



THE TREND COMMANDMENTS™

*Turning Cultural Fluency
into Marketing Opportunity*



LARRY



SAMUEL



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into Marketing Opportunity*

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**BANG!
ZOOM!**
BOOKS
NEW YORK
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THE TREND COMMANDMENTS™

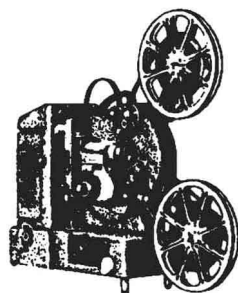
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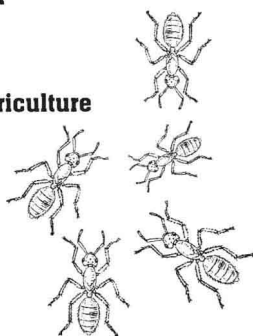
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the real land of milk and honey. Moses was without a doubt the go-to guy when it came to delivering messages from the CCO (Chief Creation Officer) and making travel plans but he was no marketing genius, trust me.

The Trend Commandments™ is your passport out of the cultural wilderness leading to a promised land of marketing opportunities. This book will offer you a new vocabulary or language to speak in the marketplace and show you how to apply these conversation skills to your business. Think of it as a way to raise your C.Q. (Cultural Quotient) in order to be in the right place at the right time with the right ideas.

The main reason I wrote this book was to pass on my learnings from my years as a leading trend consultant to Fortune 500 companies and major ad agencies. A big part of my mission is to try to shrink the sea of confusion and misunderstanding surrounding trends, which has only seemed to get worse in recent years. Many people believe trends to be about the latest, the hippest, the coolest, tipping us off to what's in versus out, what's hot versus cold, what's new versus old. The truth is that most trends are in fact not cool (or even "trendy") at all, having little or nothing to do with the fashion, hairstyle, band, or drink of the moment. Trends are exponentially more democratic, populist, and, most importantly, opportunistic and leverageable than coolness. To put it another way, coolness is the guy or gal you date for kicks but trends are whom you take home to mom and dad (or to your board of directors). Thinking of trends as fleeting,

ephemeral, and superficial fluff has also contributed to the wrong idea that they are ends to themselves when trends are much more often a means to a greater end. Part of your mission, this book will show, will be to develop a good sense of “trendar”—trend radar to filter out the lightweights and pretenders from the real thing and to use as a compass or GPS to point you in the right direction.

Too often equated with the lifestyles of leggy supermodels or teenagers with too much time and/or money on their hands, trends are actually an integral, vital component of any society. Because of our youthcentric society, progressive orientation, and insatiable appetite for “The Next Big Thing,” however, the true value and significance of trends has largely been lost. Trends reveal the seminal patterns or themes of a society, telling us where that society is headed, what it aspires to become. They both reflect and shape a culture and serve as key symbols of our individual and collective identities. Trends are directional indicators or beacons that form a cultural arc or trajectory and help us anticipate what’s next. They allow us to connect the scattered dots of society, to make sense out of the cultural mayhem, and, most importantly, to make (the right) decisions. When stacked together (*vis-a-vis* these ten commandments), trends are an immensely powerful strategic and tactical resource but they are often underused and misused. The most common mistake is to see trends as isolated, rather random phenomena and not part of a complex web of connections and relationships. Versus our regular and I think unhealthy habit of dividing, segmenting, and differentiating groups from other groups and individuals from other individuals, trends also represent an inclusive, holistic

way to view society and the marketplace. They cross demographic boundaries with reckless abandon, mocking the social divisions of age, gender, race, ethnicity, class, and geography we like to construct. Trends also frequently skirt political party lines, making the ideological labels of “liberal” and “conservative” seem monolithic and silly. And unlike what people say, think, or say they think, trends are real, serving as hard, tangible evidence and firm proof of our cultural priorities. One may (and should) argue about a trend’s social significance and marketing implications, in other words, but one can’t challenge its existence.

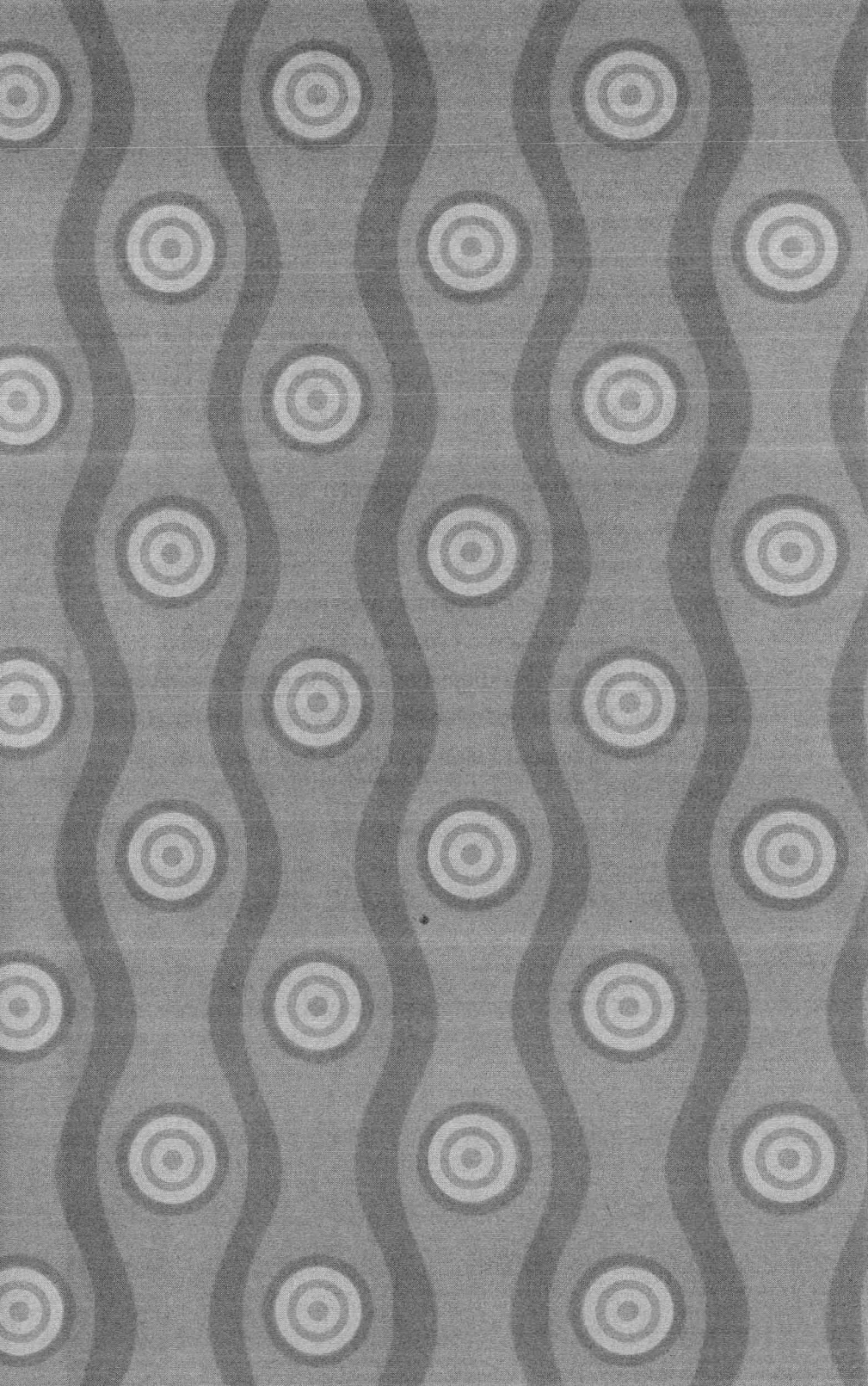
As a working definition, consider a trend to be nothing more (and nothing less) than a particular expression or articulation of a society’s values which is in ascent, i.e., rising in popularity, status, worth, and power. Trends can be seen as tips of cultural icebergs, relatively small chunks floating on the surface of society that should warn you there is probably something much bigger underneath. Switching metaphors faster than you can say *Titanic 2*, they are the strands of a society’s DNA, the structural design of a culture’s gene pool and a vital clue to who we are as a social organism. Or, to once again switch metaphors at the risk of your returning this book and ordering the one you really wanted, you know, the one with the pictures of famous people’s dogs, trends are like leaves on our cultural tree which sprout, change color and shape, and eventually die. Like any living thing, each one is unique and has a lifecycle all its own. Trends vary dramatically in importance and scope, ranging from a blip on the radar to a full-fledged social movement. Their “horizontality,” i.e., pervasiveness, popularity, and ubiquity, is, I believe, even more

important than their verticality, i.e., how long they have been around. Because of their fluidity, however, trends often overlap, mimicking the chaotic nature of the culture they signify. They are, essentially, a mess, the very reason why few people understand how to use them as a marketing tool.

Hence *The Trend Commandments*™. This book is designed to give you a framework or structure by which to ground your brands in the cultural zeitgeist and help you choose which battles to fight. The ten commandments are, I believe, the synthesis or distillation of our cultural soup, the concentrated essence of where we are and where we're headed. They are rules to follow (and occasionally break) in order to be in sync (versus 'N Sync) with the cultural flow based on trends from across society. Each of the commandments is a building block of our cultural foundation and, not coincidentally, part and parcel of the American experience, steeped in our history and always present in some way. If each trend is an individual strand of our cultural DNA, consider the ten commandments in this book a "cultural genome project," detailing the genetic code of American culture at its cellular level (and, because of our empire-like status rivaling ancient Rome or Greece, that of much of the world). Again, my goal is not so much to inform you of new trends (which are easily found) as much as to help you become more culturally fluent and recognize ways to translate that fluency into business opportunities. Because most trends in the foreseeable future should fall into one or more of the ten commandments (the more a trend overlaps commandments, the stronger the trend), *The Trend*

Commandments[™] is what I believe to be the skeleton key to marketing success in the 21st century.

The best way to use this book is to consider each of the one hundred trends and ten commandments within the context of your brand, company, category, and industry. Focus more on the commandments rather than the individual trends, as the latter are essentially ways to illustrate the cogency and validity of the former. Use the Opportunity statements at the end of each trend and the industry-specific “Ka-Ching!” statements at the end of each chapter as one way, and just one way, to translate the information into an actionable idea. Think of them as fodder to create your own new business, strategic planning, new product, positioning, advertising, or promotion ideas based on your own corporate mission, company assets, brand equities, and marketing initiatives. Before you know it, opportunities of epic, biblical proportions may very well appear before you like a bolt from heaven. Hallelujah!

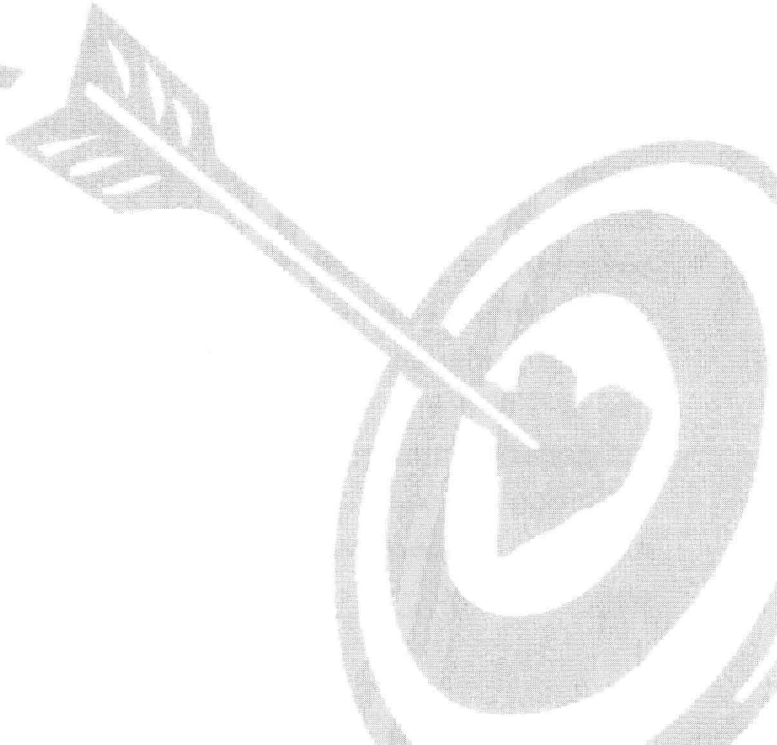


1

TREND
COMMANDMENT



Stir Passion.





TREND COMMANDMENT 1

Stir Passion.

How do you pick your marketing battles in our post-modern, post-everything culture? Do people have anything in common in our sliced and diced society? What the hell, I'll go and ask it: What's the meaning of life? One word: passion. Passion consists of ideas, events, activities, or pursuits that are grounded in powerful emotions. More passionately, so to speak, you get that unmistakable feeling in your gut, that sense of something resonating on a decidedly visceral level. Passion is larger than life, bigger than any individual, transcending the ordinary. Whether steeped in spirituality, desire, love, loss, or fear, passion is like a cultural power surge, a concentrated source of social energy which touches our collective nerve. Despite the economic downturn, many of us can still afford to pursue our passions after a full generation of prosperity, which is the true definition of luxury. Passions say who you are not only to others but to yourself, a siren of one's identity.

From a marketing standpoint, the wonderful thing about passion points is that they are fundamentally universal, cutting across all demographics and functioning as common denominators we all share but, of course, express quite differently. Because they tap into strong feelings, passion almost always lead to business opportunity, as all great success stories are somehow based in a deep emotional connection. And because passion is blissfully ignorant of our obsession with dividing people into different segments, they serve as a form of cultural Esperanto that can plug directly into any marketing plan or brand strategy. An alternative way to think about marketing, in fact, is as the challenge or opportunity to identify sources of passion among consumers and to then make your product or service part of that passion. Here then are some sites of passion that are in cultural ascent, i.e., rising in both popularity and power, to point you in the passionate direction.