Spotlight on Trendspotting

> " Missing market shifts and misreading important trends can be career-limiting. Blackberry's co-CEOs misread the iPhone, dismissing it as a niche product. Kodak invented the digital camera but stood by as it unravelled the company's business model.
>
> **Robert B. Tucker (2016)**

Why trendspotting?

The history of trendspotting up to the beginning of this century was almost exclusively linked to the fashion industry. It is about observing patterns, movements in behaviours, purchasing choice and trying to predict which direction consumer tastes are moving, then turning it into a competitive advantage. As Jeremy Gutsche (2015) of trendhunter.com suggests it is about a fundamental change in the way we search out and make business opportunities using a combination of information, creativity and innovation, capturing the zeitgeist of a time and developing it into a product or service that people never even knew they needed or wanted.

Most blue chip and fortune 500 companies pay large amounts of money to firms which either specialise in qualitative analysis of the big data out there on consumer behaviour, or analysts who use metrics to spot changing quantitative data such as how many times a keyword had been searched, tweeted or blogged online. Combined, these give insights on changing demands, choices and what is likely to become the 'next best thing'. Whether or not you choose to subscribe to a paid for search or opt for DIY approach you need to get into trendspotting because constant innovation and change is the name of the game.

The problem with spotting trends alone is that in a sense it has already happened. Whilst it is important to understand, innovation means you have to use the predictive element of existing trends, and make something new. To get in front of the curve rather than behind it. Barthel and Baeyens (2014) advise that while your response to trendspotting has to relate to your sector, there are some common themes in consumer behaviours:

New Consumer Values:

Personal branding
Seeking a relationship with brands which define them

Sustainability
Consumer values conscious global citizenship

Efficiency
Don't want to be bombarded with badly targeted mass marketing

Cost
Restrained budget and the wherewithall to price compare

Life balance
Wellbeing and balance in life experience more important

Independence
Consumers no longer reliant on past relationships

Selfie focussed
What sets them apart from the herd

How can we use trendspotting smartly?

Trendspotting has to be a core activity since you need to use the insight and innovation gained to make new products and to personalise and customise your value proposition. People are becoming more tribal and will use brands and products to say something about their personality – we are undergoing a ''de-massification'' of cultural consumption. People buy less, but what they buy adds value to their lives. And, lastly, trendspotting information helps us humanise the digital. Traditionally we have marketed to segments, we need to tailor the message so that people only see what they want to hear.

Notonthehighstreet.com started in 2003 by two women who wanted to provide a platform for crafters who produced unique products. At first it grew steadily but now it is a recognised brand and despite using mass media advertising it retains a sense of individuality because of its relationships with craft producers.

'''Become like the hunter, spot patterns of opportunity: Had you tried to compete with Facebook in 2006 it would have been like trying to hold back a heard of stampeding buffalo.'
But Facebook created patterns of opportunity for other businesses if you were creative enough to look.'' **Jeremy Gutsche (2015)**

How to capitalise on trendspotting

Jeremy Gutsche, CEO of trendhunter.com suggests that the only way to really capitalise on trendspotting is to develop a hunter mentality. He lists six patterns of opportunity which can make trendspotting work for your business:

Convergence	Divergence	Cyclicality
Creating a successful business or product by combining several products or trends together to make something to fill a gap in the market – for example Nike have added GPS tracker technology to their sports range to help people monitor workout	Rejecting the established, developing the unconventional and even tapping into counter culture – a good example is Red Bull. It was told it had to put restrictions on its labelling and that made it more attractive to the youth culture	Some trends cycle around especially those connected with nostalgia. Toy Story breathed new life into some old fading toys of the baby boomer era

Redirection	Reduction	Acceleration
Channelling the power of a trend your way, don't fight it but use it. MacDonald's have used the fad for expensive, time consuming coffee into an advertising campaign boasting cheaper and faster	Simplify your business production or your USP. Niches can be good The Horrible Histories book series have captured the market in history for kids	Taking one feature and focussing on it or giving it better features of exaggeration – Tesla have made a virtue of wholly electric cars which are now being copied widely

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