties' worthy of a lasting legacy.

- **Family Pets**

Today, we treat our pets like surrogate children. Soon animal lovers and their furry companions will grow even closer, biologically! As the cost of genetic modification plummets, engineering services will be able to create pets from scratch and pepper your future companion's DNA with your own. The result will be a unique representation of you: a pet that looks and acts like you. These animals will be such an accurate reflection of your temperament that therapists will begin seeing pets

as proxies for their patients.

- **ExpertEASE**

With the availability of so much information, expertise is no longer earned through years of training; all it takes is a little research. People are scouring television and the internet for opinions and personal testimony as a stand in for first-hand knowledge. So much of what we consume is virtual that we've lost the preferred taste for actual experience. Look for removable cochlear implants; rentable by the hour, that instantly lend you fluency in French or an understanding of how to tune a car. **DeBug-ReBug**

In the past, clean meant health and dirty meant sickness. But the more we learn of biology, the more we realize that once-icky organisms are actually beneficial. Don't think antibiotic, think probiotic. 'Good' bacteria are vital for our colon-health. Maggots can be used to quickly disinfect wounds. Cleansing is moving from purging the bad to merging with the good. Look for high-end spas, healthcare facilities, and celebrity retreats to offer designer bio-symbiotics and grow-your-own-treatment home kits.

- **Mood Tuning**

We're redefining 'retail-therapy.' No longer content to simply buy things, we are beginning to expect that the things we buy will actively help us adjust our feelings. We are tweaking our moods with biologically-enhanced purchases. Soon our clothing will be infused with urochemicals: evening-wear and lingerie will promote confidence, whereas work-gloves and boots will encourage perseverance. We will use aromatic deodorant to loosen laughter at parties, and school lunches will be engineered to improve student's acuity.

Register for these upcoming AMR programs:

AE BootCamp

February 18-19 – Las Vegas – Harrahs Hotel & Casino – Tuition \$595 (\$645 after January 18)

April 21-22 – Chicago – The Allerton Hotel – Tuition \$595 (\$645 after March 21)

September 22-23 – Baltimore – The Sheraton Inner Harbor Hotel – Tuition \$595 (\$645 after June 20)

Financial Firepower Management Roundtable

April 23-24 – Chicago – The Allerton Hotel – Tuition \$1,095 for the first attendee. \$750 for each additional attendee. This Management Roundtable is open to owners, principals and senior managers only. (Limited to 20)

AMR-1 Building a Strong Foundation Management Roundtable

October 30-31 – Scottsdale – The Paradise Valley Resort – Tuition \$1,095 for the first attendee. \$750 for each additional attendee. This Management Roundtable is open to owners, principals and senior managers only. (Limited to 15)