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Special Message:

Selling Off Trends I

There are hundreds of trends going on in American society at any given time: food, fashion, autos, etc. There is no end to identifiable trends in any market or category. Trends are really a long-term and identifiable change in tastes and attitudes.

Trends are different from fads. Trends have a nebulous beginning (very difficult to discern), and gain momentum in their early stages before establishing a critical mass. At critical mass, the trend is well established, and will continue along under its own power until it is replaced by a follow-up trend.

Fads on the other hand, have abrupt beginnings, and end just as abruptly. Fads are usually generated purposely, by some institution – usually a business. For example, athletic shoes worn and endorsed by a professional basketball player might (“hopefully” dreams the promoter) trigger a fad. A famous actress might be “seen” in a particularly unusual dress, and whoever paid her to wear it hopes this too will launch a fad. Political candidates can personify a fad. For example, in the last presidential primary, John Dean was red-hot until he hit Iowa’s primary.

Fads are usually created purposefully, and the creator hopes to profit greatly throughout the duration of the fad – which will be limited. Fads are often confused with trends, and many times, the difference can be mystifying. But let me give you a couple of examples that might clear things up a bit:

Customer preference for automobiles is based on trends. lately, this has been in the direction of Sport Utility Vehicles (SUV). This has been a strong and undeniable trend. This might gradually change with gasoline prices projected to hit five dollars a gallon over the next couple of years (gas prices are a trend too, and the trend is definitely up!). A fad in the auto industry right now is the hybrid – every manufacturer has one, and they all hope to make a buck. But right now hybrid sales are pretty weak, and have a long way to go before hitting mainstream status.

Another trend in food for example, is organic, or natural (whatever that means) foods. Sales of organic foods have increased steadily for the last twenty years, and have now become mainstream – you can even buy them at Wal Mart. As for food fads, you need look no further than the tabloid rack at your local supermarket to discover the latest fad diet!

Unless you’re the one promoting the fad, or one hoping to ride in the wake of it, fads aren’t worth your time and energy. Trends on the other hand, should not be ignored or bucked. Trends can make you rich if you understand them, and pick them up early in the game. Alternatively, trends can put you out business if you try to fight them.

Good Selling,

John White