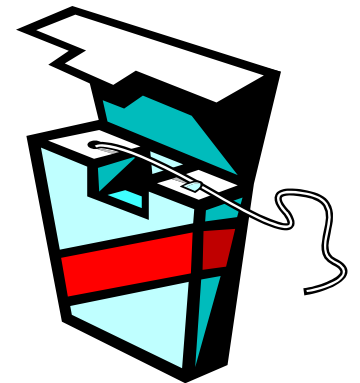


The Transformational Nature of Consumer/Product Relationships

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Moving Beyond The Symbolic Nature of Products...

- To understanding how products change consumers in ways they find compelling.
- Note: This may be different from the ways marketers believe products change consumers.
- Even more interesting – our data indicates the most “everyday” or mundane products are the ones that seem to change consumers’ lives in the most memorable/dramatic fashions (because these relationships tend to be the most pervasive in their lives)

Types of Transformational Products

- Rite of passage products (good/bad): Cars, cigarettes/alcohol, musical instruments, contact lenses, makeup
- Healing products: garlic pills, recumbent bikes, salves, creams, etc.
- Empowering products: Tae-Bo, weights, books/Bibles, computers, microwaves (!)
- Relational products: email, cell phones

An Example...

- R: The product I have in mind is simply dental floss. I started using it maybe on a continual basis, perhaps about 10, 15 years ago...I started using it...because both my parents had...pyorrhea...a disease in the gums where eventually they lost all of their teeth...So I started using dental floss, and it was just something special for me, because where the toothpicks and brushing did not dislodge the food, the dental floss did...And with this dental floss, something that simple...it gave me a comfort level, confidence level, that I would not have the same problem...[it] actually made a real, remarkable difference in my emotional level, psychological level, and just personal comfort.

Theoretical questions that emerge

- How do consumers regard their roles in relationships with transformational products, and vice versa? (Role Theory)
- What is the source of the agency that consumers acquire when interacting with these products? (Bandura etc.)
- How do consumers' relationships with transformational products themselves change over the long term?

Practical Questions

- The “JM” questions:
 - How can marketers use their understanding of transformational products to design more appealing products/differentiate products?
 - How do marketers keep products’ transformational qualities alive?

Other questions?