



LOVE MARKETING

How to Market Fashion for
a Life Sustaining Society

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DEDICATION

Everything I do, I do for Maeve Downing; my original and only daughter.
Saraswati, the goddess of this work, thank you for helping the words flow.



“If you know what you
want to create then you
can to some degree live in
that space in your own
consciousness.”

.....Peter Senge

“However dire the
circumstances we find
ourselves in, we can always
choose our response. We
discover who we are in our
choices. And sometimes
the best choice is to let go,
to fall apart.”

.....Joanna Macy

“Will we actually shop
ourselves to death?”

.....Aja Barber

PREFACE

As I write this book, I look out at a tulip tree. It was bare in the grey of winter, then I watched it bud, leaves formed, and flowers bloomed before the leaves turned and fell to the ground. I too find myself back at the beginning, but now with a new feeling of completion. It's been a long process writing this book, a process guided by the moon and the seasons that turn here on the lands of the Qayqayt First Nations. I am so blessed to walk under the cedar trees and along the edge of the Fraser River as I contemplate fashion and my role in it. This textbook is a small offering to this land. My way of stewarding this place for future generations. I am a white settler of Irish and French ancestry, a bisexual, cis-gendered woman, long time environmentalist, shamanic-wiccan-yogi with a university education and a middle-class life who works in the business of fashion. All of these elements contribute to my vision of this world, and to how I present the information on these pages. I have tried to see my blind spots in the writing of this book, despite this I know that while I can be empathetic to others, I can't truly know what it is to walk in their shoes. So, I have listened to a diversity of people, asked my colleagues to review the drafts, and have tried my best to represent various perspectives. And still, I expect there are gaps, shadows, and margins that I can't see. This introduction is both an apology and a gratitude for the patience you may offer me as I work on navigating this world in my privilege, sharing it wherever and however I can. Offering this up as an open textbook is part of healing the divide. I hope you can feel it too.

---Sarah



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INTRODUCTION

My life changed in spring 2018 when I completed a graduate certificate in sustainable community development. It was during this course that I was introduced to Joanna Macy, the founder of the Work That Reconnects (WTR). She helped me feel myself as Gaia, and the deep need to connect to our planet and to each other as one. I was smitten and by the fall of that year I was applying to a WTR facilitator training program. Deepening into WTR made me decide to quit fashion, a business I had been entrenched in for over 20 years as a journalist, publicist, fashion show producer, sales agent, marketer, and educator. The reality though is that fashion is part of my soul's journey; it holds beauty, creativity, freedom, and complexity. After a year off, I found myself back in the classroom teaching fashion forecasting and fashion marketing. This time though, I was going to do it differently. I was going to engage my students in the spiral teachings of the Work That Reconnects. I was going to train students in the art of fashion and how to practice in a way that would lead to a life sustaining society, one that is representative of all, respectful of mother earth, and deeply connected to self.

The Work that Reconnects is a series of practices that remove us from the concrete jungle and connects us to ourselves as expressions of the earth. WTR operates from the premise of three stories, all of which are currently operational during these times. Business-as-usual speaks to the industrial growth society whose central plot is about getting ahead, with economic recessions and extreme weather incidents as temporary difficulties from which we will recover, and maybe even profit. The Great Unravelling draws attention to the disasters business-as-usual has caused and continues to create, like the climate crisis. Finally, the Great Turning involves the emergence of new and creative human responses that enable the transition to a life sustaining society.¹ It's about joining together for the sake of all life on earth. It is this final story that I am trying to achieve through the concepts in this book.

The idea that the world is alive and connects me to all sentient beings, and the series of deep time practices offered by WTR that made me see myself as older than my 51 years, resonated loudly. It also filled a gap left from distancing myself from patriarchal religious practice. Here was a non-dogmatic spirituality that spoke to my sorrow as proof of my interconnectedness, and it gave me a way to support my community, industry, and students through these times "when we have lost the certainty that there will be a future for humans. A loss felt at some level of consciousness by everyone, which is the pivotal psychological reality of our time."²

This manifesto is a representation of the insights that have transpired through the fashion classroom. It shares my wisdom and experience in the industry, alongside the knowledge of my students. It also pulls together ingredients from teachers from a variety of genres including marketing, leadership, sustainability, trauma integration, and spirituality. Together, it is my hope, that we may formulate a new way to approach marketing that isn't strictly about profit and the bottom line and is instead an act of love. It is only when operating from this heart centered place that we can change our world.

So, how do we reconcile marketing with changes that lead to a life sustaining society? How do we shift the consumer* masses to conscious consumption or de-consumption? How do we spread the word from a place

**A note on the word consumer. I am not a fan of this word. I don't believe I am a consumer of clothing, endlessly filling my wardrobe like a Roman Senator, vomiting up their meals so they might enjoy another course. I only have one body that needs to be clothed, and while something is in the wash, I may need one more pair of pants. If I must consider myself in relation to shopping, I prefer the word customer. It has a more relational element to it.*

of love and respect? When I asked my nine design students who wanted to have their own brand, eight of them stood up. These young designers will create amazing garments, and they are going to want to get the word out. I believe this can be done in a way that steers clear of fear-based marketing and instead weaves together a marketing plan with the best intentions- to take care of each other and our planet.

It involves turning the marketing process on its head, seeing it from a new perspective, or as the Presencing Institute's Otto Scharmer phrases it, undertaking an inversion. "Inversion is the process of turning something inside-out and outside-in. The inside-out part is the opening: open the boundary and move what used to be inside, out. The outside-in part is the interiorization: becoming aware of our deep interconnectedness with the world around us."³ Both opening ourselves up to, and breathing in, the flurry of the world must happen for us to market with love.

So why focus on fashion marketing? Besides it being my work for the past 20 years, as writer Aja Barber says, "fashion is connected to everything: race, class, gender, environment, land, waste, animal rights, agriculture, colonialism, culture and so on."⁴

People will always make clothes and will always crave the fulfilment of seeing someone wearing what they have designed, so spreading the word is essential. Through the course of this manifesto, we will answer the question of how to market for a life sustaining society. We will use the spiral of the Work that Reconnects to guide us through gratitude, honouring our pain for the world, seeing with new and ancient eyes, and going forth. We will pay tribute to the practices of the Presencing Institute and the work of Otto Scharmer. We will also tap into our inner knowing, the voices of our ancestors, and the wisdom of nature to find solutions.

I hope you enjoy this journey. Now please close your eyes, take a deep breath in and out, settle into what supports you, and dive into the flow of Love Marketing.

PART 1: A Review of Marketing Approaches

Before you read anything, Breathe.

Originally, marketing was simply a conversation. Imagine mothers knitting their children a sweater and one of them has found the best source for wool so they share the name of the shop. Now marketing has grown into a multi-billion dollars industry, and the practice has developed procedures, rules and nomenclature for selling to customers. I am grateful for all I have learned in my life as a marketer. It has given me a career and a pay cheque for many years. It is only with gratitude for what has come before, and what is here now, that we can hope to move forward in a positive way.

The power of the marketing process cannot be denied when you consider that the grandfather of publicity, Edward Bernays, managed to convince a whole segment of society to take up smoking. In the early 1900s only men smoked cigarettes, it was considered low class and unbecoming of a lady to smoke. The cigarette companies seeking to build their revenue saw the potential in this segment of the population; however, an unflattering perception of smoking stood in their way. Luckily, Bernays had an idea. He would link smoking to the suffragette movement, making lighting up a signifier of freedom; so, during the 1929 annual Macy's parade in New York City, he had several debutantes infiltrate the parade, and when signaled pull out a cigarette and start to smoke. The 'Torches of Freedom campaign' made it into the news, and the rest is history, as stars such as Marlene Dietrich and Bette Davis lit up on the big screen.¹

This is a classic representation of how marketing originally functioned. While smoking wasn't considered a health hazard in the '20s, there was little consideration for the lungs of the ladies or other repercussions they may face through this act of defiance. But the overall methodology of using influencers and connecting to a virtue or a desired lifestyle, is something that still has relevance today.

In fact, developing marketing that helps people feel the way they want to feel, is exactly what life sustaining marketing is all about. The difference is that the feeling we are aiming for is love and abundance, and the place that our messaging is coming from is love, not the need to fill our bank accounts.

A very traditional approach to marketing is the concept of target markets. If you have been in a marketing classroom at any point you have likely heard the benefits of this theory extolled. There is rationale for this, if we can understand the people we are selling to, then the more effective our campaigns can be. Traditionally, thinking about target markets involves pulling in demographic and psychographic information to look at people's ages, locations, gender, generational inclinations, profession, and more. With this information you will be able to use the algorithms of social media to ensure your message gets in front of the right people.

Valuegraphics, a marketing company, has started to speak to the benefit of understanding people's values. "Values drive action. By uncovering the core values of a target audience, you can understand what motivates them, and why they make the decisions they make," explains founder David Allison. "Behavioral scientists will tell you the only way to engage and activate a group of people is to know what they value. Because what we value determines what we do."² This added element leads to an even deeper understanding of the customer. Actively engaging in customer research helps brands identify their uniqueness, and therefore how to sell it. When you realize that the majority of your customers are of a particular group that has a certain set of values, you can create both marketing and products that are more likely to appeal to them. The issue comes with the word, majority.

The idea of a singular person or group representing the majority of the people buying your products ignores the minority shopper that sees your ads. What about these people? They are loyal and could likely be more so if they saw your brand embracing their demographic and values. Not to mention that the demographic metrics are limiting, nobody is simply their age or their gender. As meditation teacher Katrina Bos points out, “as soon as we start to fragment things, we’ve gone wrong. Everything is whole, everything is one.”³ We are an intersectionality of identities with a plethora of unique experiences that make us who we are. So, when I am talked to as a woman, this ignores so many other elements of my person. Using target markets minimizes us to one facet of our humanness, often our bodies. It doesn’t capture the heart, mind and soul of people.

Target markets make sense, of course. It’s very difficult to understand all the people that compose a shopper group. Knowing who is the one key person and taking the time to really understand them, leads to brands being able to sell them anything. But it feels like stereotypes, it feels like racial profiling, it feels like othering. All the people outside the target market get left out in the cold. What in your advertising is built to shift them from the margins to the centre? It’s not creating a target market; it’s using some new ways of marketing that embrace diversity and build communities.

When you think about a dart board, the bull’s eye is where the most value lies, but that doesn’t mean the outer ring is worth nothing. Instead think about the all-encompassing circle of that board and the points available when you place a dart in each section. There is a lot more space for more darts in those outer circles. Bring them all in, let everybody and all parts of them be embraced by your brand.

This makes me think of Black Lives Matter which has impacted marketing. Diversity and Inclusion marketing has taken center stage in the contemporary landscape of the field. The concept embraces both the forward-facing and behind-the-scenes creation of campaigns. The premise of the method is that a variety of bodies, skin colours, ages, genders, and sizes are seen in advertising, and that a diversity of people is also involved in the creation of those ads. It is necessary work as our society has traditionally been divided across class, race, gender and other visible and invisible lines. “Racism has been deliberately engendered and manipulated to maintain the power of a small number of wealthy people, by keeping the rest of us separate and competitive with one another,” says Macy.⁴ Marketing has fed into this manipulation of people and culture by selling a fantasy life that can only be lived by white, straight, able-bodied folk and by engendering a disbelief in abundance.

Closing the distance between us, healing the trauma of our interactions, and honouring everyone, is the highest aim of diversity marketing. It is essential that we cooperate if we are to move into the great turning. Yet we can’t get there if everybody isn’t embraced and seen. The images that populate our collective consciousness, many of which are created in the offices of marketers, must showcase every style of human being. All the work is necessary work if we are truly to develop marketing for a life sustaining society. So, marketers and brands need to be vulnerable, they must open their hearts and take a step forward into inclusion and a step back to allow other voices and visions to be realized.

One voice that is consistently silenced is mother earth. But when the environmental damage of manufacturing goods became apparent in the 1980s, green marketing was born. The goal is to share with customers all the ways a product is working to care for the land. It is a story that can help brands sell more products. In fact, it is so successful that brands that don’t have sustainability at the heart of their business, use words like green and eco on their packaging and marketing. The customer was now trusting brands, for whom stakeholder profits were the measuring stick of success, to explain their ecological footprint. We want to believe their claims, we

don't have the time to research every company that we buy from, so we thank them for doing the work and letting us know that they are sustainable. If only it were that easy. "Almost every big brand has an eco-friendly line but if it accounts for less than 1% of the products listed for sale...how does that line have any impact on preventing our climate emergency?"⁵

For green marketing to be successful, we have to walk-the-talk. All elements of the brand from concept to creation to the tools used to market it have to be ecological. A brand can't be selling in zero waste refill shops, and at the same time be selling disposable, mini containers for travelers. Greenwashing is complicated though. There are always new ideas that at first seem like a positive movement forward for life on earth. Consider vegan leather. Moving away from the use of animal hides seems like a positive and earth friendly option. But when you consider that most vegan leather is simply plastic, how exactly is that creating a life sustaining society.

Making sustainable choices is part of a continuum. Customers need to consider materials, social justice, locality of production, shipping, and more, then it is up to them to determine which elements are most important and to make purchases that check as many boxes as possible. They also need marketing that is transparent and truthful about its sustainability claims, and that they can easily uncover with a quick visit to a company's website.

Patagonia is a good example of a brand that has taken some drastic steps to reduce their impact and are carving a path for how fashion brands can market for a life sustaining society. Their iconic ad with the bold heading, "Do not buy this jacket," ran in the New York Times on Black Friday, a day in support of overconsumption. "The ad wasn't successful in its intended purpose; sales rose 30% following the campaign."⁶ In 2022, the brand declared that they only had one shareholder, Mother Earth.

"Instead of "going public," you could say we're "going purpose." Instead of extracting value from nature and transforming it into wealth for investors, we'll use the wealth Patagonia creates to protect the source of all wealth. Here's how it works: 100% of the company's voting stock transfers to the Patagonia Purpose Trust, created to protect the company's values; and 100% of the nonvoting stock had been given to the Holdfast Collective, a non-profit dedicated to fighting the environmental crisis and defending nature. The funding will come from Patagonia: Each year, the money we make after reinvesting in the business will be distributed as a dividend to help fight the crisis," Yvon Chouinard, Patagonia Founder.

It's a bold step, an inspired move, it is green marketing at its prime. It is doing business in service to a life sustaining society. If all brands chose purpose over profit, if they stayed true to their morals and didn't sell out to the multi-nationals, we would be living in a renaissance, a time of understanding ourselves as one. Patagonia has shown it is possible. And customers are in support.

"Climate-conscious shoppers say they're more open to spending with brands that take concrete action to prove they care about sustainability, such as end-of-life care and in-house recycling programs. They are also more likely to trust brands that share details about their supply chain and are open to admitting where they've gone wrong. Most of all, shoppers want to see brands demonstrate a willingness to sacrifice sales to save the planet."⁷

PART 2: Love Marketing

SECTION A: Marketing fashion for a life sustaining society

Let's start to think about marketing in a new way. There are approaches to marketing that don't feel gross. It's the current intention behind the ads that leave a bad taste in the mouth. Like a feeling of being used, like the brands are telling us what we want to hear just so they can build up their coffers. Let's drop the artificial vision of perfection, endless messages of lack, and the belief that buying something will lift us up. Sell, sell, sell has to be a thing of the past.

Yet there will always be designers and artisans making clothes for those of us that don't have that gift, and they will need to communicate the value of their skills. So how can marketing function in a way that leads to a life sustaining society that uplifts people and planet? It involves rooting into our hearts and spreading the love we feel for talented designers and sewers.

Since early 2020 I have been teaching marketing from this perspective and have been engaging my students to think about the qualities they think are most important in a marketing strategy. The results are consistent between fashion design and fashion merchandising students, they are craving meaningful, creative, authentic and transparent engagement from a marketing campaign.

Marketing for a life sustaining society comes from a different place. It is not about money at all. It is about sharing the gratitude we feel for the makers. It is about creating beauty in our world. It is about connection. It is about a heart-centered practice. "If change is only embedded in the present, change will be a moment, not a movement," said Burke at Business of Fashion's VOICES 2021.¹ When the internal place in which marketing originates changes, we will see that change reflected in our systems, in our society and in ourselves, now and into the future. We are aiming for a movement.

It is my greatest fear that these new ways of marketing will be tarnished by the monetary exchange and the greed that runs rampant in business-as-usual. The only way I can see to solve this is to always be connecting back to life, and the easiest way to do this is with the breath. Before you create any marketing campaign or materials, close your eyes, breathe, and touch in for a moment to the silence and stillness, then move forward with your marketing practices.

It's true, marketing for a life sustaining society is an oxymoron. The concept of marketing is so wrapped up in the building of profits that it seems doubtful that it can become a vessel for change. To move things in a positive direction, we must start by drastically scaling back, stepping into the role of the de-consumer who is actively trying to reduce their consumption. "Climate-anxious shoppers want to see the cycle of consumption slow down, which for brands means fewer sales, says Geraldine Wharry, a fashion futurist and trend forecaster, 'brands should be looking for ways beyond physical products to make money.'"²

The slowing down of fashion goes hand-in-hand with the idea of demarketing as demonstrated by Patagonia. Author J.B. Mackinnon defines this as "convincing consumers to buy less of a thing."³ It's not about consuming nothing, just less. If we truly engage in these new marketing methods, people's need to consume will decrease; potentially putting us out of a job. But as Marianne Williamson says, "sharing our gifts is what makes us happy. We're most powerful when we are happy. [And fashion is our] instrument through which the world is healed."⁴

So, if you, like me, see the need to change marketing as a crucial step in moving us forward to a socially and environmental just world, read on, brave soul.

SECTION B: Marketing as Activism.

Today, marketing as activism feels like a necessity because of the great unravelling (a term used to describe the collapse of biological, ecological, economic, and social systems).¹ Activism is defined as the policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change². Marketing does have this role to play, if we are to create a life sustaining society.

“Marketing as activism is when a business publicly takes a stand on a social, environmental, economic, or political issue. The activism must be genuine, when companies align themselves with issues that they aren’t engaged with it may be perceived as performative. Performative activism is like virtue signaling, saying things so that people perceive you in a positive light. Thus, if activism as marketing is not genuine to the company’s values, it can be very damaging to a brand’s reputations,” says marketing student Sam.

Activism has a bad rep, it invokes a mob of angry people on the street, disrupting life and getting in people’s way. Yet as Margaret Mead said, “never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” If that small, committed group were some top tier advertising firms, the potential for change could be impressive. “Advertising sells a status system. Can we get these campaigns to change the status item from another pair of sneakers to volunteering or seeking wisdom?” asks Mackinnon.³

Now imagine...if brands across one segment of fashion decided that the message they wanted to share was about volunteering. Every campaign, by every Canadian sportswear brand, had at the core of its messaging that people should get out and help others by volunteering. The reason advertising is so ubiquitous is that it holds a lot of power. If Canada Goose and Lululemon decide to use their marketing to encourage this type of philanthropy, how much would local charities and communities’ benefit?

I admit it seems like an insidious methodology, but as this is about creating a life sustaining society, there won’t be any cat and mouse, shadow messaging. Instead, it would be broadcast and shared that this was the intention. This style of marketing tells the shopper of the brand’s true purpose. Allowing them into the heart of your business will only grow their devotion.

“Communicating social issues in clever but practical ways makes it more relatable, less preachy, and accessible to the everyday fashion consumer. Asking what is your purpose. This type of marketing message captures the interest in a brand and nudges the consumer to act, to resist or to rethink their traditional buying habits.”⁴

“Being a brand with an activist voice allows consumers to see what your brand stands for, invites customers with similar or shared values to engage with your brand, and give brands an opportunity to be on the right side of history,” says marketing student Andrew.

Everything I am sharing here is marketing as activism in action. I am campaigning for new ways to market that will bring about social change. With the sizable reach of a marketing campaign, to use it in this capacity, seems prudent. Scharmer speaks to the fact that we keep creating a society and systems that no one wants. How can we change this? By speaking our minds vigorously while coming from a place of love, and not greed.

But when you consider the idea of marketing as activism you must ask, is the social change I am envisioning an element of a life sustaining society? Is it truly inclusive of all, respectful to mother earth, and deeply charged

with a sense of my higher Self? Trauma can lead to some shady definitions of what these qualities mean. Scharmer speaks about this as absencing, “shutting down our capacity to relate to the future that wants to emerge through us. The shadow space of absencing features the economics of destruction. The shadow space of social pathology is based on the dynamics of being stuck in one truth (rigid ideology), one center or collective skin (arrogance and hate), and one will (fanaticism and violence)”⁵ It’s not a question of free speech so much as a willingness to listen and actively find the middle ground which requires a constant striving to keep an open heart and mind.

Marketing as activism is a step on the ladder towards a life sustaining society, it will fade as a method once we settle into the sweet equilibrium of the great turning. A time defined by the awakening of a higher level of human consciousness and a human turn from an era of violence against people and nature to a new era of peace, justice and environmental restoration.⁶

SECTION C: Marketing as Beauty.

This is the opportunity for marketers to share their creativity through the imagery and words they use to celebrate the designer. Engaging with the beauty being created through fashion is a major perk of the work of marketing. We get to be inspired by the collection, to let it work its magic on us. We in turn create beauty in a photo shoot, fashion show, or ad layout, and this then trickles down to the shopper, who is equally inspired. They now bring home that piece of clothing and find a way to wear it that expresses their unique beauty and creativity. What an easy way to uplift people, through this beautiful cycle of inspiration and creative expression.

When we are bombarded with advertisements in every facet of our lives, if they resonated with beauty maybe this wouldn’t feel so problematic. Imagine if every time a brand’s Instagram post was created, it was done thinking it was artwork that could hang on a gallery wall. This could feed the marketer’s soul and that of the shopper’s too. “Beauty can mean different things to different people though so be sure to know your audience,” reminds marketing student Tia. As they say, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Ideally, a diverse group of people are involved in the creation of content and imagery, resulting in beauty for everyone.

“The superior gratification derived from the use and contemplation of a costly product masquerades under the name of beauty,” says MacKinnon.¹ When in fact, it’s the expense and not the beauty that we truly appreciate and want to show off. If we can source into our deepest reservoirs of stillness and silence, we will be moved to create that which satiates our eye, and the senses as a whole, without ever considering how it reflects our bank balance.

“Beauty can be both exterior (appearance, outfit, body shape) and interior (politeness, confidence, attitude). A successful marketing strategy to promote beauty should cover both sides, emphasizing individual values and bringing positive effects to our society,” says marketing student Choco.

Marketing as beauty is an essential, seemingly obvious element of fashion marketing. Balancing this visual aspect with some of the other new ways to market will be a delicate process. It feels important to mention that not all these new ways of marketing will be used in one advertisement. A conflict of styles does not lend itself to beauty. Instead, finding a focus for the brand’s story at any given time is crucial, although beauty should always be at the heart of every campaign. Without capturing the eye of the customer, your marketing will be pointless. People do all that is in their power to avoid ads, if we can make them pieces of art this avoidance may end, allowing our message to shine through.

As we build towards a life sustaining society, creating marketing that is infused with beauty will fill us with joy and gratitude, which will help minimize our sense of lack. To develop beautiful marketing is an honourable job.

SECTION D: Marketing as Celebration.

Celebrate, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, means “to perform publicly and with appropriate rites; to honor especially by solemn ceremonies or by refraining from ordinary business; to mark something by festivities or other deviation from routine; and to hold up or play up for public notice.”¹ If the marketing industry simply considered celebration as a necessary function of their work, how different would it look? To lift up designers, to honour their skill and talent, and to do so with a ceremonial intent, wow! Celebration brings happiness to mind; it often involves family and friends and good spirits. This jovial atmosphere could infuse marketing with an honest lightheartedness whose intent isn’t to sell you something. Instead, it engages in respecting the craftsmanship that is involved in the creation of clothing and encourages celebrating the people who have honed this skill. It is important to mention that the people we are celebrating in this marketing method aren’t solely the star designer. Every facet of the industry that takes the vision from an idea to a product is part of the festivities, this includes the pattern makers, sewers, textile developers, and more. Our industry currently has a bad case of operating only with the flash and none of the soul.

"At Balmain, a 10th anniversary show for designer Olivier Rousteing was attended by industry insiders and celebrities, but was also open to the public: of the 5,000 people who attended the brand’s second festival last Thursday, 4,000 of them paid for their tickets as part of a fundraiser for HIV charity Red. The amphitheatre space, complete with booming music, jumbotron screens and a screaming audience, added a jolt of emotion that was well-suited to Rousteing’s pop vision, framing his creations more favorably than a stiff judgement ceremony for editors.”² This is an example of the democratization of fashion. No more exclusive fashion shows for the inner fashion circle, instead everyone is a participant in the luxury of fashion.

The other definition of celebration is “marking something by festivities.” In this case, the creation of the campaign by the team of marketers. We need to take the time to pause and revel in the beauty we created. We need to celebrate all the creative minds that have encapsulated a designers’ vision into an advertisement that a shopper can appreciate and understand. This slowing down of process, to touch upon the happiness of a job well done, leads to people, and the work they create, truly operating from a deeper and more meaningful place. Marketing as celebration is really respecting the efforts and talent of all the creative individuals.

“Marketing as celebration is also about celebrating your customers and allowing their success with your product or service to be your success,” says marketing student Shanella.

Marketing as celebration can be an effective framing because who does not want to be at a party, grooving and enjoying the company of friends? In this atmosphere, a flow state can develop, time seems to stand still, memory expands, and everyone is swaying in unison to the heartbeat of the music and the universe. It helps us feel part of something bigger, and it can hit even during a quiet conversation while waiting to use the bathroom. If marketing can be created from this transcendental state, we are moving towards a life sustaining society.

This method of marketing looks on the bright side and takes the time to honour the rituals and cycles of creation. As we capture this fundamental way of being human, we bring ourselves back into right relations

with the world and with each other. So put on your party hat and let's share the accomplishments of the brands and the teams behind them!

SECTION E: Marketing as Circular.

Circles are a shape of nature and one we should emulate in marketing. Circularity in fashion is often accompanied by the phrase cradle-to-grave, a premise that "considers impacts at each stage of a product's life-cycle, from the time natural resources are extracted from the ground and processed through each subsequent stage of manufacturing, transportation, product use, and ultimately, disposal."¹ Marketing materials can speak to the benefits of circularity and the beauty of brands that work within this natural system.

It is referencing nature, it is seeing the ways in which she creates and the ways in which things die, and how in their death they offer up new life. "Circularity shifts the psychology, in general, away from that disposable mindset to investing into taking care of a product," said Kathrine Nasteva, a sustainable fashion consultant.² This could be expressed in marketing as something novel like printing on paper that is embedded with seeds. Or maybe it is ensuring that no element of the marketing campaign will result in garbage being created. Or maybe a campaign works with the concept of the reoccurring trend, an item that keeps coming back into style. If it is high quality, customers can pull it out of their closet the next time it becomes chic and wear it in an ad campaign. Imagine a series of people photographed wearing a pair of jeans that they have had for 5-10-20 years that, with a refresh of accessories, looks totally in fashion.

Currently though, fashion is developed in a linear pattern under the false premise that we live within a system of infinite resources. "Our planet is quickly running out of resources to make all this stuff, and we are also running out of places to put it once its short life cycle is done."³

Circularity also is like wrapping the customer in a hug. It embraces the whole body of a brand from designer to sewer to customer and inviting all of these people to contribute to the birthing process, while concurrently acting as death doula, reimaging the spirit of the clothes into a new form when they are no longer wearable. Campaigns that are co-creative in nature, that speak to how to create, how to buy, how to deal with end of life, and the grief we feel when we lose something that helps us express our identity, are a facet of marketing for a life sustaining society.

"Creating a sense of ownership of a product means a user is less willing to part with it. This means putting the user at the start of the process, rather than considering them merely a recipient at the end. This presents a valuable opportunity for brands to engage directly with consumers, building stronger trust than ever before."⁴

Collaborations in fashion are an important, and longstanding, marketing strategy. They can lend cache to a brand when they partner with the right person. "Brands see contemporary art as a way not only to draft off a globally recognised artist's popularity but also to signal their shared values to consumers. Brands need to ensure that the collaborations with artists feel authentic to the brand and in line with the brand essence," said Arifa Sheikh, partner at Kantar's consulting division. "And that it doesn't feel like it's just a logo and a pretty image slapped together."⁵

Co-creation though needs to be democratized. Right now, it is the domain of the elite. Only the Justin Biebers of the world get to create unique Timbiebs doughnut flavours for Tim Hortons. It also shouldn't consider only the size of a person's following on Instagram or TikTok. All customers have a circle of influence. So, open up the floodgates and let everyone within the organization, and in your customer database, share their creativity.

Fashion, like the rhythm of the moon and the seasons, is circular. We expect winter and spring fashion shows at certain times of the year, and we anticipate nautical stripes in the summer and sequins at new year's. What if ads also operated on a pattern and were only allowed to be shown on certain days or at certain times of the day? Imagine ad free Tuesdays. What would we do with all the time not taken up with looking at and reading ads?

When you have natural systems as the inspiration for business and marketing operations, then by definition you are working within the constraints of a life sustaining society. "By realigning ourselves with what occurs in nature, we can design a next-generation textile production model that recognizes its connections to the biosphere. Biomimicry's Nature of Fashion report offers an in-depth analysis of the material flows that underpin natural systems, compares them to the flawed industrial system that exists today, and explains how the fashion industry can work with existing technology and nature to jump-start the transition right now."⁶ How exciting is that? Nature already has solutions to our problems if we just look and listen.

Fritjof Capra's life-sustaining principles of ecology can offer a signpost for marketing in a new way.

- Networks: living systems communicate with one another and share resources across boundaries.
- Cycles: ecosystems generate no waste, matter cycles continually through the web of life.
- Partnership: life took over the planet not by combat but by cooperation.
- Diversity: ecosystems achieve stability through diversity, the more diverse the more resilient.

"He points out, however, that there is this crucial difference between the ecological networks of nature and the corporate networks of human society: in an ecosystem no being is excluded from the network. By contrast, many segments of our population are excluded from corporate networks."⁷

Circularity though implies wholeness, oneness. Marketing from this perspective counters the story of lack, of outsiders, of separation. If we truly uphold these concepts in the creation of our campaigns, the great turning will be well underway.

SECTION F: Marketing as Community Development.

Traditionally, target markets segment people into small brackets of their identity. Instead of the war-inspired terminology of target markets, can we start to think about community, about sticky edges, and marginalized pockets of people that could be brought into the fold? If we do, marketing as community development begins to look like a chance to till the soil of the social field to see what seeds want to sprout into new products. It feels more like a healing opportunity.

Marketing as community development is about deep listening and truly hearing the customer. I think about Adelle Renaud at the brand Peau de Loup who shared that 75% of her customers are repeat shoppers. It's not unusual to ask a brand to identify their target customer and for them to say "well, we have 18-year-olds and 60-years-olds that like what we do."¹ In a traditional marketing setting this would be unacceptable, there would need to be a narrowing in on the exact person. Peau De Loup's repeat customer statistic hasn't come about by saying their shoppers are 32-year-old professionals that identify as non-binary and make \$75,000 a year. It's about listening, it's about co-creating a brand with a community that has a vested interest in the clothing being created. Traditionally, this is called word-of-mouth marketing, today it is also phrased as social selling. "It is a particularly popular method with small brands, which typically don't have the advertising

budgets to elbow out rivals for space on consumers' Instagram feeds. Instead, they turn what they do have, a small number of fiercely loyal customers, into a viral marketing machine at a fraction of the cost."²

Marketing as community development encompasses the full spectrum and diversity of customers that love a brand. It is about embedding the desire of your customers into the brand and building loyalty and coherence between a group of people that will speak with high praise of your brand. Once we start to listen to all the voices, there is no stopping it. We open ourselves up to others in our lives and we start to delve into deeper topics with the brand's focus group. As we connect at this level, the potential for the brand's highest future potential to be achieved is increased. Coming at it from such deep connection with all customers helps us leap the abyss of separateness and move towards equity for all, an embedded concept of a life sustaining society.

Mark Woerde, author of *How Advertising will Heal the World and Your Business*, assessed research in the 16 biggest economies in the fourth quarter of 2010. He discovered that "people have a strong, fundamental and increasing desire to live a meaningful life and 74% of the people indicate helping others is their way of finding meaning in life. Where in the past brands have seemed mainly focused on fulfilling hedonistic individual needs, it's gradually becoming clear: people are waiting for brands to facilitate them to help others. And in doing so, these so called 'Meaningful Prosocial Brands' help fulfill a basic, strong, and growing need: the need to live a meaningful life. These brands use their marketing power and engage target groups to the max and facilitate them to help other people by tackling small or big societal issues."³

Marketing as community development can't involve marketing for the sake of marketing. It has to be marketing as meaningful, no fluff. It is thinking about using money wisely, so you can take care of your brand and all the people and places it affects and still donate to and support various groups and services in those localities.

"Marketing as community development can also involve appealing to a local demographic and marketing an action to resolve a local issue. It centers around the consumer's joy that arises from collective community improvement," explains marketing student Allison. It's a hyper-localized approach that has a brand so entrenched in the local scene that they know the issues that are plaguing a neighbourhood, and they use their marketing dollars to try and help remedy it, with the community's assistance. It's an old school method really. Local businesses have been sponsoring local team and events for ages. What if a clothing brand decided to sponsor a high school fashion show in each of the communities where they have their shop? That's grassroots marketing and community development at its finest.

Take McQueen for instance. They are "doing it through the courses the brand does with universities all over the country, with the Saturday Club in the Bond Street boutique, teaching handcrafts to eight-to-ten-year-olds, and with the Brady Centre in London's Tower Hamlets, where a youth centre that was about to be closed down is now a hub where kids can learn how to put together a portfolio, where women are learning to sew, where there are poetry classes. McQueen has been reconceptualized as a post-pandemic platform of possibilities."⁴

Overall, this methodology is about reciprocity and generosity. About appreciating your customer and letting them appreciate you, about sharing ideas across the threshold of business and personal. Marketing as community development is part of a life sustaining society as it brings people together in equal footing.

"Belonging is simply good business."⁵

SECTION G: Marketing as Education.

There are so many ways that marketing can function that aren't detrimental to our world. Using the platform as a means to educate is one way for marketing to act in a reciprocal manner with the world in which it exists. Education can sometimes be viewed as dull, a simple listing of features and benefits. This is important information of course; education though can go beyond this.

Marketing can be about sharing the process of making clothing. When customers understand the work that goes into making a sweater, it is much easier to imagine paying the true cost for that labour and the resulting beauty. There is so much about our industry that the public doesn't understand. They see the clothes on a mannequin or an influencer and imagine wearing it with something they already have in their closet. Beyond that, all the intricacies of making clothing are lost. Marketing is an opportunity to share this information, to build up the knowledge base of the shopper. A marketing campaign could include a how-to, like teaching shoppers to reconfigure that cool sweater into a rug once it has worn out its welcome in their wardrobe.

"It is likely to become more important for brands to play a bigger role in educating consumers about fashion's impact. That also means offering more transparency around the challenges and limitations of any sustainability efforts. 'We're steeped in this language of fashion sustainability, and we sometimes think that the consumer is too,' said Carrie Ellen Phillips of communications agency BPCM. 'They're not.'"¹

Marketing has such a large category of touch points which means its influence is massive. If we can use these channels to share insights to see into the soul of the industry and beyond the flash, then fashion will be in a more resilient place as our world begins to put quality over quantity.

This is a smart method for brands to use as it also builds trust with the customer. The transparency of production is a learning tool for both the brand and the customer. Having eyes on every element of making fashion creates an industry that is accountable for its actions. "Marketing and communications play a vital role in educating consumers and convincing them of the importance of sustainable consumption and making circular fashion mainstream."²

Marketing as education democratizes the process of fashion. Seeing behind the veil empowers people to participate in the process. Co-creation is a step in the direction of a life sustaining society.

SECTION H: Marketing as Love.

Love is the overarching element of marketing for a life sustaining society. When an agency is focused on reputation and bank balance, the messages that subtly come through their campaigns are contributing to the great unravelling. If instead agencies are operating from love, generosity, gratitude and oneness, this changes the campaign from creation to launch.

Love is a sacred word, that has been made saccharine sweet with candy hearts, romantic comedies and Valentine's Day greeting cards. If we respect the idea of agape love as defined by the Ancient Greeks, then it is self-less.¹ It is a sacred duty to express this unconditional love for everyone, from the designer to the shopper. If you are creating your marketing message with agape love in your heart, then the beauty that can be created will be boundless and will fill the hearts of those who engage with it.

"Feeling and emotions lie at the heart of the world's most loved brands. Brands that have a reputation for doing good and being socially responsible in areas such as philanthropy, human rights and environmental

issues have the potential to help consumers make better and more conscious choices, are those that are loved.”²

It is hard to find a marketing campaign that expresses this great appreciation for our world, our knowledge, our stories, our community, our future, and the beauty that surrounds us. Somehow, advertising that plays to our heart strings feels a bit icky, like they are artificially trying to create a warm and fuzzy feeling that may leave you teary-eyed. This uncomfortable feeling comes from knowing we are being played. That our emotions have been used to build a hefty bank balance. Yet still, when we see a campaign that speaks to our deep longing for love, it’s hard not to be compelled to shop. It’s a fine line. The difference once again comes from intent and the starting point of the campaign. It’s the one that asks its developers to breathe together, to feel into their own bodies and spirits, that will successfully wrap ads and other collateral in love, a love that is true and sacred.

SECTION I: Marketing as Storytelling.

Products only truly become our own when they have history and stories behind them,” says MacKinnon.¹ During a session of Flash & Soul, a community of fashion business people interested in working towards a life sustaining society, we did a clothing show and tell. The items shown seemed to fall into one of two categories: those made by the person and those handed down by a loved one. The stories shared to express the meaning of these pieces brought smiles, laughter and tears to the eye. One participant, Irina, commented that the stories of her clothing weren’t known by her best friend yet she would carry the clothes with her throughout her life’s journey.

Fashion as a means for sharing our stories is often discussed in terms of individual expression, but it goes beyond that. In a world of fast fashion, MacKinnon comments that “when we replace things, we lose the opportunity for connection.” One of the key drivers of marketing is the development of brand loyalty. This can only come through a sense of connection, and stories have the ability to fulfil this function.

Storytelling is like breathing for humans. It is a way to share our experience, to connect with each other, to root into our histories, the land, and our past and future. “Storytelling is a fundamental part of being human. Stories let us share information in a way that creates an emotional connection. They help us to understand that information and each other, and it makes the information memorable.”² When marketing can function in a way that tells a story that captures the imagination and speaks to our shared experiences, the audience will be compelled to engage.

“World saving marketing messages that shame consumers or make them feel bad about buying non-ethical clothing can actually be counterproductive. Instead focus on the brand’s story and bypass telling people how to behave.”³

Everyone involved in the creation of a piece of clothing has a story to share, and shoppers crave the chance to listen. This is one of the important ways that we can feel empathy, to imagine what it is to walk in another’s shoes. While the star designer is interesting, people want to know about more than just celebrities. Like Shad says in his song “Black Averagesness” there is power and beauty in the everydayness of life.⁴ It’s okay to be “normal,” in some ways it is more relatable. Generally speaking, customers can’t make their own clothes, which is why they look to marketing for advice on who is making beautiful clothing of value. While the star designer is a good story, we also want to hear about the colour expert and the manufacturer. These people have impressive talents so let’s share their stories too.

Beyond this, it is important to share the voices of a diversity of brand ambassadors, this is crucial in our desire for a life sustaining society. The stories of people with lived experiences of racism, sexism, ableism and more, who work in the industry, or even customers, could be expressed in marketing materials. Hearing these voices could lead to an acceptance or appreciation of all customers and workers.

Marketing as storytelling will move us towards a life sustaining society because understanding the heart of others deepens our resonance with each other, bringing us closer together and minimizing othering. It has the potential to repair the separation of people from each other through the beauty of a well-told story.

SECTION J: Marketing as Wonderment.

Oh, wow look at this world, this creativity, I can't help myself, I need to share it! I need to sing it from the mountain tops! The awe we can find in life and in fashion strikes when a perfect garment struts down the runway. Your breath catches and you feel compelled to jump to your feet in applause. The wonder and amazement that someone thought of the look and had the skill to construct it hits your heart. Maybe it's a feat of engineering that you didn't imagine possible with fabric. Maybe it's a colour combination that flashes like a morning sunrise.

These moments of wonder at the heart of creativity and skill can make a marketer jump from their seat and rush to the computer to write the content or develop the visuals. That flash of inspiration from the wonder of it all will make for a marketing campaign that speaks to the soul of the designer, the marketer and the shopper. There is no analyzing this moment, no self doubt, no dialogue needed, it's a direct connection to the source of inspiration. When it flows it can't be stopped, and it shouldn't be second guessed. It should be shared, as the resulting marketing campaign will make everyone stop in wonder. This is true life sustaining marketing, the flow of creativity from one person to the next. It showcases the interconnectivity, the jewel of light in Indra's Net that captures every other light in the cosmos.¹ It is beauty, it is love, it is storytelling, it is simple, it is celebration, it is all that marketing has to offer to a life sustaining society.

All these new marketing directives start from a place of abundance, generosity, and love. They make the shopper view clothing in a different way based on the messages that are being transmitted through the marketing. They start to understand and appreciate the time and effort it takes for a piece of clothing to be retail ready. This will slow down the mountains of clothing being produced. Instead, people will be looking for quality, beauty, and community in their purchases, providing even more value to both the shopper and the maker. With an intention that isn't focused on the bottom line, we can share fashion in a way that truly honours the participants in this industry and the people that support it by shopping consciously.

Together we can share, grow, learn, love, expand, and make a difference. Let's breathe together, listen, and market.

PART 3: The Path Forward

If there is marketing in a life sustaining society then it will look like love. That will be because everything, the economy, education, business, government, are all operating from this heart centered place.

Before we find our selves in this magical society, we need to slow down, digest, heal the trauma and integrate. Personally, I need to reconcile my past activities in marketing and consider how I have contributed to the problems that exist in our world. But it's not only about me. I come to this world from a place of unearned privilege and oppression. It's through relationship and by working together that we can create the world that we desire.

Samira Nasr, the first woman of colour, Editor-in-Chief at Harper's Bazaar says, "This role (as editor) isn't about me. It's about we. It's about the community that I can bring together, share this platform, elevate these voices and bring them along with me. So, it's about the we. But I believe we all have a responsibility. You get through the door and every one of us has a responsibility to look back and extend your hand and pull someone in with you."¹

Who are you going to pull up? The consumer or the citizen? The creator or the celebrity? Your highest potential self or your needy ego? In some ways it doesn't matter. It's not a question of either-or, it's a both-and situation. If you are pulling people of all walks of life up to equal ground with you and into the magical place of fashion and beauty, you are stepping into a life sustaining society.

"There is a deeply felt sense that eventually all legitimacy flows from structures that enable inclusive participation. A view of the human being as a being of freedom; as a being defined by the capacity to make the choice between acting in habitual ways or connecting with one's deepest source of creativity, ethical action and freedom."²

Marketing for a life sustaining society rests on our ability to enact the great turning, even while drowning in the activities of business-as-usual. We have to take a stand, we have to find the moments in our work when we can speak for each other and mother earth and direct our path towards inclusion and freedom and love. It takes great bravery, and at the same time it is so simple. It is stretching out deadlines so every one can breathe, it is sharing gratitude daily, it is listening deeply always, and it is loving everyone, and yourself truly. And this is where the promise resides, in the deep inspiration of fashion to create beauty and function in our lives, while sharing a message of love.

Marketing is only one part of the fashion industry though. There is so much more work that needs to happen at if we are truly going to experience the great turning. "It doesn't take the entire industry to make change, it happens in smaller circles first. Those effects will bring about change. The arc of success is long, but it can happen in a moment."³

The moment is now. It's why we work in fashion, it is beautifully ever changing, and right now it has the potential to change our world for the better. "We must realize that we will move through this moment of collective crisis together, or not at all," says Langston Kahn.⁴ We can't underestimate the power we wield as marketers. We are the tastemakers, the trend setters, the beauty seekers, and community developers. We are a center point in Indira's Net, connected with everyone in the fashion industry. This gives us unique opportunity to influence our world.

If you are called to this work, to fashion, then you are drawn to people, dedicated to bringing beauty into our world, open to the sources of creativity and eager to gift what you make to the world, whether graphics or words. While we move at the speed of trends, we need to slow down if are going to move into Love Marketing.

Before you do anything, Breathe.

ACTIVITIES

1. Identify one of the issues with fashion that resonates with you. Take a moment to think about why this one strikes a chord. Then journal your response to the following question: how have my own actions contributed to the problem?
2. Write a gratitude list for all things you love about fashion.
3. Nature is a great teacher; can you find examples from the plant or animal kingdoms that could lead to new approaches in fashion marketing. Are there creatures or processes that partake in marketing and sales? Journal whatever far flung examples come to mind and how we could use this inspiration from nature to do fashion marketing in a more eco and socially conscious way.
4. A good jingle will get stuck in people's heads, and they won't be able to stop themselves from singing along when the ad plays. The senses play a big role in marketing. Can you find examples of a campaign that markets to the following senses: touch, taste, sound and smell?
5. Take a pause from reading and look around you. See the beauty that surrounds you. Maybe it's the colour and texture of bark, maybe it's the porcelain lamp on your desk, maybe it's the person sitting across from you. Close your eyes and breathe in this appreciation. Now take three minutes to express this beauty by drawing, writing, singing, dancing or another form of creative expression. This is only for you, so leave the judgment behind.
6. Watch BBC fashion waste video, "Fast fashion: The dumping ground for unwanted clothes" and journal how you feel about the legacy of our throw away fashion culture.
7. In one go, draw a circle by hand. Consider and appreciate its unique imperfections. Now find a fabric or a brand or an advertisement that embraces the concept of flaws as beauty.
8. Think about love marketing, what does it invoke in you, can you find two examples of marketing that you believe are coming from this perspective.
9. Write a short story about your life in fashion. How did it begin? What do you love about it? Where do you excel? What would people be surprised to know about your work in this industry?



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