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PATTERN-SPOTTING AT SPIKES ASIA

Analysis of award-winning campaigns reveals the underlying processes behind creativity and patterns even the most original have in common

At creativity festivals, it is customary when examining work to assess how original each idea is, and to look for fresh, groundbreaking work. But, can we go deeper than that? Mindscapes' analysis shows that the majority of award-winning marketing communications ideas share recurring patterns of thinking. These patterns, paradoxically, help break existing moulds and originate surprising ideas.

We can transform these thinking patterns into practical mental tools. Each suggests a disruptive technique for looking at an existing system and deconstructing it in order to create a new idea, or develop a new system altogether.

To help you to spot these patterns at Spikes Asia, let's look at the thought patterns shared by some multiple-award winners at the recent Cannes Lions.

New Tasking

What does a campaign that used leftover yeast from beer brewing to create fuel ('Brewtroleum' by DB Export by Colenso BBDO Auckland) have in common with songs used to help Parkinsons patients recover their ideal walking pace ('Parkinsounds' for Teva by Havas Life, Sao Paolo)?

Both campaigns have a pattern called 'new tasking' — assigning a new and unexpected task to an existing resource, which offers an innovative way to deliver a message and provide real value. Putting your mind through this pattern helps it overcome a mental block called 'functional fixedness', in which the mind automatically associates an object with its known function. The key is identifying the right resource within the system and then assigning it with the right creative new task.

Relocation

Another mental technique is 'relocation'. This pattern involves relocating a component from one system to another, while maintaining its function. This creates a new experience in an unexpected place. In 'Pinlist', by DDB Sao Paolo, the pin-it button was relocated from an online interface to Tok&Stok furniture. For BMW's 'Animal-detecting billboards', Demner, Merlicek & Bergmann relocated a car's night vision onto billboards. This pattern overcomes a mental block called 'structural fixedness' in which our mind perceives systems as a whole, making it hard to reimagine components.

Dynamic Connection

This method suggests creating an unexpected link between two unconnected variables in a system. Delivering an unexpected occurrence. In each system there are two kinds of variables which can be connected: "Internal Variables" which are in the complete control of the manufacturer (e.g. price) and "External Variables" which are not in the control of the manufacturer (e.g. weather during consumption). In 'Sugar Detox' for Intermache by Marcel Paris, the amount of sugar in each chocolate yoghurt package was connected to the recommended order of consumption.

Create a Product

Instead of communicating an existing offering, try creating a new product. For health food store Nas Grunt, McCann Prague created honey using processed foods to show how much hidden sugar lurks inside. Or one of the biggest winners at Cannes was the 'McWhopper', which proved how well the idea of a new product can work. ■

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Peace offering... award-winning 'McWhopper' concept demonstrates just the idea of a new product has an impact

