13th TREND DAY

IDENTITY MANAGEMENT

KEYNOTE
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The Attention Economy is dead! Being loud and different is no longer enough – anybody can do that nowadays. In future, it will be recognition that counts. We are all social beings. We want to be liked, respected and appreciated. It is the applause of our elected circle that secures our status.

We used to be shaped by our work, family and religion. Identity was static. Today we lack this kind of continuity. We define identity dynamically. In the days of Web 2.0, identity is becoming a management task. The question of “Who am I?” is being replaced by “Who do I want to be?”. We play different roles depending on the audience. We optimise successful roles and accept them as part of ourselves.

The days of one-way communication are over for good. The focus is shifting to the consumer himself rather than the product. Customer relations hip management is becoming an essential component of brand management. In future, rather than anchoring a static picture of the brand in consumers’ minds, the goal will increasingly be to live and breathe the brand identity in a process of interaction with the customer.

Choosing the right audience is crucial. In contrast to attention, recognition requires a dynamic process of exchange: he who seeks recognition must himself recognise others. This banal insight has serious consequences for companies and institutions.
In a globalised world, the importance of place will increase rather than vanish. Where we live is becoming an increasingly important aspect of our lives.

THE CHOICE OF CITY DEFINES YOUR IDENTITY

What are the key findings in your new book "Who’s your city"? Some have suggested that the world is becoming flat, that is: location does not matter. However, in my book, I argue the opposite. Place is not only important, it’s more relevant to the global economy and our individuals lives than ever before. The choice of where to live, therefore, is not an arbitrary one. It is arguably the most important decision we make, as important as choosing a spouse or a career. In fact, place exerts a powerful influence over the jobs and careers we have access to, the people we meet and our “mating markets” and our ability to lead happy and fulfilled lives.

Why is place so important? Innovative people cluster together. This “urban metabolism” increases our productivity. In a globalised world, the importance of place will increase rather than vanish. Where we live is becoming an increasingly important aspect of our lives.
innovative. That’s why economic activity spikes, because of these conglomerations of energy and talent. We don’t have a North-South conflict, but a conflict between the centre and the periphery. It is not China or India we are competing with, it’s Shanghai and Bangalore. These countries are even spikier than the U. S. and Europe.

Is it possible to construct the identity of a place?
Just like creativity, place identities are organic. They cannot be engineered in a top-down process. Rather than spending money on large projects – such as a new opera house or soccer stadium – to create a “physical” identity, communities should concentrate on local initiatives already taking place that promote or embody the community’s identity, tolerance, diversity and creativity.

What implications do you see for companies?
Effectively managing creative talent is the most important decision companies can make for their future. Creative employees spur economic growth.

What are the factors behind economic growth?
The driving force behind any effective economic strategy is talented people. People, especially top creative talent, move around a lot. An organisation’s ability to attract and retain top talent is the defining issue of the creative age.

Technology and innovation are critical components for driving economic growth. You have to find ways to optimise them. It’s a question of transferring research, ideas and innovation into marketable and sustainable products. Universities are paramount to this, and provide a key hub institution of the creative age.

As the third factor, I have defined tolerance. Creative workers need communities, organizations and peers that are open to new ideas and different people. Places receptive to alternative lifestyles.

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What changes are in store for marketing practice with regard to identity? Marketing has to consider the fact that people are social beings. Target group-based marketing always set its sights on the lone consumer. But this simple way of thinking – totally detached from any context – no longer works.

IT’S A QUESTION OF OFFERING THE CUSTOMER A BIT OF QUALITY OF LIFE

The focus has to be on the networked individual. At the same time, our social interaction patterns are changing. An example: girls are going to stores and taking photos of several different dresses, which they then post on their website so they can ask their friends which one suits them best. The brand is becoming less important than the social context.

So we buy things in order to get social recognition from our peers? Yes, and at the same time, the customer is looking for products that give him a good feeling as well. In that respect, it isn’t only the brand that counts, but his identification with the company behind the brand: how does it approach the question of personnel management? How are products developed? What is the investor structure like? It’s about the identity of the company itself.

Facebook attracted 270% more visitors in the space of a single year (2006/07).