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CANADA'S BUSINESS VOICE, MONDAY, JUNE 25, 2012

Crowdsourcing design is **CHEAP** but is it **GOOD** for your brand?



Roy White, left, and Matthew Clark, principals at Subplot Design, gave Petcurean a long-term branding strategy.

SIMON HAYTER FOR THE NATIONAL POST

TRADE

Canadians to spend more in U.S., survey says

NEW DUTY-FREE LAW

By JULIAN BELTRAME

OTTAWA • Canadians are in a U.S. shopping state of mind this summer thanks to changes in regulations that allow them to buy more without paying duty, a new survey suggests.

The Canadian Press-Harris Decima poll on relaxed cross-border shopping limits that went into effect June 1 found a large majority in favour of the changes — and 54% of those planning a trip stateside said they intended to spend more. Additionally, four in 10 said they were likely to purchase more duty-free goods.

The telephone survey of 1,000 was conducted between June 14 and 18 and is considered accurate plus or minus 3.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

As outlined in the March budget, the duty-free thresh-

ENTREPRENEUR

DESIGN DEBATE

By JULIA JOHNSON

An online design contest to create a logo for Canadian website TimesSquare.com that has \$10,000 on the line for the top submissions, has garnered close to 3,000 possible designs.

For Lorenzo Tartamella, chief executive of TimesSquare.com, crowdsourcing its new logo has provided a vast range of art options. "It's incredible... An ad agency would have never been able to give us the diversity and the choice that we've been given the way we have with this contest," he said.

For lean startups looking for cheap and fast logo designs, the crowd may provide access to affordable art. But some design experts say the savings aren't worth the expense of not having a long-term brand strategy.

Mr. Tartamella's contest is running on DesignCrowd.ca, which launched this month and is the latest crowdsourcing platform to hit Canada since the online process for obtaining freelance graphic work took off three years ago.

*DesignCrowd.ca and crowdsourcing

help fix a number of problems with the traditional design process, which is slow, expensive and risky," said Alec Lynch of Design Crowd, the Australian parent company.

The platform allows small businesses to host contests, in which freelance designers compete by submitting designs for logos, websites and mobile apps. Once a contest is opened with a description of the business's needs, designers around the world can submit a creation in hopes of getting selected.

Mr. Lynch said his service is "essentially outsourcing on steroids," since it gives customers a vast amount of speedy responses, on their set budget, with no cost risk if they aren't satisfied with the results.

However, some marketers see the one-off process as counterproductive to building a lasting brand.

A decade into its existence as a premium pet-food company, Petcurean Pet Nutrition recognized the need for a long-term branding strategy so it hired Vancouver-based Subplot Design Inc. in 2010, which resulted in the launch of new product packaging earlier this year.

See BRAND on Page FP4

RETAIL

Tim Hortons tasters sip coffee for a living

75,000 CUPS A YEAR

By DAVID FRIEND

ANCASTER, ONT. • Coffee lovers are all too familiar with that satisfying moment — the first sip of a freshly brewed cup — but for the lead coffee taster at Tim Hortons, that borderline euphoric sensation has become a lifestyle.

Kevin West leads a team responsible for maintaining the trademark flavour of Tim Hortons' coffee, a process engineered from the company's facility on the outskirts of Hamilton.

Every day he pours a seemingly endless stream of coffee made with beans from around the world. The goal is to ensure that the quality of each is up to expectations, and all together he estimates that he tastes about 75,000 cups each year.

At first, Mr. West's estimate sounds like a huge exaggeration, but he's quick to follow it up.

"When we first built the facility, we cupped so much in one day that I went home calling my brother thinking I was having a heart attack," Mr. West says. "I had about 600 cups of coffee and my heart was racing."

Tim Hortons wants Canadians to know that, like its coffee tasters, it's critically serious about coffee.

The country's biggest restaurant chain is in the midst of an intense battle for the lucrative coffee products market, facing competition from both low-priced and higher-end rivals.

But unlike a majority of businesses vying for the same market, the Canadian mainstay has built its reputation almost solely on coffee and doughnuts since 1964.

The Oakville, Ont.-headquartered company is just a short drive from its \$30-million facility in Ancaster, Ont., which opened nearly three years ago.

The 74,000 square-foot building is tucked in the corner of an industrial park and operates under the guise of Maidstone Coffee, a company owned by Tim Hortons. Inside the building, a sequence of machines process beans fresh off the truck into the finished ground product.

At several points in the process, Mr. West steps in with his taste buds at the ready, looking for any brews that don't fit the profile.

See TASTERS on Page FP2

Erosion of design industry or modern reality of market?

BRAND

Continued from FPI

Petcurean credits its relationship with Subplot principals Matthew Clark and Roy White for the company's image makeover. "They are our partners. We would never have gotten where we are today without their expertise, absolutely," said Jaimie Turkington, Petcurean's marketing manager. "It's a critical relationship."

She said it was vital to get real data on market research and an evaluation of the company's identity. "A crowdsourced logo will likely have none of those things, and it might look beautiful on paper, but it's just that."

Subplot helped Petcurean build a comprehensive brand strategy, Ms. Turkington said, by establishing a "brand bible" that the company can use if it wants to outsource future design work.

The other downside to crowdsourcing, from Petcurean's perspective, would be having to reveal brand strategy secrets to the crowd. "Now that we have our brand standards manual, could we work within different applications to get people to contribute creative thinking? Sure. But I don't know if crowdsourcing would be the way to go because then I would have to reveal, in a public way, the strategy behind the brand," Ms. Turkington said.

The graphic design industry

is not thrilled with the use of crowdsourcing either, which results in designers producing work "on speculation" that their efforts might be selected and paid for.

"Crowdsourcing in general is a lose-lose proposition all around," said Adrian Jean, president of the Society of Graphic Designers of Canada. "The clients lose because they don't get the best value out of the process because they didn't engage a designer in any proper in-depth consultation or research. Crowdsourcing participants

Designers
who compete
worldwide
see the value

waste valuable time and resources developing designs that they may or may not be paid for."

Producing work on spec is against the society's policy and code of ethics because it erodes the industry by devaluing designers' work, Mr. Jean said.

Some designers who compete worldwide, however, see the value in the flexibility and access to clients provided by crowdsourcing.

For the Canadian designer known online as Buck Tornado, DesignCrowd.ca is a platform that allowed him to rebuild a career in design after getting

laid off from his full-time gig at Yellow Pages in 2009.

An industry veteran of 20 years, he now works part-time in a traditional industry job for a firm that does health-care company logos and stationary. He said crowdsourcing has allowed him to successfully freelance on the side in a highly competitive field. "For the past year, it really started to snowball. A lot of these contests are startups so they don't have a lot of money," he said.

Since 2010, he said he has sold more than 100 designs on DesignCrowd, earning more than US\$22,000.

The designer said after winning logo contests, he has been hired back by some of the companies to design their business cards and stationary.

Mr. Tornado said he agrees with the society that the crowd process can undervalue design work, but has accepted it as a modern reality of the competitive market. "I agree with them. But as Bob Dylan once sang, the 'winds of change are blowin' and you do what you have to do to adapt," he said.

After trying several other platforms, he said he is sticking with DesignCrowd because it is set up to be "blind" — meaning other designers can't see his work and steal ideas.

Working with small businesses, he said he also sees the value of the crowdsourcing process from his clients' perspectives. "It's such a dog-eat-dog world now for startups and it gives them a huge chance to start out positively because they don't have to inject this huge amount of capital," he said.

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