

One Person's View

Cultural Innovation and "Experience" Design

Professor Philip Kotler, a leading figure in the marketing field, recently co-authored a book titled *Marketing 3.0*. This book has aroused some controversy in terms of marketing concepts. In this book, Professor Kotler proposed a new marketing concept, in which, instead of "consumer-orientation," he emphasized "value-orientation." This means a transition from "consumer-oriented" marketing, which is based on "consumer needs," to "socially and culturally oriented" marketing, which is based on visions and values on how the world should be.

One might respond by pointing out that companies have always been fighting for the actualization of a desirable way of life by developing convenient and affordable products with excellent functionality. This brings to mind the old Japanese saying, "hana yori dango," which means people prefer eating sweet things to appreciating flower blossoms. This is a typical way of thinking of substantialism. But a problem lies in this view, Professor Kotler says. Other than substantial values like functionality and convenience, people share more important values, that are aesthetical and social values like appreciating flower blossoms.

Companies in the past several decades have been competing to produce tastier and more affordable "sweets" with the result that their products now all tend to be of a similar quality (commoditization), leaving them trapped in a mire of price-competition. No matter how affordable or tasty it is, a sweet is only a sweet. On the other hand, eating sweets under blossoming cherry trees is an emotional "experience" that will live on in memory.

What matters is a knowledge of "staging" experiences. The "experience" creates emotional outcome, that is likes and dislikes toward the world view, values, and aesthetics that the company or the brand possesses internally. Through these experiences, people feel favorably (or unfavorably) toward the company (or the brand).

However, knowledge and world views are not visible. It is the power of design that transforms them into something that can be felt. In the field of architecture, architect Kiyonori Kikutake expresses this power of design through the Japanese expressions, "ka," (values and aesthetics), "kata" (styles), and "katachi" (actual things we can see and touch). For example, a house is a visible form ("katachi"), but at the same time it also gives us an image of the lifestyle ("kata") of the people or family who live there. Underpinning that style, meanwhile, there exists a sense of the family's ideas, values, and aesthetics ("ka").

Similarly, companies' values, aesthetics, and shared approaches to value creation can be perceived in the form of "experiences" through their "katachi" at the various forms of "ba" (interfaces) or points of contact they have with consumers and other parts of society, and people can react positively or negatively to what they experience.

While in the past there has been a tendency to treat design only as a means of differentiation or as something to be managed (such as corporate logos), from the viewpoint of experience, "deities dwell in the details." That is, the essence of a brand lies in the details of the "ba" where that design is to be found, and it is here that its soul resides. It is design that can determine the details of such "ba." However, it is important to notice that the design being talked about here is not the same as in the past, and that it is the design of an "experience." Sharing such critical mind, the new design thought and method, which go beyond past design concepts, are becoming growing features in the fields of business and design.



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Professor Okamoto's main publications include co-authorship of "Designing," "For Students of Current Advertising," and "Case Studies in Knowledge Management," co-editor of "Current Marketing," and co-translator of "The Experience Economy."