

THE NEW QUEST FOR HAPPINESS & EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

By Louise Locke Foverskov,

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Using trend management to understand your market and your consumer is nothing new. In fact trends have never been so trendy and access to trend information never so easy. However, it is what you do with your knowledge that defines your success. Understanding not just what the consumer – *whether it is your B2B partner or the end user* – want right now but also in the future demands skill and care. The good news is that the future is yours for the taking. As futurist and founder of trend management consultancy kjaer global, Anne Lise Kjaer says, “the future is not just somewhere you go, you create the future”. In short it is up to you to use the trends relevant to you to create the best future for your business. The drinks can manufacturers have an established success in identifying and responding to the mega trends impacting on the consumer. With such solid trend management already in place they are well equipped to meet future developments face on.

“There has long been an undercurrent of change that is now becoming more prominent. The pursuit of happiness is becoming more and more important as a core need to address. People no longer measure happiness in material terms – they are looking for more substance and meaning in life”, and Anne Lise would know as she is helping some of the worlds biggest companies navigate the future and understanding tomorrow’s consumer. “Can manufacturers have an advantage, she continues, as their product is already inherently addressing what is probably the biggest megatrend, namely sustainability”. Sustainability is our new religion”. No one can be in business without addressing the sustainability agenda. The really good news is that drink cans are one of the most sustainable packaging propositions out there. Today’s consumer is very savvy, connected and informed. They also like to be proactive in the way they consume. Anne Lise calls this **Conscious Consumption**. “Knowing that what you buy is the least harmful to the planet make people feel good and when you feel good you connect with the product and the brand”. People want an emotional connection with products and services more than ever. A positive experience is now rated higher than economic advantages. Emotional engagement can take many forms but at the core is a sense of personal meaning and a feel good factor. The search for emotional connection is a key driver of most trends and perhaps as such more a general need state, closely connected to our hunt for happiness.

The aluminium or steel drinks can is the perfect vehicle to create an emotional [link](#). It is already an extremely versatile product and with technical leaps in printing and manufacturing processes it is also very agile and responsive to changes. ‘**On The Go**’ and **Convenience** continues as big trends and we have already seen great examples of how brands – not only of canned beverages but also the event industry, airlines and others - understand how to tap into these trends. A particularly good example of an opportunity identified and taken is canned wine. This is an idea that could easily have been shot down had it not been for sound trend management. Understanding that a younger audience, free from the snobbery and adherence to tradition often associated with wine consumption, is in the market for a refined alternative to beer and spirits when attending events, take a trip by plane or train or are simply having a picnic in the park is vital for this fresh idea to work.

Emotional Connection is also the actual physical touch point or interface between the consumer and the product. The drinks can have some material properties that allow for great tactility that will appeal to the senses of the emotional consumer. Various embossing processes as well as impact printing can be used to great success when brand and manufacturer want to address the trend **Premiumisation**. “Luxury is changing and evolving – people still want an aesthetic product experience but overall luxury is becoming more subtle and tactile and this should be reflected in the design”. Anne Lise Kjaer calls this Deep Luxury. Overconsumption is no longer equated with success hence the new subtlety. We as consumers also demand more from a luxury brand than we used to. There must be an ethical and responsible dimension as well – we want to know about the environmental impact and the provenance of the product. Generosity is another trait that can leverage a brand today. Generosity projects a feeling of excess than is non-material like having a charitable initiative affiliated with the product.

Another aspect of the new turn of **Premiumisation** is, as luxury has become more accessible to all, differentiation and exclusivity must come from elsewhere. This is something the can manufacturing business and the drinks brands have understood and responded to successfully. Individualisation is such a response - limited edition and event specific products still appeal to the consumer. With communication technology and social media this become even more important as the stream of information and communication speeds up so will the consumer’s demand for product response time. Social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, is growing in importance to brands and therefore also to the drinks can supplier. It provides a ‘real time’ direct line to the consumer and a big opportunity for dialogue. As consumers we want nothing more than to be listened to perhaps only beaten by a chance of direct influence. Tomorrow’s consumer wants to **Co-create** their products and brand experiences. Why not have QR codes printed on event specific drink cans that will take the consumer directly to the event or brand home (website) for an enhanced experience via their mobile phone? Or perhaps as Glaceau’s bottled water brand Vitamin Water has done recently – Co-created the next flavour in collaboration their consumers or ‘fans’ via Facebook. In fact they have managed to cover two trends in one product by also colour coding the different flavours in a simple and logical manner. This is a stylistic trend that derives from the desire to have access to clear and transparent information. The possibilities are endless.

The other side of the coin is how communication technology has empowered the individual. It has brought about a new openness that is fast becoming the new norm as boundaries between public and private worlds are redrawn. Tomorrow’s people demand **Total Transparency** and dialogue from businesses and organisations after a culture of cover-ups and nondisclosure have left them sceptic and aware. People look to buy products or do business with companies that take a lead in accountability and responsibility. According to the Edelman ‘Trust Barometer’ study, people believe that a ‘person like myself’ is by far the most credible source of information. Add this up with unrestricted access to information, a hyper connected society and a flood of user-generated feedback and you will find that ‘word of mouth’ now can make or break a business. So, make yours the worthwhile choice by being open and have genuinely ethical credentials. People can tolerate flaws but not cover-ups. As long as they sense a business is doing their best they can actually be very forgiving.

Finally we cannot talk trends and canned drinks without mentioning **Health & Wellness**. Many consumers prioritise and pay premium for self-pampering, mind-

detox, personal trainers, and wellness coaches - health management is simply big business. Prevention rather than cure drives tomorrow's consumer and we invest vast sums in our body – our most valued future capital. This is of course good for the canned drinks industry. More and more consumers are realising that the drinks can is not just convenient, it has properties that are advantageous as they have better preservation qualities than other receptacles. A good example of a brand that have understood this trend well is Pret a Manger's line of sparkling canned 'health' drinks. The flavours come in names such as "Yoga Bunny Detox" and the can carries the promise of "absolutely no nasties". All is done tongue firmly in cheek to make the communication light hearted and easy. After all no one wants to be bogged down with guilt in their lunch break.

All this brings us back to happiness as the new secret of success. From politics and business to community and family - **Happiness Hunting** is on the agenda. It is no longer just a personal pursuit, but a big-hearted approach to work, money, family and community - even politics. And happiness can be applied to everything: personal development, branding and the marketing of products, services, businesses and leadership. Coca Cola's "Open Happiness" worldwide campaign is perhaps the most direct and eye catching response to this trend. Del Monte too has created the brand Bloom, a canned juice drink, under the brand slogan, 'Happy hour – spread the good energy". All in all good news! The canned drinks industry is well up on the mega trends. Now make sure that your business trend management counts and go on, create a happy future.

KJAER GLOBAL KEY TRENDS TO WACTH

1. TOTAL TRANSPARENCY

Openness becomes the new norm, as boundaries between public and private worlds are redrawn. Ethics and caring values are essential measures of a product or company's success and, with nowhere to hide from online exposure, trust goes hand in hand with transparency.

2. CONSCIOUS CONSUMPTION

Personal satisfaction and sustainable living are finely balanced, as individuals take real responsibility for their shopping and consuming habits. Governments and corporations embrace this movement through education, empowerment and open discussion.

3. CLOUD CULTURE

Digital reality broadens horizons as data and apps move to the 'cloud'. Accessibility and open source enables new collaborations and communities – feeding our desire for instant information, true personal expression and genuine 'real-time' dialogue with companies.

4. THE REAL THING

In a homogeneous world, people crave meaning, individuality and emotional connection. Everything a brand says or does reflects its values. Empowerment brands will tell their individual story in fresh ways, inviting us to experience the Real Thing - it's a soul thing.

5. HEALTH INTELLIGENCE

With rising concern and increasing information about obesity, stress and other lifestyle diseases, health management and personal wellbeing become even bigger business. Seeking holistic approaches, people take personal responsibility for their wellbeing.

6. HAPPINESS HUNTING

Forget wealth, happiness is the new measure of success. With 'good karma' hunting viewed as a serious business proposition, governments, companies and individuals look beyond the balance sheet and start to explore how to make this society a happier place.