

Innovation Thinking

How to
prepare the
ground for
successful
New
developments can
be prepared

I e brands - whether market leaders or young start-ups - always present themselves as highly creative when they present innovative new products or come up with original campaigns.

gen make a name for themselves. But how they came up with the brilliant idea remains top secret, of course. Creativity remains a myth and also a bit of magic, as Anja Postler and Florian Klaus from K&A BrandResearch know and lift the veil a little.

Creativity and innovation are often equated with ground-breaking inventions and artistic creation. However, genuine breakthrough innovations are quite rare and rarely successful straight away. They are often initially rejected and criticised on the market - too daring, too unusual, not practical enough, not usable in everyday life. This requires generous media budgets and courageous early adopters who recognise the value of an innovation and promote its acceptance across the board - without any guarantee of success. After all, we humans are creatures of habit and value consistency. Simply continuing to do what has always worked - that is extremely convenient, comfortable and, last but not least, inexpensive. Deviations should only be made to the extent that they counteract the other extreme, boredom. Accordingly, it seems sensible to develop product innovations and strategic realignments close to people while always keeping an eye on their favourite everyday routines.

Do routines stifle creativity?

Routines are ways of thinking and behaving that have become habitual over time and through repetition. Routines are not questioned, but are carried out completely automatically without us being constantly aware of them. The impetus for a specific routine pattern of behaviour is provided by the respective behavioural environment with its determining spatial, temporal, social and psychological factors. We refer to this network as the context of behaviour (cf. Ohnemus, Lebok & Klaus, 2021). The problem for market research is that there is usually not much talk about routines and the associated contexts. For example, people do not talk about how they brushed their teeth in the morning, the order in which the cereal bowl was filled and then spooned out or which cup of their favourite coffee tastes best. We are not even very good at describing routine actions. Try explaining to someone how to tie a bow or ride a bike - using only words, without demonstrating it visually or pictorially!

Such sometimes highly ritualised habits are of central importance in everyday life. They provide cognitive relief, give us the good feeling of being al-

to do everything right and be efficient at the same time. And at the same time, there is hardly anything fascinating about routine work; it is monotonous, uninspired, boring - and therefore virtually the opposite of the creative idea that surprises, fascinates and inspires us with its novelty. It is a dilemma between two opposing endeavours: Security and making everyday life easier on the one hand, the desire for something new and the joy of creative ideas on the other (cf. Postler & Laux, 2022).

So how can a manufacturer of everyday products such as toothpaste, muesli or coffee shine in this field of tension with creative innovations and original ideas without failing to innovate with people and their everyday lives in mind? And does it always have to be the big world first, the radical revolution, to amaze us?

If you take a closer look, you realise that in addition to the outstanding so-called Big C creativity, there is another, more everyday form of creativity - little c (see Freitag, 2018). It becomes visible when people react to everyday problems not with routine behaviour, but with new, original solutions. Colloquially, this could be described as resourcefulness, quick-wittedness, the ability to improvise or knowing how to help oneself (Schuster, 2016, p. 9). You come up with something. And this ingenuity is experienced as clever, worthwhile and creative. Even the small ideas in everyday life are therefore full of fascinating power and innovation potential. And it is assumed that each and every one of us possesses this everyday creativity - including consumers, who are expected to accept a more or less original innovation, which could also be described as a smart everyday hack, as useful or at least usable.

Everyday creativity is by no means limited to "small" ideas. According to Richards (2011), Everyday Creativity can encompass very different levels of originality, so that great innovations can also be derived from it. It is a universal construct, a kind of lifestyle that is not about **what** you do, but **how** you do it. And sometimes you may not even be aware that you are being creative because the behaviour feels completely normal and commonplace. You only recognise the novelty when you specifically question things. When you immerse yourself deeply in everyday life and recognise automated behavioural patterns.

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It reflects subjective realities, exploratively analyses them in comparison with other realities and uncovers their peculiarities.

Novelties from Derive everyday contexts

So why not make use of the fact that everyone is creative and specifically involve them in the process of generating ideas? Wouldn't it be extremely helpful if, when formulating the creative task and at the latest when developing a new solution, it could be ensured that it is later certified as having a certain suitability for everyday use and does not exclude the needs of the users?

The secret lies in activating people's creative potential in the midst of their everyday consumer lives and not just mulling over possible application scenarios on a greenfield site. The closer the generation of ideas is to everyday life, the greater the chance of significantly enriching everyday life with creative solutions. There are numerous methods and techniques for this, the application of which stimulates our flow of ideas and makes us more creative in our daily work. This results in very specific requirements for systematic, context-related innovation work.

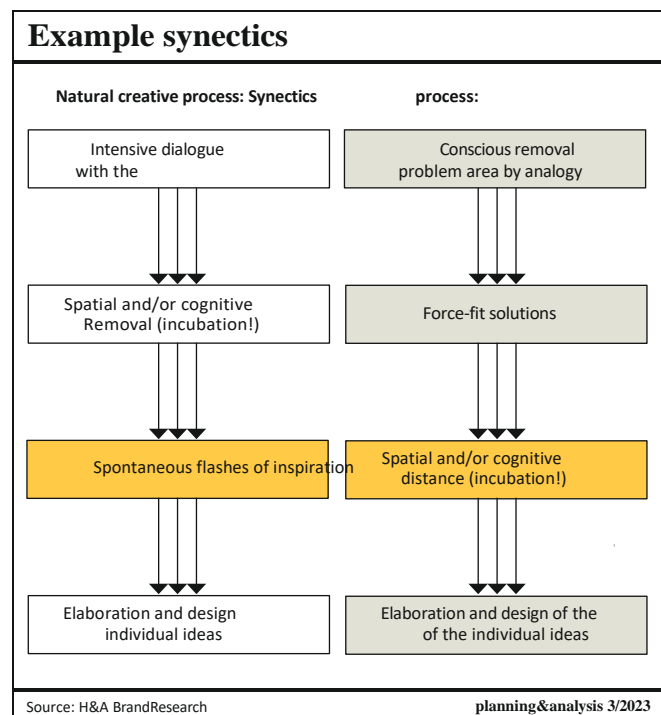
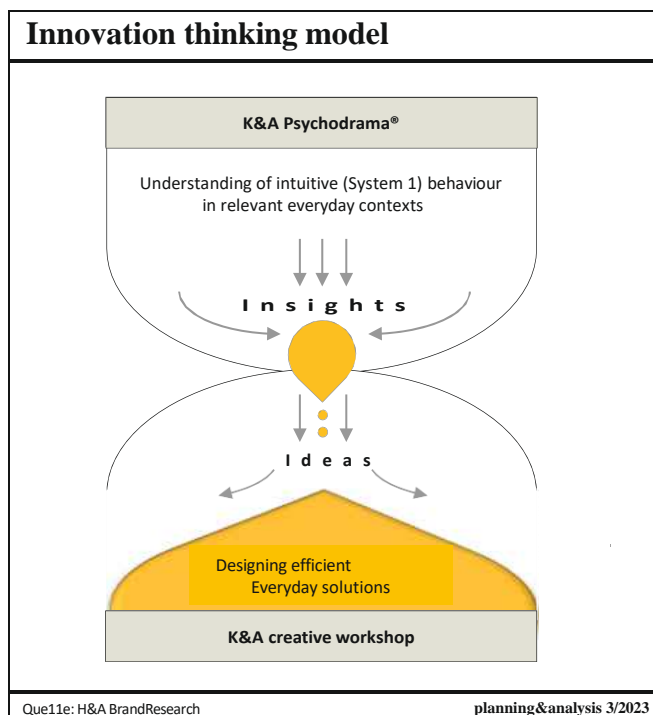
Ideally, it starts exactly where relevance arises: in everyday life. And utilises this everyday life and the context-related requirements that people have of a

efficient solution further into the process as the decisive key performance indicator (KPI). At K&A, we ensure both as part of our innovation thinking model. The model and its methodical implementation can be understood as a symbiosis of behaviour-oriented research and systematic, scientifically based innovation promotion (see Figure 1).

A profound understanding of intuitive behaviour is necessary in order to decipher everyday life and its diverse contexts with regard to a category or even a sub-market and to make it the basis for new developments. Because - as the advances in academic psychology in recent decades have taught us - people neither decide nor behave rationally or irrationally. Despite all the justified criticism levelled at the researcher and author Dan Ariely, he hit the nail on the head with his book Predictably Irrational (2008). The apparent irrationality of human behaviour can be predicted first and foremost by taking a close look at the behavioural environments in which people operate. The context controls us. As a rule, it does this much more effectively than individual attitudes, values, attitudes and so on. To a certain extent, people are victims of circumstance when they buy aperitifs and Prosecco for a garden party, while watching a sporting event at home - even with the same friends - is more likely to prompt the purchase of beer and mixed beer drinks.

triggers. In the vast majority of cases, we buy what feels right and thus save ourselves the time and, above all, the cognitive effort of constantly making new decisions. Imagine if we had to make a sensible decision every time we bought yoghurt or tools. On an average day, we would do nothing more than research the perfect everyday helpers. Because cognitive load acts as an immense energy guzzler, our decision-making system tries to do without it whenever possible. Instead of the time-consuming System 2, we fall back on our routine autopilot, System 1 (cf. Kahneman, 2016).

This system 1 is sensibly structured according to contexts and not according to products or even brands. We can therefore decide at lightning speed which behavioural alternative is very likely to be the right one for us in situation X. To do this, we don't have to think from the end and first dig brand lists out of our memory. The neuronal linking of brands with prototypical situations guides our behaviour, so that the recognition of this situation automatically triggers associations with the respective brand. In this case, context and brand interlock according to the lock-and-key principle. On the one hand, there are the defining characteristics of the context, so-called cues or behavioural cues. On the other side are the suitability signals of a brand or innovation, known as codes



or, in the language of the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, Distinctive Brand Assets (see Romaniuk, 2018).

Innovation thinking as context-related innovation development

Traditional qualitative methods are not very suitable for a reliable understanding of this interplay. This is because they are generally based on dialogue, discussion and self-reflection. Researchers ask more or less elaborate questions and interviewees explain their behaviour. Which, as described, they are unable to do in most everyday cases. The researcher is left with subsequent rationalisations and, in the worst case, marketing makes wrong decisions because people's justifications have been taken at face value. The K&A Psychodrama® stands for a fundamentally different approach. As a solution for deep dives into everyday life, it is characterised above all by the intensive, interactive examination of behaviour and its framework conditions 'in context'. We call this 'ask without asking' and are aimed directly at people's gut feeling. Techniques borrowed from psychotherapy such as role-playing, projections, imagination, symbol work and many others authentically place people in the relevant environments, trigger intuitive behaviour and make this changeable in experiments. This is because people also feel real emotions in simulated situations. Our mirror neurons are responsible for this (cf. Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2007). The focus of interest here is on the codes that are particularly effective in ensuring that a new development becomes intuitively relevant in the environment. This requires time, a safe space in the sense of a benevolent group atmosphere and yet goal-orientated moderation.

Systematically induced creativity

Based on these findings, Innovation Thinking enters the creative process. Surely everyone knows the effect of not being able to produce good ideas when they are most needed. The K&A Kreativwerkstatt uses the latest scientific findings to counteract such lulls. Because it impressively demonstrates that even if new ideas often feel as if they are the result of creative chance alone, there are processes that can be used as creativity-enhancing work techniques to generate ideas.

to bring them out in a targeted manner. And precisely through a structured approach, even if that sounds counter-intuitive. The secret lies in transforming the natural creative process into a controlled one. Figure 2 uses the example of synectics, an extraordinarily effective creative technique, to show what a sub-step can look like. Synectics uses the principle of analogy to create a new perspective on solutions based on similarities and differences.

In the first step, we seek an intensive engagement with the topic and a concretisation of the problem area. In the second step, we consciously move away from the problem. This is because the best ideas arise when our brain is doing something completely different. This is often referred to as incubation. In the third step, solutions are deliberately brought about, for example by forcing connections between random stimuli in a 'force fit'. Stimuli can be found everywhere, in social discussions, the world of technology and nature. The final step is the elaboration and concrete realisation of individual ideas.

Based on the surprisingly structured nature of creativity, Innovation Thinking bundles the individual steps into an efficient tool. This results in solutions that effectively combine creativity and everyday relevance for the brand. ■



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