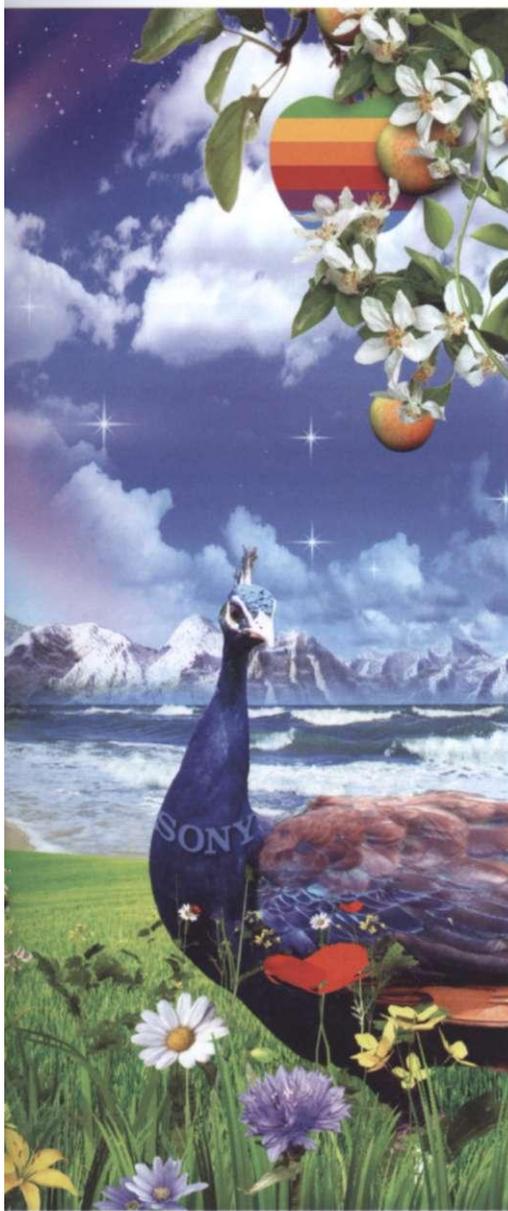




# A brand utopian world

People now expect brands to improve their lives, their personal wellbeing and that of their communities and society at large, which requires a new marketing model, says **Sara de Dios** of Havas Media



## Meaningful marketing

connects brands with a positive mission to improve the quality of life. This can be a positive impact on the environment, societies and communities as well as how they improve individual quality of life (such as happiness, health, mood, self-esteem etc)

**T**he traditional economic and marketing model that drives us to consume more is under threat. Studies show that economic gains and material consumption do not necessarily make us happier, nor do they advance our sense of wellbeing as individuals and as societies.

Until now, brands have not worried about the effects or outcomes that their products and services have on our lives and wellbeing. But that is changing as consumers begin to demand that brands take a more transformational role in our lives and the issues that are meaningful to us.

We, as marketers, need to build a radically new approach that will reconnect brands with people, in becoming 'meaningful brands' - that enhance the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the environment, by enabling people and society to flourish.

This article will demonstrate how brands can contribute in improving our personal wellbeing as individuals and the sort of personal outcomes that brands can leverage.

Studies in psychology show that there are seven core states that help us flourish and improve our wellbeing: physical (helping us being healthier/fitter/look better); intellectual (making us smarter/more skilled); economical (helping us become financially secure); organisational (making our lives easier); emotional (feeling better and happier); social (improving our relationships with others); and spiritual (connecting with our values and ethics).

Brands that succeed in connecting positively with these states are rewarded by consumers through stronger brand equity ratios and greater brand attachment and trust. Specifically:

- There is strong evidence that meaningful brands enjoy stronger brand equity and business results. The Havas Meaningful Brand Index, which tracks the opinions of over 50,000 people on 300 brands across 14 markets, reveals that the top ten brands in the Index outperform their peers in the stock market and enjoy greater growth paths, both in terms of market capitalisation and brand value growth.
- Brands that are considered meaningful to consumers systematically enjoy greater consumer preference, advocacy and loyalty; people feel a stronger attachment to these brands because they perceive they are playing a meaningful and useful role in their lives. This happens across all industries and markets.
- We also found that those of us who are highly demanding of brands, also love them more and are more attached to them. People who expect brands to produce positive

outcomes and act sustainably, also tend to value brands more and are more willing to pay a premium; as a consequence, they are also a key target market for any brand.

What makes brands meaningful varies across industries, markets and brands. People needs, expectations and socio-economic and cultural context differ significantly across markets and within segments in the same market. When it comes to how a brand improves our personal quality of life, FMCG brands, retailers and IT and consumer electronic brands are performing better than most. People usually have a good daily experience with these brands.

Among food and drink brands, Danone and Nestle are perceived by consumers to help them enjoy healthier outcomes and better nutritional habits and lifestyles. While Coca-Cola may be perceived to be contributing negatively to health, the brand connects in states such as happiness and positivity, which has enabled it to build a positive link to our emotional wellbeing.

IT and consumer electronics brands such as Google, Microsoft and Apple make our lives easier and enable us to be smarter and more skilled, while fostering our social connections with others. Google has democratised access to information and knowledge. Internet and telco brands help us socialise and connect with others, giving new intellectual and social stimulus to our lives. An example in India is Idea Cellular, the third-largest national mobile operator. There are 22 recognised languages in India, which presents a huge communication barrier. Recognising this, Idea Cellular provided a simple solution to build bridges between people by launching a language helpline, which offered the services of a translator. The service is not limited to Idea Cellular's 74 million clients, but is open to the general public. In 2011, Idea Cellular grew its revenue by 7% and millions of Indians could better communicate with others in the country.

Retail brands are often perceived to contribute the most to our economic wellbeing by helping us fulfil our daily needs at an affordable cost together with convenience and an enjoyable shopping experience. IKEA's contemporary designs and affordable and environmentally friendly products help us live more responsibly. IKEA makes numerous meaningful connections with people, at an economic, intellectual, organisational, spiritual and emotional level. It is not surprising that it registers in our Meaningful Brands Index as the most meaningful brand across all markets.

More importantly, some retailers are assisting us to make purchase decisions that benefit our wellbeing at point-of-purchase. Hannaford Brothers Supermarkets



Apple: a brand that has created a new model based on quality outcomes and interactions

highlights its healthy guiding stars that show which products provide healthy outcomes. Those categories with more stars (healthier) boosted their sales to the detriment of the not so healthy options. The intention is not to make us buy and consume more, but to help us to consume better.

Like Google, retailers are gatekeepers and are in a perfect position to help consumers navigate through a universe of products helping them decide what benefits them most at the point of sale. Retailers can become the new Googles of the FMCG industry, creating the context for 'better consumption'; guiding, coaching and helping people achieve the outcomes that are meaningful to them. This raises opportunities and risks for FMCG brands. Brands which cannot provide a demonstrably positive outcome will suffer and will become increasingly commoditised.

Some brands have been able to break free from their industry limitations that exist in sectors such as financial services and energy, and present credible, meaningful marketing strategies. Fidelity Investments' business in the US was challenged by the economic volatility of 2008-2009. At that time, consumers were seeking more personalised investment guidance, giving the opportunity

to financial institutions to enhance people's financial capabilities (what we call intellectual wellbeing). This is what Fidelity Investments did. Its 'Follow the Green Line' campaign positioned Fidelity as the trusted source for personalised investment guidance. It became the nation's financial GPS navigator, creating a specific plan for each customer and providing people with a personal, familiar and helpful service. Its communication campaign, with a simple green line became the visual metaphor of how it was giving consumers the guidance necessary to achieve their outcomes. By bringing its easy-to-follow green line to life, it restored consumer confidence and improved unaided awareness, consideration and brand preference, exceeding competitors by +10 points. Satisfaction with Fidelity's investment guidance enjoyed a 138% lift and the retention and growth of current household assets increased by 12% from 2009 to 2010. Not surprisingly, Fidelity Investments is one of the most meaningful financial brands

The Brazilian energy brand Petrobras is another case in point, it is one of the leading meaningful brands in Brazil with a Meaningful Brand Index score far higher than most FMCG brands and retailers. Petrobras has shown a unique ability to involve and

engage Brazilians in the development of their country, fostering quality interactions with Brazilians, while leveraging their sense of national pride. For instance, when announcing Petrobras' next challenge, a pre-salt exploration project, the company launched the Bandera Viva campaign. At the heart of the campaign was an interactive space formed by the photos of 25,000 men, women and children throughout Brazil. Each person was able to upload their photo and their personal challenge for the future. This campaign allowed Petrobras to listen to the challenges of Brazilians throughout the country and then respond with tangible environmental, social and cultural initiatives that contributed to the wellbeing of Brazil. Meaningful communication initiatives such as this one strengthen the emotional bond between the brand and consumers, positioning Petrobras as a key reference for Brazilians.

#### HOW TO BECOME A MEANINGFUL BRAND?

Meaningfulness is a mindset, not a marketing issue. I believe there are five key 'mental shifts' that companies and brands need to believe in and act on to start reconnecting. These shifts highlight the 'do's' and 'don'ts' we might consider when approaching meaningful marketing.

#### 1 From People to Citizens

To understand our new demands and values, we must start thinking of people as citizens, not just consumers. For brands to become meaningful, they have to really care about people 'in human terms'. We want companies and brands to listen to us, share our values, and our vision of the world. We want them to help and empower us to become better citizens (not just greater consumers).

Brands should start making commitments to people, instead of promises, and consider themselves as enabling platforms that guide people to achieve the outcomes that are meaningful to them. What matters here is not the brand, but how its existence helps people to change for the better.

For that to happen, it is vital to listen and to discover what is meaningful to people, get to know them and understand which concrete areas of human wellbeing each brand can better leverage.

**2 From products to outcomes**  
People demand something more than functional products or apparitional stories and promises. People expect brands to have a more positive, tangible impact in their lives, and in the lives of their families, and the communities they care about.

What people seek in brands are outcomes, rather than products. Outcomes are the effects and consequences that consuming or using a product/service have on our sense of personal wellbeing (personal outcomes: being healthier/fitter/happier/smarter/connected, etc) and/or in the wellbeing of the community, society or the environment (community and environmental gains, ethical issues, etc)

People expect brands to lead and help them achieve greater outcomes and create new lifestyles more consistent with their real needs, values and context.

**3 From individuals and segments to communities and systems**  
Community, society and the environment are the context in which we all live and interact. Enhancing the wellbeing of individuals enhances the wellbeing of the communities we belong to. Addressing big social challenges enhances the wellbeing of millions of lives. They are interdependent and inter-related parts of a bigger interconnected system we cannot ignore.

The Unilever Sustainable Living Plan is a very good example of how a company makes this system work better and enhances people's livelihoods responsibly. For instance, Lifebuoy disinfectant soap provides affordable and accessible hygiene to millions of people. In India, it has prevented millions of children dying from diarrhoea. Unilever's marketing efforts focused on an ambitious five-year campaign to educate children, their families and communities, to adopt the simple healthy habit of washing their hands daily. By the end of 2005, they reached 18,000 villages, and sales of Lifebuoy soap grew by 20% in 2003-04 and is India's most popular soap. Not surprisingly, Unilever is one of the most meaningful brands in India. It is not just selling soap - it is helping to transform lives and society as a whole.

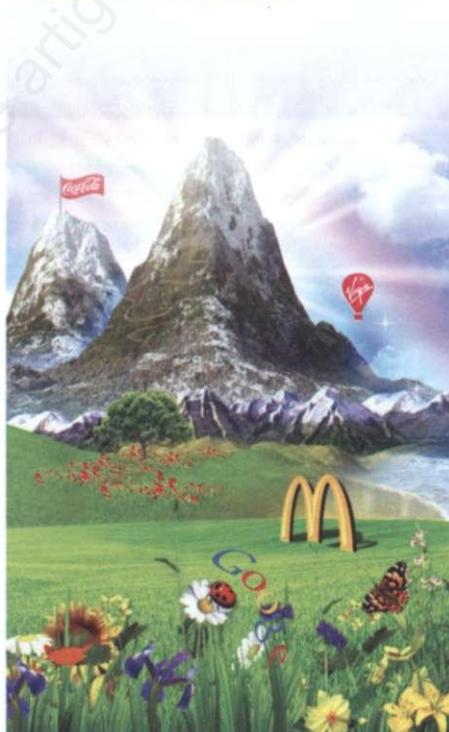
Communities are also the context in which brands are collectively built and grown. Marketers have the opportunity to leverage the collective power of our social networks

to help their brands make a difference and amplify their impact. Social media is a key platform for listening, and then nurturing meaningful interactions.

**4 From building functional and apparitional brands to becoming transformational agents**

Meaningful brands are transformational; they aim to transform ourselves, our lives and our societies for the better; they provide us with the products, services, tools, and engaging experiences to help people become better. Products and communications are

"People expect brands to help them create new lifestyles consistent with their real needs and values"



just the means to help us live better. As B J Pine and J Gilmore highlight in *The Experience Economy*, people and society have become the product. We are the product, and the brand's project. Meaningful brands' purpose is to help you become 'a better you'. They make commitments and help us become better.

To become transformational, meaningful brands need to become our partners and help us adopt meaningful habits and lifestyles. Nobody can make us healthier unless we decide to become healthier and adopt better nutritional and physical habits. People achieve outcomes; brands act as our 'coach'.

Most organisations need to transform and reinvent themselves to deliver on this mindset. Traditional organisations have been designed and grown to produce and sell more.

Not surprisingly, many of the most meaningful brands have revolutionised their markets or are undergoing a transformation. Walmart and Nestle are transforming their supply chains into sustainable life cycles and networks to create shared value. Google, IKEA, Mercadona, Zara, Apple have all created new and revolutionary models based on quality outcomes and interactions. This is not just 'marketing' or branding, it entails a much deeper radical change.

**5 From talking to building relationships: Talk, Think, Trust**  
Few people, can change someone just by talking. In the transformational business, communications become a powerful means to conduct the necessary changes that will make us and our lives better.

Real communications entail more than brands talking about them. To restore trust and reconnect with citizens, brands must start listening to citizen demands and start fuelling a dialogue about the issues that are meaningful to them (Talk), open up to new perspectives and shared thinking with citizens and other stakeholders as a move toward a shared purpose (Think), while reinforcing the relationship with them and gaining their trust (Trust).

It is through this approach that brands can start reconnecting with people and become meaningful to them.

more on meaningful marketing at [www.warc.com](http://www.warc.com)