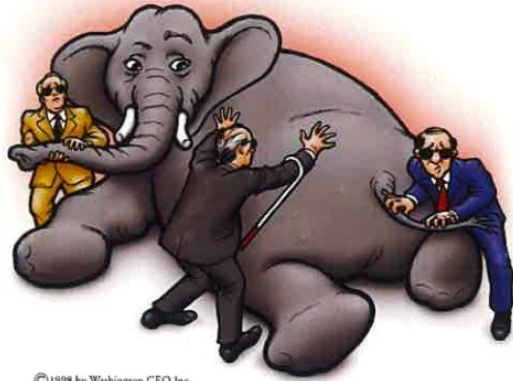


Of Elephants and Blind Men

The case for MacroBenefit



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It was three men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant-
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation-
Might satisfy his mind.

The First approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side, -
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant -
Is very like a wall!"

The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, "Ho! what have we here?
So very round and smooth and sharp? - To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant - Is very like a spear!"

The Third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands, - Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant - Is very like a snake!"

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion - Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right - And all were in the wrong!

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!

-Abstract from the original
work of John Godfrey Saxe

Introduction

Along with rising marketplace penetration, all product categories experience increased competition. Concomitantly in this journey, they also experience 'benefit factionalism'.

Over time, fundamental benefits of the category either tend to get strongly appropriated by the leader brand(s) or they become generic to all communication for the product category. As a result, it becomes imperative for new entrants to respond with a differentiating brand proposition to gain share of the consumer's mind.

The classical marketing response to this need is to splice (and nuance) the original fundamental benefit repeatedly in search for a differentiated proposition. It is this phenomenon of consciously taking only a share of the benefit (along with objectives of taking share of the market) that is being articulated as 'benefit factionalism'.

Quicker sticking glue, more comfortable underwear, jeans with stronger rivets, friendlier banks: all examples taken from a day's viewing of advertisements appearing on prime time television, are apt examples of how much 'benefit factionalism' is a part of marketing strategy today. Ingredient branding (ZPTO, Lemon, proteins, Ceramides, etc.) and self-branded technologies (PUF, Quadra, DVMC, DNIE, etc.) are more extreme examples of this splicing of original consumer benefits.

This paper seeks to challenge this pursuit of 'benefit factionalism' because it is bereft of both, marketing creativity and cultural understanding. It attempts to depict how marketers can profit from the big picture: a perspective that stems from the larger human desire that the product category satiates - the MacroBenefit.



What is a MacroBenefit?

The dictionary definition of the word 'macro' is 'large in scale, scope or extent', dimensions that aptly qualify the concept of MacroBenefit. Consumers subsume limited category specific benefits into larger and more fundamental human motivations that we have termed as MacroBenefit. Hence, MacroBenefits are fundamental human motivations that are broader in scale, scope or extent than the benefits offered by individual product categories.

Hence, unlike marketers who obsess over specific product dynamics, consumers respond purely to the broad payoffs (MacroBenefit) that they get from using these products. It only follows that all consumption activity is essentially a means to satisfy some or the other MacroBenefit.

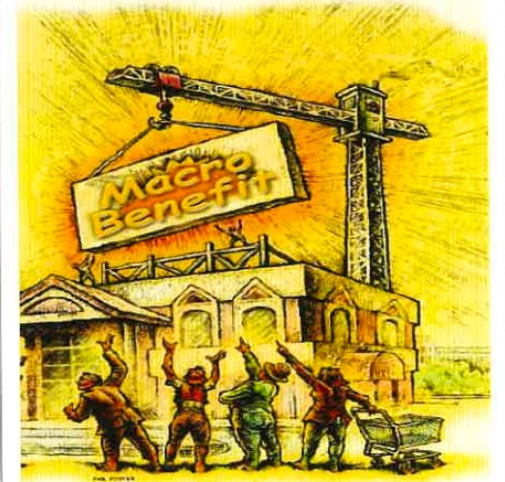
It is because of this that one can observe the success of brands that stem from, or single mindedly cater to, larger human motivations in a culturally relevant context.

It is because of this that one can also see that diverse and unrelated product categories find themselves competing with each other, as there is no compartmentalized share of the consumer's wallet.

It is also painfully clear through the experience of many fallen leaders that brands which associate too closely with

their product category may be catching the wrong end of the stick.

In a nutshell, as competition and the resultant product parity proliferates most market scenarios; the marketer should refrain from benefit factionalism. Instead, this paper makes the case that the brand's proposition should stem from perspectives on the pertinent MacroBenefit.



MacroBenefit in Action

Working on the brand strategy for Sugar Free, a leading player in the low calorie sugar sweeteners category, provided an ideal opportunity to illustrate the theory of MacroBenefit.

The category of artificial sweeteners in India consists of three key brands - Sugar Free, Equal and Sweetex. While Sugar Free was one of the stronger brands in the category, all the three brands were attempting to appropriate the category generic of 'the sweetness of sugar minus the harmful calories'.

Research revealed that focus on a 'low calories' platform was limiting the category's relevance. This was because the general population was not interested in calorie control and felt that it was important only to a fitness- or appearance-conscious minority.

Hence the challenge was to create a proposition that would increase the relevance of the category. How could the benefit of lower calories be related in a manner that would appeal to a larger audience base? In effect how would one move 'low calories' from the platform of fitness and looking good to a wider platform of health and well-being?

For this purpose we chose to enquire into the varied associations with the MacroBenefit of Health to decode what it means to the everyday Indian.



Rising urbanization and an upwardly mobile population has led to an explosion of health needs in India, with a rise in stress levels and lifestyle-related diseases, on the one hand, and increased consciousness on health and fitness related issues, on the other. From shopping for organic foods to thronging to gyms and Yoga classes, Indians are beginning to loosen up their purse strings for health and fitness expenditures, like never before.

In such a scenario many brands are trying to latch on to the health / fitness band wagon, leading to a deluge of undifferentiated communication with many brands portraying the same benefits in a very similar manner.

Being a fundamental human motivation, with high levels of undifferentiated competition, made 'Health' the ideal testing ground for the idea of MacroBenefit.

Methodology

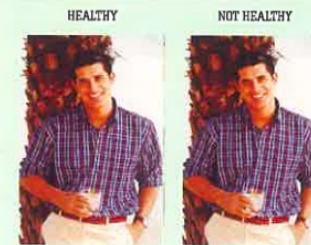
Health, as a Macro Benefit, exists in various facets of our everyday life. A hospital, a spa or a gymnasium, are all 'points of consumption' of the benefit of health. However the method, the ambience and the mindset in which health is consumed in all these places vary drastically. Hence for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of 'health' on the average Indian, in-depth interviews with several kinds of consumers were conducted to understand their varied outlooks towards health. Further, it was important to connect with 'health experts' from various fields viz. doctors, chemists, dieticians, gym instructors, beauticians, sports coaches and school physical training tutors. To go beyond the physical manifestation of health and understand its impact on the various areas of life, two unconventional projective techniques of inquisition were used. The first projective technique enquired into the social dimensions while the second enquired into the self driven dimensions of health. These projective techniques coupled with a detailed discussion with the respondents provided a wealth of information on health and its meanings in India

TECHNIQUE 1



This technique displayed archetypal images, such as the housewife, athlete, couch potato etc. Inquisition areas consisted of key health related concerns, desires, fears etc. for each image.

TECHNIQUE 2



This technique showed two identical images, labeled 'Healthy' and 'Not Healthy'. Respondents were asked about differences between the two, starting with diet, routine etc and laddering up to profound ones such as priorities in life and relationships.

Six Layers Of Health

At the first level of analysis, six basic definitions of health in Indian society were decoded. All six were considered important in varying degrees in the quest for the Holy Grail of good health.

Physical Health

This aspect of health relates to the body's ability to function at its best. Primarily to do with the internal functioning of the body, the key indicators of good physical health is the absence of disease.

Projected Health

As suggested by the name, this facet is about how healthy one 'looks'. This is the area of the overlap between health and fitness. Projected health is a vital component of the overall health market and is becoming more and more a part of popular culture in India. The bulging belly, once seen as an indicator of affluence and well-being, is today seen as a sign of laziness and lack of grooming.

Mental Health

Health is intrinsically linked with a person's 'state of mind'. The defining characteristics of a healthy person is the ability to be at peace with oneself, and to maintain a calm composure and not get agitated even in times of high stress. As tight work schedules and increased pressure of daily living pervades urban India, peace of mind is becoming critical.

Emotional Health

The importance of emotional well-being as an integral aspect of health was a critical dimension. To a society that prided itself as an 'emotionally alive' and vibrant society, emotional health was the exuberance manifested in all aspects of daily life and a strong connectedness with friends and family.

Moral Health

Indians tend to see themselves as devout and self-righteous to a fault. Hence, a lot of stress was laid on values, beliefs and moral character as an individual's defining qualities. A truly healthy person is expected to be idealistic and morally upright with respect for elders, warmth towards all and an overall positive disposition. Many times, the key difference between a healthy and a less healthy person was stated as the ability, desire and the judgment to do what is virtuous.

Spiritual Health

An atmosphere of global uncertainty and turmoil and a perceived erosion of value structures, especially amongst public idols and leaders, have led to the emergence of the spiritual aspect of health. Yoga, Reiki and meditation have all witnessed a surge of popularity in recent times, as a consequence of the rising importance of spirituality in health.

The Yin and Yang of Health

Beyond the six definitions, health is seen as a cause and effect phenomena. Hence, the manifestations of health can be structured into two parts - what one does for good health and what one gets from good health. Both these parts can be divided further into three broad dimensions: It is these dimensions that are the underlying motivators for any sort of health consumption.



What one does for good health

Discipline

Discipline is seen as the cornerstone of good health. Strong will power, leading to a routine and monitored lifestyle, is seen as the dominant trait for one to be truly healthy. Along with discipline in diet, habits, etc., discipline also takes on a mental aspect through focus, concentration and practiced positive thinking.



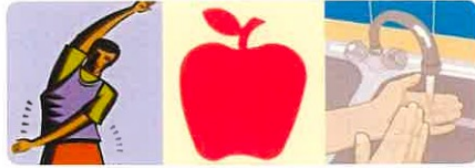
Balance

Balance pertains to an elusive equilibrium that is, as in other things in life, also the foundation of good health. In terms of health, balance pertains to just the right kind of diet, the right amount of sleep, equilibrium between work and play and between ambition and emotion.



Pro-action

Pro-action is the underlying reason for the 'over-the-counter' consumption of health. Health care is no longer so much about cure as about prevention. With rising discretionary incomes, people have begun to take an active interest in health management whether it is about exercise, Yoga or wellness. People today realize that health is the consequence of a series of activities and that one needs to consciously work towards a state of good health rather than react to ill health.



Enhanced Performance

In an extremely competitive society, good health is also seen as a competitive advantage. An intrinsic reward of good health is the ability to stretch oneself beyond what others can and an ability to overperform at both a physical and a mental level.



Creating a Positioning Map

What one gets from good health

Longevity

Longevity, the ability to preserve what one has for a longer time, is a strong motive to work for good health. On a consistent basis, most respondents named Amitabh Bachchan and Dev Anand as the healthiest celebrities (one is a 65-year-old mega star whose popularity is still soaring, the other is an 80 year plus veteran of Bollywood who is still an active actor and director). The reason for the choice was almost always the fact that they were extremely active, in spite of old age.



Buoyancy

The ultimate reward for good health, Buoyancy is the 'feel good' factor associated with health. It can be described as the sense of invigoration that good health brings with it. It is the state when the body, mind and soul are one with the environment and consequently one feels just great to be alive.



Fusing the two different aspects (social and self) gives a comprehensive view of health in society (as depicted in figure 1). This helps create a positioning map that would depict the various positioning platforms that a health product could take.

Specific articulations or points of view on health by consumers were really a combination of these two dimensions resulting in a number of spokes, each a potential positioning pole for a health product. Putting all this together gives a comprehensive view of 'health' meanings to the average everyday Indian (as depicted in figure 2 on the next page).



Figure 1

This model provided insights that could be leveraged to effectively disrupt the dominant trend in any health related product category.

Each of the spokes of the wheel is a positioning opportunity in itself. Any health brand can map its competition onto these spokes and look for vacant positioning areas that would boost its relevance to the audience.

For example if vitamin tablets or health tonics talk about the physical manifestation of longevity (as they do in India), with old people shown performing physically exerting activities with ease, there is the option to disrupt the category by addressing the emotional aspect of longevity.

Similarly soaps needn't be only about grooming. The bath can be seen as a means to unplug from the daily grind and consequently the soap can be about mental balance, as is evidenced in the Palmolive Aromatherapy range.



The Sugar Free Strategy: Conventionally the category of low calorie sugar sweeteners had been operating in the zone of 'Proaction' (and within it, limited to the zone of 'Projected health'). Hence the category had been speaking the language of a limited niche of consumers, who are fanatical about their fitness levels. The task hence was to move Sugar Free from this limiting fitness platform to a wider and more encompassing platform of health. This implied a shift in the audience that the brand was talking to from the fitness fanatic to the more mainstream 'Passively Health Conscious': people who are not overtly conscious about their health needs, but to them health is more of a 'back of the mind' concern. To appeal to this audience base, various concepts were created using spokes of this positioning model. The concept that resonated the most with this audience came from the zone of mental buoyancy i.e. peace of mind. From here emerged the strategy for Sugar Free as 'the first step to a healthy lifestyle'.

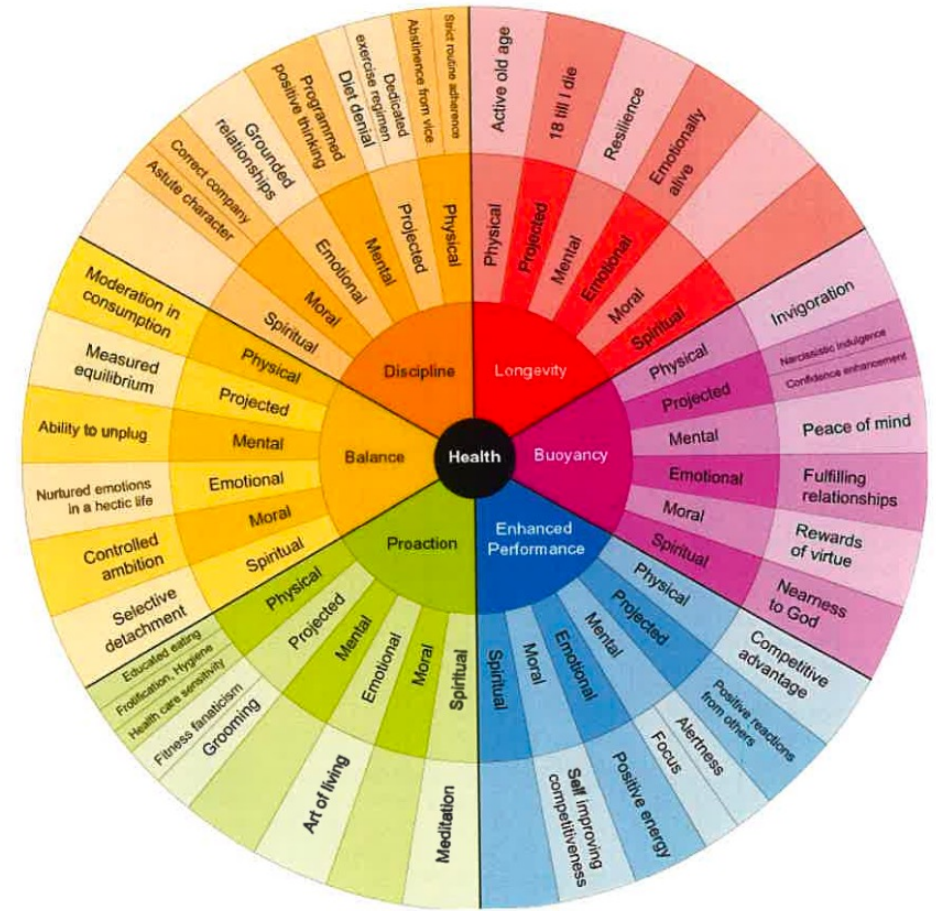


Figure 2

Uncovering The Primary

Having established that this Yin and Yang view of health can explain any health-related consumption activity, the next step was to formulate a way to layer these onto a best practice model that blueprints the process of MacroBenefit.

The first step was to look for possible patterns across the six primary motivators.

Various theories on the core drivers of human behaviour were studied for inspiration. One of the most widely known and recognised motivation theories defines consumption as driven by the perceived risks involved.

Three types of risks account for all consumption activity. These are Performance risk, Social risk and Self risk.

Performance risk pertains to the risk that the act of consumption would deliver the benefit expected of it. Social risk pertains to the risk of the effect of the consumption on one's social standing. Lastly, Self risk pertains to the risk of the effect of the consumption on one's self image.

Our next step was to analyze whether the six primary motivators of health could be mapped onto these risks.

For purposes of this mapping, the consumer risk - consumption grid was created. This grid is a three

dimensional axis of the three types of risks - each spanning from negative to positive impact. As one moves from the positive to the negative end of each axis, the quantum of risk involved in each consumption activity amplifies.



Explaining The Axes

Social Risk

The social-risk axis ranges from Belonging to Standing out. Social risk is at its highest when the activity that one is involved is likely to make one stand out from amongst peers and deviate from socially accepted norms. The positive aspect of this risk entails those activities that are likely to align the individual within the societal framework and aid acceptance and approval by peer group.

Self Risk

As one begins to disrupt set patterns that one has been comfortable with, one enters an area of declining surety and increased self doubt, thus resulting in an increased risk to one's perception of self. Hence as one moves from continuity to change, self risk begins to amplify.

Performance Risk

Assurance is the most positive aspect of performance risk. At this point, on the performance axis, the individual is completely assured of his decision in the choice of a particular consumption activity as its performance to the set benchmarks is a given. However, as one begins to move towards the negative axis of performance risk, the surety of the consumption activity's ability to deliver the expected level of performance begins to wane and the expectations of positive results becomes more an act of faith rather than a rational expectation.

Note of caution - Though worded in such a manner, the negative aspect of each of the risk need not necessarily act as a detractor to consumption. In fact, given a paradox called the human psyche, both the poles on the risk axis act as compelling motivators for consumption. For example, in many cases, the prime motive to purchase a product could be the rarity of it working successfully, such as the high that one gets from gambling or playing the lottery. Similarly, the need to stand apart from the peer group is equally strong, if not stronger than the need to be a part of a group.

It is interesting to note that, as one moves from the positive to the negative on all three axes, there is a sense of dynamism as opposed to a sense of status quo at the origin. For a benefit to be truly macro, it must exist in various manifestations across this continuum of motion, as we shall depict subsequently in this article with the example of health.

MacroBenefit exists in 3-D

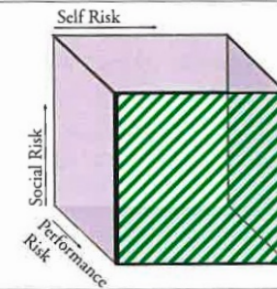
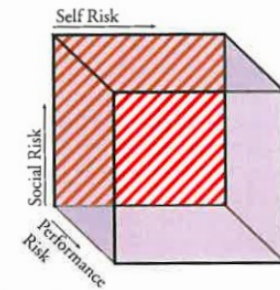
Interestingly, product categories tend to appropriate only one axis (dimension) in the Risk-Consumption grid. For example product categories such as apparel and automobiles predominantly play in the area of social risk, whether it be the urge to blend in or to stand out. Similarly products such as innerwear, lingerie and cosmetics are sold on the concept of self worth, in the area of self-risk. Most commodity categories have not managed to effectively break out of the performance risk paradigm.

At the same time, a MacroBenefit would have manifestations across all three dimensions, as can be demonstrated through the mapping of the six primary motivators of health on the risk-consumption grid.

The three aspects of what one does to attain good health are motivated primarily by the need to steer clear of the three types of risks and hence would lie on the negative side of the risk axis. Similarly what one gets would act as positive reinforcers for health based consumption and hence would lie on the positive aspect of the risk.

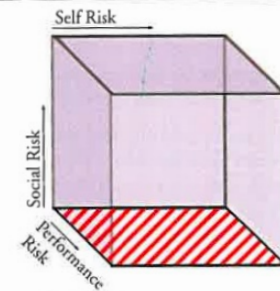


Discipline is the need to maintain a certain amount of order in an uncontrollably chaotic world. Discipline fundamentally is practiced to bring about a certain amount of predictability and rigidity to an otherwise fluid setting. Hence the zone of discipline would fall on the shaded wall, which covers the area of negative performance risk with varying degrees of self and social risk.

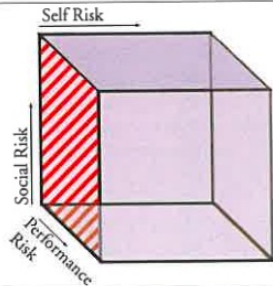
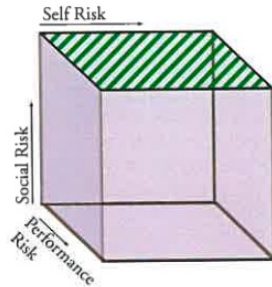


Enhanced Performance quite predictably is the benefit or payoff of maintaining discipline and acts as a positive motivator for health consumption. Enhanced performance lies on the front wall of the risk-consumption grid in the positive zone of performance risk.

Balance is a function of the compelling need to belong, almost dissolve into the teeming majority. The single reason why we try to maintain a balanced lifestyle, whether in terms of sleep, work, relationships or even diet is the core human need to pull towards the middle of the bell curve, or the inherent fear of falling on either of its extreme sides. It then suffices to state that balance lies on the lower wall of the grid in the negative social risk zone.

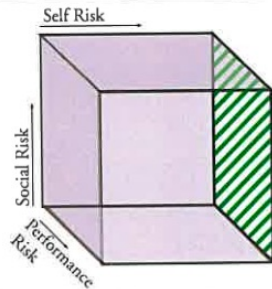


Buoyancy belongs to the positive aspect of social risk. Buoyancy is achieved when one is at complete ease with one's surrounding. The oft-repeated cliché of feeling one with the universe is the ultimate symbolism of buoyancy achieved through a sense of belonging.



In today's age of increased health awareness and social pressures to maintain a certain level of fitness, how proactive one is about health and fitness directly impacts one's sense of self. This is why we can see an extremely high level of involvement and near fanaticism amongst active fitness seekers, as there is a direct link between health consciousness and self worth. Therefore **pro-action** is driven by negative self risk.

The primary driver for **longevity**, as discussed earlier is to maintain what one has. The motivation for longevity is strongly based in a desire for continuity. Longevity is the ultimate pay off for proactive health care attempts. Hence, it is directly opposite pro-action on the positive end of the self risk axis.



MacroBenefit - the implications

As opposed to the concept of benefit factionalism (which seems to be a de facto response to the increased competition scenario of today), MacroBenefit allows the marketer to bring about relevant disruption and challenge the conventions of the product category, by borrowing codes from other categories satiating the same benefit.

Firstly, the marketer must decide as to what MacroBenefit the product category is truly satiating. The MacroBenefit must be larger in scale, scope and extent than the generic benefit of the product category. The benefit should also be expansive enough, so that various category benefits can be subsumed within it.

Once the MacroBenefit has been identified, the next task is to analyze it on the three dimensions of risk and to identify what are the six facets operating from the negative to the positive axis of these risks. These facets as demonstrated in this paper could emerge through an inquiry of various consumer types, experts and opinion leaders relevant to the MacroBenefit.

The current dominant category code can then be self-evidently plotted on the derived plane(s) of the MacroBenefit. Armed with this knowledge, the marketer can now create fundamentally disruptive brand

propositions by capitalizing on the vacant planes available to the category.

Thus through the concept of MacroBenefit, the marketer can truly leverage various aspects of a larger human motivator and not surrender to category conventions.

A leader brand can redefine the category by shifting to or adding another layer of the MacroBenefit in its proposition.

A challenger brand can create a compelling counterpoint to the generic category message by consciously choosing to play on a different plane of the MacroBenefit.

Brand portfolios can be managed by truly and comprehensively owning the MacroBenefit through deliveries across its various axes.

Fundamental to the theory of MacroBenefit is that consumers are increasingly making consumption decisions on broader benefits that they get from across categories, as opposed to limited category specific motivations. MacroBenefit is the reality of today, for the consumer is no longer playing by any set of rules that the marketer wishes to set for them.

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