Cultural Strategy

a framework for cultural innovation

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Cultural Strategy Group
Brand nirvana

Building the next great billion dollar brand

Revitalizing a once-great brand

INNOVATION
Conventional Innovation
Build a Better Mousetrap

Breakthroughs are better performance, more function, or cheaper price, driven by the commercialization of a new technology.
When marketers do innovation

Chasing after trends, coolhunting
What is cultural innovation?
## 2000-2010: Cultural Branding Laboratory

**ACADEMIC RESEARCH (30+ cases)**
- Budweiser
- Volkswagen
- Snapple
- Corona
- Mountain Dew
- Harley-Davidson
- ESPN
- Levi’s (EU)
- Nike
- Marlboro
- Jack Daniel’s
- Patagonia

**STRATEGY CONSULTING (60+)**
- Coca-Cola (global)
- Microsoft
- Mountain Dew
- MINI (global)
- Jack Daniel’s
- Sprite (EU)
- Mastercard
- Vitaminwater
- Fat Tire
- Ben & Jerry’s
- Planet Green
- Georgia Coffee (Japan)
2004: cultural branding
2010: Extend model to cultural innovation

How to map cultural blue oceans?

How to design brand concepts to take advantage?
Red Ocean Branding

BRANDS FIGHT IT OUT WITHIN CATEGORY’S CULTURAL ORTHODOXY

Benefits trench warfare
Emotion words slugfests
Chasing generic trends
Clichéd ideology
Fifties Cultural Orthodoxy
Ideological Opportunity: Revival of Frontier Masculinity
Source Materials

Anachronistic Hillbilly “frontier” subculture
- Appalachian south, most authentic frontier remaining, booze-running

Becoming Media Myth
- True and Fortune Magazine articles
AN OLD POSTER, a little yellowed now by time, still hangs in the “Hollow” where we make Jack Daniel’s whiskey. It gives us pause to remember a near-century of whiskey-making tradition…to recall how Jack Daniel insisted on using an old Tennessee process we call “Charcoal Mellowing” to smooth out the flavor of his whiskey…how folks admired his fine potable and would have no other. To this day we’ve made Jack Daniel’s that same slow way…”Charcoal Mellowed” before aging. And it is still much admired for its rare smoothness.

Just one regret: you may have trouble finding Jack Daniel’s. If you do, please try again.
Cultural Orthodoxy: Star Athletes’ Feats
Americans faced huge challenges competing in the new economy
Nike dramatized how its ideology--Combative Solo Willpower—can overcome the worst discrimination.

A metaphor to motivate Americans to achieve the American dream in the new economy
Ideology dramatized across other social discrimination
Fifties austerity sapped Brits dreams to move past war
Radical “go-cart” design inspired Brits that finally the time had come for “everyman” to frolic.

Coca-Cola
A brand becomes a cultural leader when..
The power of cultural leadership
Coca-Cola excels when it acts as a cultural leader
taste that beats the others cold!

Pepsi pours it on — pours on the taste that actually gets better as it gets colder. It’s a cold fact: Pepsi-Cola is bottled as cold as we can make it so you can drink it as cold as you like it! And cold is the way to really drench a thirst. Prove it for yourself — put it to the taste.

Media obsessed with rioting

Politics becomes police crackdowns
Media filled with disturbing images of Vietnam war

Sparks huge protests, also dominates media
excels when it acts as a cultural leader
Media imagined black men from the ‘hood as the nation’s nightmare
Resonance, Identification
Coke’s cultural leadership drives functional + emotional benefits

Best tasting
Most refreshing
Most invigorating

Makes me happy
Makes me optimistic
Makes me feel good
Avoid the pitfalls
>>Thirst Quenching!

>>Exhilarating!

>>Refreshing!

>>Energizing!

1. Functional benefits trench warfare
2. Duals over nice emotion words
COKE EXCELS WHEN IT ACTS AS A CULTURAL LEADER

HILLTOP
taste that beats the others cold!

Pepsi pours it on—pours on the taste that actually gets better as it gets colder. It's a cold fact.
Pepsi-Cola is bottled as cold so we can make it so you can drink it as cold as you like it! And cold is the way to really drench a thirst. Prove it for yourself—put it to the taste.

PEPSI COLA, THE NUMBER ONE SOFT DRINK IN MEXICO CITY, INVITED YOU TO THE SUMMER OLYMPICS.
Media obsessed with rioting

Politics becomes police crackdowns
Media filled with disturbing images of Vietnam war

Sparks huge protests, also dominates media
TCCC COMPOSED SLIDE OF HILLTOP (OR SHOW FILM)
COKE EXCELS WHEN IT ACTS AS A CULTURAL LEADER

MEAN JOE GREENE
Media imagined black men from the 'hood as the nation's nightmare.
TCCC COMPOSED SLIDE OF MEAN JOE GREENE
Coke’s Cultural Leadership drives functional + emotional benefits

TWO STILLS: HILLTOP AND MJG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resonance, Identification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best tasting</td>
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Humans rely on ideologies to anchor their identities.

Cultural icon = the most valued and important agent of ideology

Ideologies are embedded in cultural expressions =
myth = story that make the ideology salient, credible, persuasive
+ cultural codes = conventions for telling stories

Social shifts create cultural tensions

disrupt the identity value of existing ideologies, creating a demand for revised or new ideology (via myth+codes)

The performer of the ideology that responds best to social shift sparks huge cultural resonance, becomes iconic.

Icons result from ideologies that a segment of society most “needs” at a particular historical moment, expressed in the most persuasive manner
Conventional Brand Strategy

Key Mental Associations

- Functional Benefits
- Emotional Benefits

ESSENCE or DNA

- Sprinkle with Trends And Fame
- Celebrities Fashion Cool

RELEVANCE
Strategy is rudderless, left to agency and luck,
Cannot possibly direct valued symbolism
Different Mechanics Require Different Strategy Model

Requires conceiving of the brand in society
   Not metaphysical abstraction

Requires conceiving the brand as a cultural expression
   Not as an amalgam of cognitive concepts

Requires staking leadership position re: historical change
   Not yanking brand out of history, consistency at all costs
How Ben & Jerry’s Became a Cultural Icon
Identity Project: political v consumerist juggling

“Sixties Generation” middle-class enjoying bourgeois lifestyle and material success

While trying to stay true to their Sixties/college ideology
- Humanitarian idealism, environmentalism, cultural libertarianism
Political Shift Fuels Cultural Tension

“Reagan Revolution” dramatically alters American political discourse

- Capitalism over environmental and humanitarian values; greed is good ideology; aggressive militaristic posturing

Left-of-center baby boomers became politically alienated

Creates powerful latent demand for cultural response to Reaganism
Enter Ben & Jerry’s

Advance humanitarian-sustainable business ideology

Source material
- Back-to-the-land hippie subculture
- Yippie political prankster media stunts
What’s The Doughboy Afraid of?

When Pillsbury tries to use market power to shut Ben & Jerry’s out of marketplace

Cohen responds with a provocative prank that captured the liberal baby-boomer imagination
Ben & Jerry’s Vs. Reagan’s Cold War

Guerilla campaign and new product launch receives national coverage on all major networks.

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Cherry Garcia

“Euphoria Now” vs. Reagan’s War On Drugs
Rainforest Crunch vs. Slash-and-Burn Farming in the Amazon

Leverages media wave covering rainforest activist Chico Mendes assassination in 1989

Launch reported on all major television networks and news dailies
Grows to $237 Million Revenue

Ben & Jerry's Annual Revenue in Millions

DOUGHBOY CAMPAIGN


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Cultural Branding Shorthand

Brand advances an ideology

Expressed via myth and cultural codes

That resolves a cultural tension

Caused by a social disruption

Via source materials repurposed from subcultures, movements, and media myths
Cultural Innovation

Innovative ideologies, expressed via myth and codes

Responding to emergent demand created by historical changes in society

Usually happens within existing categories

Not technology led. Does not require breakthrough product.

Powerful complement to better mousetraps strategies
Application
Map the Cultural Orthodoxy
Cultural Orthodoxy for Craft Beer

Artisanal-Cosmopolitan
Unearth the Ideological Opportunity
Creative Rebel Discourse

BoBos aspired to do insanely great things in work that seemed like play.
But few did. Routine boring work in stressful organizations was the norm. And they make big bucks so they can’t walk away.

They can only dream of another life. *The ache of the Bobo*. 
Mining Source Material

Cultural Orthodoxy
Competitors' Dominant Cultural Expression

Ideological Opportunity
Demand for Better Ideology

Social Disruption

Source Material
Subculture, Media Myth, Brand Assets.
Start a boutique organic farm
In pastoral towns
Pastoral Amateur Subculture

Stubbornly independent renegades passionately pursuing avocations in beautiful rural places

Don McClung, 29” single-speed mountain bike pioneer
1. Map the Category’s Cultural Orthodoxy

2. Identify the Social Disruption

3. Unearth the Ideological Opportunity

4. Cull Appropriate Source Material

5. Apply Cultural Tactics?

6. Craft Cultural Strategy
Pastoral Amateur Manifesto

New Belgium is a community of pastoral amateurs with many avocations, including brewing beer. We celebrate quixotic playful exploration. Pastoral amateurs investigate their chosen domain with intensity. But this isn’t a masculine conquest. Our approach is communal, not competitive. We prefer childlike innocence to jaded professionalism. This is a playground, not a frontier.

We champion wildly non-instrumental investments of time. Pastoral amateurs will take whatever time it takes to learn what needs learning, pursue the paths of inquiry that are open, experimenting to get things right, attending to the details. We embrace brash iconoclasm.
Results

Sales +30-45% in test markets vs. control

Fat Tire is #3 craft beer in USA, fastest growing
Pregnancy Tests: Cultural Orthodoxy

Patriarchal-Scientific Medicine

- Talked down to women as experts
- Treated women’s bodies as taboo

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Subculture: 3rd Wave Feminism
Media Myth: Pop Culture For Educated Women
Embrace 3rd wave’s celebration of woman’s body and sexuality

Challenge patriarchal scientific approach to women and their bodies

Take on category taboos
How to use:
CLEARBLUE EASY DIGITAL OVULATION TEST

1: It works like a pregnancy test. The test detects an increase (surge) in the luteinizing hormone (LH) in your urine and shows a smiley face when you are most fertile. If a smiley face appears proceed to STEP 2:

2: Seduce your man.
How to use:
CLEARBLUE EASY
DIGITAL OVULATION TEST

1: It works like a pregnancy test. The test detects an increase (surge) in the luteinizing hormone (LH) in your urine and shows a smiley face when you are most fertile. If a smiley face appears proceed to STEP 2:

2: Seduce your man.
Results

UK  55% sales increase
Germany  45%
USA  80%

Radio only  35%
THANK YOU
A Brand becomes a Cultural Leader when..

It recognizes that delivering cultural expressions that society demands creates enormous customer value.

And it acknowledges that society is always changing—disruptions challenge accepted ideologies and create demand for new culture.

So, successfully responding to historical changes that matter to category consumers is what transforms the brand into a cultural leader.

Cultural leaders are empathetic observers of how societal change impacts the identities of category consumers, and then, acting as an artist, crafts new culture to envision a way forward, to help customers anchor their identities in a changing world.
The Power of Cultural Leadership

CONSUMER IDENTIFICATION

BRAND METRICS

- Most Desired
- Most Relevant
- Most Admired
- Most Like Me
- Cut Through
- Most Talked
- Perceived Quality
- Highest Benefits
AVOID THE PITFALLS
1. Functional Benefits Trench Warfare

- Thirst Quenching!
- Exhilarating!
- Refreshing!
- Energizing!
2. Duals over Nice Emotion Words.
We don’t want to end up here.

Life is good. Always.

We believe in a world of rose-colored glasses, in which no problems ever need to exist if only you follow us and only think about good things.
How to break out of the red ocean?
1. EMBRACE COKE’S IDEOLOGY
2. PAY ATTENTION TO SOCIAL DISRUPTIONS
TO SPECIFIC HISTORICAL INSTANCES OF ACUTE INHUMANITY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY THAT TROUBLE YOUR CUSTOMERS

BEYOND SURVEYS, TRENDS REPORTS, FOCUS GROUPS.
Historical Change

Red Ocean Competition

Social Disruption

Ideological Opportunity
BREAK OUT OF THE BENEFITS VS IMAGE TRADEOFF

WHICH PART OF BRAND HOUSE TO EMPHASIZE?

FUNCTIONAL BENEFITS OR IMAGE (EMOTION WORDS)
CULTURAL LEADERSHIP DRIVES FUNCTION + EMOTION

Coke applies utopian humanitarian ideology

Resonance, Identification

- best tasting
- most refreshing
- most invigorating

Makes me happy
- optimistic
- joyful
THANK YOU
OUTTAKES
We need to crack Coke’s Strategic Black Box

Happiness
Refreshing
Invigorating

Cultural Leadership