

## CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

## CHANGE COMES FROM WITHIN



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It often appears that social change is being driven by technological innovation but, while technology has an undeniable impact on the way we live, it can be argued that the changes that have most affected modern life are those related to tradition, belief and politics.

The media never tires of telling us that society is changing at breakneck speed and constantly talks about new technologies that allow us to do things faster, more effectively, more efficiently, and to be more self-assured and healthier. Whether it is a car or an airplane, a detergent or yogurt, medicine or a lock, technology offers us a range of innovations which we continue to accept almost without realizing it and which produce clear changes in consumer behavior. These are factors that are outside changes derived from the innovation itself.

What we have to ask ourselves, however, is whether these changes in consumer behavior are really profound. We know that some have made radical changes in the way that we work, sleep, drive, eat, obtain information and amuse ourselves that would have made our grandparents blanch. I imagine that if my grandfather had taken a ride on the Dragon Khan roller coaster at the Port Aventura theme park he might not have survived the experience. The adrenaline rush that we feel today cannot be compared to the one they used to experience. Other changes have perhaps been more fleeting and afterwards we have returned to our origins.

But I am convinced that the changes that have most affected modern life are those related to tra-

dition, belief and politics. These are dizzying changes that have occurred over a single generation. And I venture that it is precisely these changes that have brought about the modifications in consumer attitudes mentioned above.

**MOBILITY AND THE FAMILY**

● If we look at tradition, the idea of family, friendship and personal relationships, it is clear that we have taken on board ideas that a few years ago would have been unthinkable. One example is job mobility. Young people at university see leaving their city of origin as a necessity and think little of it with regard to family life or their social group. Like superheroes, it seems they are ready to go where no one has gone before. They can launch themselves into the unknown without batting an eyelid because they are convinced they can find their way back.

And this changes their way of seeing the world, communicating, having relationships, wanting, appreciating and loving. It shouldn't surprise us that more people live on their own, because this tendency to "leave" after the experience of living in a group encourages people to choose a solitary life free of conflict. Single-person households are different from others in terms of consumption, entertainment and hobbies, as well as how they spend disposable income. It seems to me that change on this scale has changed the way we live, consume and think much more rapidly than any new product or service has.

We should ask who is capable of changing the way in which we look at the world, given young people's eagerness to go abroad and the fact that many established professionals have accepted that moving from city to city according to what their employer wants is not such a bad thing. If we can understand this, we will find it easier to understand people and to interest them in our brands. Because by understanding their essential outlook we can help them to overcome their uncertainties, anxieties and burdens. Can a brand do this? Few other things can.

### SHALLOW THINKING

● It is we ourselves and our fundamental attitudes that are changing. Influenced by contemporary social and economic thinking, we have changed the way we look at the world and when we stop to reflect, something we do less and less because life does not let us stop, we are surprised by the shallowness of our convictions and impulses. We follow an ill-defined philosophy because we are not trapped by ideology the way we were and, for many, ideals are mere aspirations for money, status, symbols and well-being.

All of which suggests that the changes we are seeing are profound and related to attitude and not simply to behavior, and attitudes are what determine the way we consume goods and services. I'd like to say a few words about the changes that I believe are taking place in our lives.

### LACK OF BRAND LOYALTY

● The first change: it's more or less all the same to me because I'm the one who decides. Lack of brand loyalty is regarded as socially acceptable behavior. Now that many have abandoned beliefs, politics and tradition... what will happen to the María biscuit brand? We talk a lot about commodities and the truth is that more and more brands are considered unimportant. Very few products interest us and very few brands say anything to us. The second change: there are brands that I love. I sometimes find it difficult to write love instead of ap-



preciate, but the truth is I love them. I have fun with them, I am loyal to them, I sell them to my friends and acquaintances, they fill my life and help me to overcome a thousand uncertainties.

They are brands that have understood me, that touched my soul, that helped me without asking anything in return, that don't ask for my money, only my happiness. Who could resist that? Those who understand this change in the consumer's deepest attitudes are making great brands. If we take Zara as an example, we can see how by understanding people, it has managed to become the second biggest fashion brand in the world.

These two changes and what flows from them are marking our lives as consumers, because only they derive from changes and needs in our innermost selves. If we understand that, we will be successful.

**SINGLE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS ARE DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS IN TERMS OF HOW THEY CONSUME.**