

channel UNO

trends and other interesting things from around the world



As we all trickle back to work after the excesses of the season, and contemplate with sober eyes the resolutions we made for this year; stopping smoking, spend more time with kids, ease off on whatever is your predominant vice, get fitter, or to simply enjoy life more.

This annual tradition is well placed to give a good perspective on the year that's past and the year ahead. The season with its focus on both family and mutual indulgence also tends to steer our thinking on resolutions and so those thoughts of family or personal wellbeing are often front of mind when it comes time

to reflect on what you are going to change, to make this year better than the last. The ending of a year also quietly reminds us that our allotted span is not infinite, and without labouring too long on that point, it does have a massive influence on our actions and the goals we set ourselves. The concept of well-being, mental, spiritual and physical, is core to most of these resolutions, and this is the core topic of this episode of Channel UNO.

A number of you will be aware that UNO is a member of the IDP (International Design Partnership), and every year the IDP holds a



UNO add reflexology to the services offered

channelUNO

week long annual conference, which all members are invited to attend. This years meeting was hosted by Degrippes Gobe's Hong Kong office and the central theme of the conference was that of 'Health & Wellbeing' and what that means within our own culture and the related trends. Health and Wellbeing is such an expansive topic, littered with numerous little asides, each fully deserving to be explored, but we wanted to force our way back upstream and look for the force which is driving this resurgence. We wanted to know what people are looking for when they buy a 'Wheatgrass & Echinacea Berry Smoothie', what the motivation is in buying their outdoor wear from Patagonia, why liquid yoghurt sales have gone through the roof, why reality TV is such a phenomena and yet no one admits to liking it? What does Paris Hilton actually do? These and other more relevant questions were all on the agenda, although we sadly ran out of time before we got to Miss Hilton. We did consider staying focused on market and branded packaging related issues but in my view working within this silo would have blinkered our vision and not really gained us any better understanding of the forces driving these changes.

Our partners took a variety of approaches and by overlaying these it was hoped that we could discern elements that were International and also those that were more localised. The International aspect of the conference could hardly be more pronounced with partners coming from every continent to converge in the heart of one of the World's greatest cities. The marrying of many cultures, the East meets West connection all helped to support the central discussion topic of Health and Wellbeing, with its myriad strands and sub-topics.

We've highlighted some of the work that was presented on this topic and we've also looked to define recurring themes and were relevant, the cultural contrasts that are in some ways more interesting, as they help us to understand our own and others cultural space and identity. To compress a weeks worth of efforts into a few pages would not do justice to either so I've attempted to group the work by Continent, although I have also attempted to make specific references to the more glaring cultural distinctions.

The area that we were all highly interested in was Asia and we were very fortunate to have a number of Asian partners in attend-



Just another relaxing day in Hong Kong

ance, including our hosts from Hong Kong as well as South Korea, China and Japan.

South America

The work presented by our South American partners, Peru, Argentina, Brazil and Chile was highly reflective of the deep traditions on one hand, particularly evident in Peru and the development of identity on the other, which was more notable in Chile. Argentina and Brazil reflected fewer extremes than their neighbours but there were still strong and familiar trends which reflected the need to create a balance in life, managing the necessities of work etc, but

not at the expense of a reduced ‘quality of life’. This is a phrase that was often repeated, the actual meaning having a very personal definition. Marcelo, from Argentina, mentioned the growing trend in downshifting, and although this is not confined to Argentina, it was clear that this ‘balancing’ of elements, one ‘connection’, the other ‘healthy balance’ were themes that were constantly repeated and the desire to have a deeper connection with ourselves, our families and even the local spaces which surround our homes, or have in some way become part of who we are, local bars, football grounds, favourite walks etc.

In Chile, a country which bears a surprising number of parallels with Australia, they highlighted a number of trends which would have felt incredibly familiar to an Australian audience, the challenges of excess, childhood obesity levels on the rise, diabetes and associated health issues, growth in gym membership. Health was also having an impact on the tobacco market, who have now been forced to print images on their packs showing the effects of smoking. Perhaps the most striking difference between Chile and its Northern neighbour, Peru, was that there was more physicality in the make-up of wellbeing, whereas

Health, Prosperity and Longevity

There are two primary aspects to downshifting. One is about **connection** – connection to life, family, food, place – and the other is about maintaining a **healthy balance** – balance in the personal, work, family, spiritual, physical, and social aspects of their life.

Marcelo Sapoznik, Argentina

Porta4, Chile



Peru showed more of a balance between the physical and mental/spiritual aspects of wellbeing, with a resurgence of trust in traditional preventative or curative treatments, which were typically diet based. This resurgence of trust in the past also follows on from the 'connections' idea raised earlier and it was interesting that this force was remarkably weaker in Chile, this was attributed to Chile's ongoing struggle in defining their national identity, being a relatively young country without the same depth of historical and cultural resources of Peru.

North America

If a country could typify the act of balancing the spiritual with the physical more than the Chinese it would have to be Mexico, steeped in layers of history, from the Mayan's through Spanish rule and then the post colonial years with the ever growing presence of an imposing and fairly boisterous neighbour. Mexico best typifies the desire to balance our needs for a spiritual life, a family life and to also manage the work and commercial aspect. There are of course the numerous parallels that Mexico has with any first world country, increasing wealth but time poor, increasing

childhood obesity, increasing levels of diabetes etc, the difference, as we have seen before, is in the approach that is taken to offset these factors. As well as looking to new solutions, such as biodynamic food products and increased gym membership, there has also been a growing nostalgia and trust in older methodologies, such as herbology. The curative properties of herbs is well documented, but instead of adding these into a smoothie in a modern format, these are being sold in traditional packaging with a complex mix of specific iconography, depicting religious figures or stating very definite benefits.

The US on the other hand has approached this from a very modern and youthful angle. The desire to squeeze more from 24 hours is most apparent in the US. This was perhaps best symbolised in the growth of pre-work Yoga classes, where the physical and mental combination of yoga is ideally suited to release built up tension and create a tranquil space which can then be filled up with new, fresh pressures. However, to accommodate this new past time the space had to come from somewhere. With the day broken into units, each allocated to differing functions, each of which is indispensable to a full and active life, the only place left to steal time from was sleep, so people just get up even earlier, so no doubt the new growing issue is going to be how to manage on 3 hours sleep. The contrast to all of the trends which underlined the desire to 'be active' was in one traditional cornerstone of US life and in one growing global trend, these are 'Thanksgiving',



Wholefoods - USA

which is possibly the only meal centred family occasion in the US and the other is the slowfood movement, which although it is an actual organisation also can be typified as a trend in that a number of the aims of the movement are already distinct and growing trends in their own right. The slowfood movement captures elements like organic, biodynamic, farmers markets, agricultural sustainability, local diversity as well as the more hedonistic trend of gastronomy and people whose main concern is the pleasure to be derived from eating well. This in actual numbers is still quite a small market but what is interesting is that these trends are coming together and gaining strength. Supermarkets like Wholefoods in the US & UK and Macro Wholefoods in Australia have far more mainstream appeal than they would have adopted say 5 years ago.

The effect on the big players can be clearly seen in the new dominance of 'fresh' as the defining category within the mainstream supermarket arena, as well as the revitalisation in Australia of the High Street specialists like butchers, green grocers etc.

Europe

We had numerous contributions from our European partners, where the issue of health and wellbeing are major issues with both the social costs of an aging population and, like everywhere else it seems, increasingly obese kids. The most humorous presentation was from our UK partner who showed a slide of parents passing burgers and chips through the fence of a school which had introduced the new



Traffic Light Nutrition Labelling - UK

healthier school lunches, made famous by Jamie Oliver's 'School Lunches' programme. There were also some slides showing the introduction of the new traffic light system of labelling on food to highlight the positive or negative aspect of the product prior to purchase. In Germany the situation was highlighted by the government's introduction of a mandatory health tax, which was a massive shock to a population that had always felt comfortable in receiving excellent health services free of charge. Now a portion of the responsibility was being placed back on the individual to look after themselves. Interestingly, although the organic movement is well established in Europe, there is now the added complication of using labels to highlight the carbon footprint of products, which for organic foods flown in from Africa or Mexico means that although they are organic, and may have been farmed using sustainable methods, the fact they were shipped by air has now given them either an airplane sticker (TESCO) or will be reflected in a larger than most carbon footprint. The growth in slowfood, farmers markets, alternative remedies/medicines, food supplements has been widespread through Europe. It has been more polarised



Parents taking lunchtime food orders for 'junk food' - UK

in the UK with the uptake of these more health based trends occurring sharply along the old class lines of middle and working class. It's a point of contention that cost is the prohibitive element, some have stated that the cost versus benefit or the fact that the UK is deemed less food conscious than its European neighbours is perhaps more to blame.

Asia

Its borderline criminal behaviour to have allotted so few words to any of the areas covered, they could

easily fill numerous books in their own right but to do so would have been at the risk of blurring the bigger picture, where what I've attempted is to look across the globe and pick up on the repeating patterns and areas of contrast.

Asia with its ever-growing market strength, huge population centres and rapidly changing social structure is being forced to adapt very quickly and in doing so is experiencing problems associated with the sheer speed of change. I agree, this is a broad blanket statement and by no means 100% accurate, but in broad terms the issue of opening markets and what could be termed an industrial revolution in many Asian countries along with the resulting influx of western goods and media is giving rise to a generation which has to balance many conflicting messages and resolve it into who they are and what it means to be Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Asian.

In market terms the products that appeared to have been developed to fit this fusion of cultures were the ones based on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the fmcg lines, soft drinks being the most prolific, were in a format that could fit with the new lifestyle needs but the ingredients and benefits were supported by TCM. The packaging formats were very modern, shrinksleeved PET bottles in numerous shapes but with graphics and iconography that blended the old and trusted with the modern, branded and fashionable.

Australia is a bit of geographical oddity as far as our culture goes. In this season of Christmas, we still have northern hemisphere traditions gently tweaked to fit our summer season, our largely Western Europe based culture has only recently become more Asian in outlook, the growing Asian population, the accessibility to Asia for holiday makers, the political connections being developed and the strong trade links have all gently pulled the culture pointer Eastwards.

In our presentation we took an emotive approach and suggested that the element that connected the vast majority of the trends discussed by our partners was that of trust and the various and all too numerous examples of how trust has been eroded. We highlighted various political scandals, food scares, celebrities de-frocked or imprisoned, corporate fraud and embezzlement and then to cap it all the planet starts to fail, ice caps melting, droughts ravaging the land etc. When it came to brands that are trusted it was those that walked the walk. Patagonia being one example that we highlighted, but there are others, I mentioned slowfood earlier, the stars that give of themselves, using their celebrity to do something more constructive than show us how not to live, the volunteer movement in Australia, especially fire-fighters who are an integral part of many rural communities and who in return have the support and loyalty of those communities, and on a high street level we have pharmacists who always appear in the top 3 most trusted professions, usually battling it out for top honours with nurses.

In short, we are most definitely in a changing world, and in times of uncertainty we are reaching for elements of stability, either because we know through our cultural heritage or family history that these have always been dependable or because we are able to grant some faith in a new approach, product, person or group that can help us to regain some inner equilibrium. In Traditional Chinese Medicine there is the principle of 'Ying and Yang', most commonly recognised by the circle formed by two interlocking teardrops, one black one white. The restoration of harmony in the body by balancing these two complementary energies underpins most Asian medicine and in a sense was related to the topic of our conference and also goes to the foundation of any brand in that it needs to speak to us and also be worthy of our trust.

This is our channel for airing opinions; a few of ours, our International Design Partnership friends and if you've got some, yours. Our aim is to start a few fires, kick a few tired ideas into shape and stir up a healthy debate on what we see around us.

If you want to join in the debate or introduce a friend to the channel then you can mail us at

newsdesk@uno.net.au

The logo for channelUNO features the word "channel" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by "UNO" in a larger, bold, uppercase, sans-serif font. The "UNO" is set against a solid red rectangular background.

trends and other interesting things from around the world