

CHANGING THE PARADIGMS

By Rudi Page

In a competitive market, commerce and culture are inseparable because culture is the unseen strand that binds people together. In the global economy, the term minority is a social, cultural and economic misnomer. Bonds which have been inherited within diverse communities are a source of economic strength and competitive advantage and should be utilised as such.

Marketing to economically active consumers within diverse communities is not necessarily a challenge to traditional marketing theory. It's about installing new ideas, creating innovation without precedents - changing the paradigms to satisfy customers. The language of communication may be different but the needs are the same.

To make best use of available resources, decision-makers and marketers must identify and utilise the influence of opinion-formers and experts who can access those accepted mediums which reflect the aspirations of the target audience. They will then be able to meet corporate objectives such as overcoming entry barriers, increasing overall market share and improving brand awareness and relevance to a new generation of consumers.

Management and exploitation of local knowledge through an integrated communications strategy is a cost effective instrument for tracking patterns of behaviour, collating consumer profiles and building momentum in a rapidly changing environment. By directing resources towards the target market's area of economic, cultural and leisure interests, marketers can position against competitors by signalling through a chosen medium that their particular brand is interested in these groups as consumers.

The continuing fragmentation of communications and distribution channels is an ongoing challenge to the promotion of a unified brand message serving separate constituents. Therefore, a different approach and a new set of relationships are required to understand the active ingredients and the underlying forces in this arena to capitalise on the 'synergy of diversity'.

This new phenomenon provides opportunities for future growth, as well as the transfer of core brand values and more focussed messages which ensure consumers either converge on the same outlets or purchase the same brands through their preferred routes. The application of these principles is a fact of economic life where both trade customers and consumers are an integral part of the whole community. Marketers who ignore the community do so at their peril because, "Bringing people together, creates markets".

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