

CASE SECTION

A FRAMEWORK FOR CONJECTURING ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES

AN APPLICATION TO INDIVIDUALIZATION OF DEMAND IN THE UNDERTAKING BUSINESS

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In the last few decades, the manner in which western society deals with death has changed under the influence of individualization processes. In this paper, directions of emerging opportunities for new products or services are pointed out that respond to this development. For this purpose, five types of heuristic information are provided and analyzed. First, background information about the market. Second, an analysis of consumer wants, problems, and behavior. Third, an analysis of the change factor that explains how wants of consumer are becoming different. Fourth, a description of innovations that already try to meet these changed wants. Fifth, conceptualizations of the market that define the market in a reframed manner. The paper concludes that the centrality of the self (and its cessation by death), the importance of expression of one's authentic personality, the diminished authority of traditional frameworks that explain death, and a want for self-esteem in response to mortality salience all give rise to opportunities for new products and services in response to individualizing manners of dealing with death.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper it will be argued that in the last few decades the manner in which western society deals with death has changed under the influence of individualization processes. The research question of the paper is: to what

products and services does this development give rise? Whether these new products or services will be provided by (starting) businesses or non-profit organizations is irrelevant for the purpose of this paper. However it is assumed that the new products and services are self supporting and therefore able to compete on a market. Thus, the individualizing manners of dealing with death are not analyzed in order to develop therapy or policy. Rather, this paper is meant to be helpful for (would-be providers) on this market in shaping their proposition.

As stated by Burt and van der Heijden (2003), players on any market need to be aware of new trends in their contextual environments ahead of their competitors. The contextual environment is defined by them as that part of the total business environment where driving forces play out to evolve the situation, outside the control or influence of an individual company. Examples of such driving forces are demography, societal factors (including lifestyles and societal values), economic conditions, political forces and technological development. Opportunities continuously emerge because the economy operates in a continual state of disequilibrium and change, and vice versa. This makes it imperative that new market-making knowledge is developed continuously (Burt and van der Heijden, 2003). On field of research that has been intensively studying this process of developing market-making knowledge is entrepreneurship research.

Entrepreneurship has been said to consist of the discovery and exploitation of opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). The entrepreneurial process begins with individuals recognizing an opportunity. There is a debate centered on whether entrepreneurs search, find, or create opportunities (Sarasvathy, Velamuri, and Venkataraman, 2003). In either case, prior knowledge and cognitive abilities meet with novel information in the perception of opportunities. The particular ideas that someone comes up with depend on someone's idiosyncratic information or beliefs (Shane, 2000; Eckhardt and Shane, 2003). In other words, people discover opportunities that others do not see because they have different information either/or they interpret the same information differently (Shane, 2003). This paper will provide the novel information that will make it possible for the reader to recognize opportunities.

In a recent paper, one of the leading experts in the field of entrepreneurship research stated that if this field really wanted to make a difference, it should develop an ability to understand the entrepreneurial implications of technological, cultural, socio-economic, demographic and institutional changes (Davidsson, 2002). In his opinion, this amounts to point-

ing to the entrepreneurial opportunities that emerge from these changes. In this paper we will take up this challenge. We would like to propose an approach which takes the (changing) attributes of a particular market or industry as a starting point. This approach is specifically developed in order to point at opportunities that have a change in socio-economic values as their source. In order to analyze opportunities emerging from changes in socio-economic values, in my view, one should have a look at five types of information. First, background information about the market. This concerns such things as the historical development of the market and the way in which products and services are produced and distributed. Second, an analysis of consumer wants, problems, and behavior. Third, an analysis of the change factor that explains how wants of consumer are becoming different, in this case, individualization processes. Fourth, a description of innovations that already try to meet these changed wants. Fifth, conceptualizations of the market that redefine the market. Then, one analyzes how the five types of information fit together. Directions of opportunities may then be induced.

I will refer to my approach as the heuristics approach, as information is primarily provided for inspirational purposes. Some limiting remarks are in order. First, opportunities can only be pointed at in general terms. If fully developed new business concepts would be discussed, they would be generally known and therefore cease to be an opportunity. Second, whether new business ideas are actually taught up can only be facilitated, and not directly induced. We propose that whether the participant indeed feels inspired will depend on the fulfillment of two conditions: whether he is interested in this particular market, and on his creative ability (Ardichvili, Cardozo, and Ray, 2003). Third, creativity research has shown that insights occur after a certain incubation period, so be patient (Wallas, 1926; Mintzberg and Westley, 2001).

While research on opportunity recognition is exploding, there is thus far little development of methodologies that helps one to detect opportunities (Saks and Gaglio, 2002). The proposition and application of such a method is the scholarly contribution of this paper. In the remainder of this paper we will present the categories of information proposed by the heuristics approach with regard to opportunities that emerge in response to the individualized manner in which people deal with death-related issues and concerns. Suppose someone has heard about changes in death-related consumer demand and wants to start a business, a non-profit organization, or a new business activity in response ... The information and analysis pro-

vided below is intended to help this person to find a proposition that s(he) wants to offer.

Background Information

According to some influential authors, nowadays death is less visible in Western societies than in other times or in other cultures (Aries, 1980; Elias, 1985). Causes of this low degree of visibility have been mentioned such as the development towards small, nuclear families, coupled with the development of large, bureaucratic institutions, of which the combined effect has been that the dying have disappeared from our homes. Moreover, our culture emphasizes such values as youth, progression and success (Dekkers, 1997), which has created an atmosphere in which even talking about death is sometimes seen as something morbid and sinister, as something that healthy people should not do. When we are forced to deal with death, as in the case of a deceased relative or friend, the average funeral is of a modest character. While normal, daily death takes a minor place in our lives, extraordinary death has a prominent place in our culture. Death figures prominently in our news programs and in Hollywood movies. News programs show massive amounts of “newsworthy” deaths in wars, accidents and natural disasters. In action movies dying usually takes just a second, ignoring the grief of the bereaved. The image of death in news programs as well as in Hollywood movies is highly selective. These are extraordinary deaths, that happen to other people far removed from us (Schultz and Huet, 2000).

The last fifteen years, however, have shown a change in the attitude towards death (Wouters, 2002; Krabben, 1998; Enklaar, 1995). We will concern ourselves with the case of the Netherlands, but similar developments have been observed in other Western societies (f.e. Winkel, 2001). Newspapers and informative television programs started to report on death related topics on a regular basis. Innovations in the undertaking business were drawing a lot of attention. People with near-death experiences or with theories on life after death were interviewed in the media or wrote books. Artists showed a great amount of interest in death related matters, which resulted in expositions on funeral art rituals. A TV program on Dutch television interviewed VIP's on how they wanted their funeral to be conducted. In many cities, funeral shops were opened serving as information centers for the general public, and showing traditional as well as unconventional coffins and urns in their windows. In sum, a change in attitude

could be observed with regard to death in general: in funeral practices, but also in art and in books.

Three explanations have been given for this remarkable increase in interest in death in our culture (Krabben, 1998, Enklaar, 1995). The first explanation is based on the fact that many AIDS victims were young, expressive, creative and at times extravagant persons, for whom the traditional funeral did not suffice. The second explanation is that people from Morocco, Turkey, Surinam, and the Dutch Antilles, who immigrated to Holland in the sixties in response to severe shortages on the labor market, recently came of old age. These ethnic minorities have their own funeral rites, which are often more elaborate, expressive, and of longer duration than the typical Dutch funeral. The third explanation for the increase in death related matters concerns the different mentality of the younger generations (Inglehart, 1985; Heelas, 1991). The newer generations have a more individualistic value system that emphasizes individual expression, the uniqueness of the individual, freedom of choice, and the personal development of norms and opinions (Triandis, 1995; Kim, 1996; Oyserman *et al.*, 2002). They often feel that the traditional funeral is too restrictive. All three explanations have corresponding versions in many other Western societies. In this paper, the third explanation will be central, and we will investigate how individualization brings with it new products and services that serve death-related wants. We acknowledge that ethnic minorities and the homosexual communities are highly significant in influencing our death-related practices. Our reason for singling out individualization is that this explanation is more general and can be applied to broad segments of society. While the first two explanations are concerned with specific groups of people (ethnic minorities and AIDS victims), we feel that the more individualistic mentality and value system that is prevalent nowadays provides an overarching explanation of changes in supply and demand.

The Change Factor: Psychological Correlates of Individualization

Individualization has been identified as a prime influence in the renewal of the Dutch culture of death and mourning, with similar patterns detected in Germany (Winkel, 2001). The question is what the individualistic mentality consists of. In answering this question we will draw on empirical, social-psychological research. Triandis (1995) argues that individualism can be regarded as a characteristic of a culture, but also as a characteristic of an individual (with individuals within a particular culture behaving more or

less individualistic). An ideal type of the psychology of the individualist concerns the following elements (Kim, 1995, Triandis, 1995, Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeister, 2002): The belief that everyone is a unique individual; The importance of authenticity; The importance of individual expression, of expressing one's unique personality; Identity and self are defined without reference to social context but rather as an independent entity; Emphasis on personal rights and needs as opposed to obligations and social norms; Own goals and preferences are more important than those of the group; The importance attached to freedom of choice; Independent development of personality, attitudes and opinions; Truth is based on personal experience instead of on authority figures; Therefore, innovative behavior, experimentation with opinions as well as with self image; A hedonistic orientation; Importance of being successful, as one is responsible himself for what one makes of life; A certain sense of loneliness as ties with groups are loose; Therefore, an emphasis on special friendships and romance.

One can summarize these characteristics by stating that the central characteristic of individualization is the central position of the self. An individualistic culture requires it subjects to come to terms with a number of tasks. One task is to develop into a unique and autonomous individual. This individuality should then be expressed. Beliefs, norms, and values have to be developed, and they have to be developed independently. Each of these tasks changes the manner in which we deal with death. When much energy is invested into the development of a unique self, cessation of the self represents a significant problem. Concerning expression, people will want to give more individualized expression to death-related practices such as funerals. Furthermore, not being socialized in a framework that explains death (for example, the Christian Church), they may want to find a personal perspective on death. We want to emphasize that individualization should not be equated with solitary behavior. Its characteristics do not imply that individualistic persons do not like group activities - the point is that these activities need to be self endorsed and chosen for. Individualists may even prefer public activities - in order to show and express their individuality. Nor do the characteristics of individualization imply that individualists are not strongly influenced by outside forces. On the contrary, individualistic cultures impose values that are subsequently internalized. People may be very other-directed, as is noted in consumer behavior research. In this field of research, need for uniqueness is the trait that is ascribed to people who are high in counterconformity motivation. Dependent

on their degree of other-directedness, individualistic consumers may have a high independence motivation or a high need for uniqueness (Tepper, Bearden, and Hunter, 2001).

Consumer Wants and Behavior

In this paragraph we will develop a classification of death-related wants. We should clarify that for this study, we try to outline general death related wants. We are aware that the strength of these wants varies by age, gender, religion, etc., as many studies have purported to show. For inspirational purposes we focus on general death related wants instead of specific funeral related wants such as peace of mind, and getting rid of the hassle (see Gabel, Mansfield, and Westbrook, 1996). The framework of death-related wants will be developed by drawing on three strands of literature:

- A. Research on conscious reactions towards death (thanatological research)
- B. Research on unconscious reactions towards death (terror management theory)
- C. Research on reactions to the death of a loved one (bereavement research)

As this research is only reviewed for its heuristic value for inferring entrepreneurial opportunities, we will not discuss their respective "truth value", even though they draw on different ontologies and epistemologies.

Wants Connected with the Prospect of One's Own Death (Thanatological Research)

Researchers studying conscious reactions toward the phenomenon of death label their object of study as death fears, death anxieties, death attitudes, death meanings, death orientations, or death perspectives, depending on the scope of their interests. Thus, they identify what aspects of death people find problematic or attractive. Traditionally, the emphasis has been on fear of death, death threat, and death anxiety (Neimeyer, 1993). Later, researchers started to take into account that people can have positive attitudes toward death as well. There is no reference in this literature to the experience of losing loved ones and the grief process. We will turn to these in the paragraph on bereavement-related wants.

Table 1. A Selection of Outcomes of Research on Death Fears, Attitudes and Meanings.

death attitudes	fear of death	death anxiety	death perspectives	fear of death
Murphy (1959)	Diggory (1965)	Nelson (1975)	Spilka (1977)	Hoelter (1979)
end of life	grief to others	death avoidance	natural end	dying process
losing conscious.	all projects end	death fear	pain	dead people
loneliness	no experiences	death denial	loneliness	being destroyed
unknown	painful dying process	reluctance to interact with dying	forsaking dependents	suffering of others
punishment	no care for others		punishment	the unknown
cons. for others	uncertainty after		unknown	conscious death
fear of failure	body after death		failure	body after death
			afterlife-of-reward	premature death
			courage	
			indifference	
fear of death	death concerns	fear of death	death attitudes	death concerns
Lemming (1980)	Strichertz (1982)	Florian (1983)	Gesser (1987)	Fry (1990)
dependency	loss of loved ones	loss of self fulfillment.	fear of death	physical pain
pain	depend on others	self annihilation	death avoidance	sensory loss
indignity	grief of loved ones	loss of soc. ident.	neutral accept.	personal safety
isolation, lonely	dying a long time	cons. for others	approach accept.	self-esteem
loss of loved ones	to leave dependants behind	transcendental	escape accept.	uncertainty
finality of death	to die to early	punishment in hell		vacuum
afterlife concerns				
fate of the body				
death meanings	death meanings	fear of death	death orientations	
Durlak (1990)	Cicirelli (1998)	Rosen (2000)	Wittkowski (2001)	
religious outlook	legacy	painful death	fear death self	
term. experience	extinction	death as unknown	fear death other	
impact on others	motivator	hell	accept. death self	
continued existence	afterlife	termination of existence	acceptance death other	
uncertainty		loss of loved ones	fear dying self	
favorable			fear dying other	
inevitability			accept. dying self	
			accept. dying oth.	

I will summarize the death issues by counting the number of studies that have reported on a particular theme (Table 1). We will discuss the death concerns that are mentioned most, and formulate the wants that are connected with these issues. Five issues are dominant. *First*, there is the issue of termination, extinction, annihilation and finality. Plans and projects end and experiences stop. Indeed, as the self is a major source of value for modern man, cessation of the self represents a significant problem (Baumeister, 1991). The issue of finality might also induce positive energy as it is a motivator to achieve something in life, and to leave a legacy. The want connected with finality and termination is a want for permanence, a want to continue in spite of death. *Second*, there is concern about the process of dying. Dying is feared because it may be prolonged, painful, undignified and result in dependency on others. This is a pressing concern

nowadays, as medical technology offers possibilities to prolong life that exceed the experience of a positive quality of life. Some wants connected to this issue are of course wants for pain killers, professional care, social support and facilities that allow people to die at home. Obviously, the euthanasia debate is also connected to this issue. *Third*, there is the effect that one's own death has on others. For example, the dying person is worried by the grief and suffering of the loved ones that are left behind. Also there is the concern of possible financial consequences for dependants. A want connected to this issue is the wish to take care of significant others, whether financially or emotionally. *Fourth*, there is the problem of the unknown or the uncertainty as to what happens after death. People can be frightened by the prospect of complete uncertainty. The want connected to this issue is a want for certainty and for knowledge as to what happens during death and after dying. *Fifth*, there is concern as well as hope about transcendental consequences. While in the category of uncertainty concern people are uncertain to what will happen, within the transcendental category one has expectations that can be favorable or unfavorable. Some people expect severe punishment in hell, while others expect a blissful reunion with (the) God(s). The wants connected to this issue are the diminishing of bad prospects and the increase of good projects, and knowledge about the means to achieve this.

I have focused on the categories which are mentioned most in the literature. We ignored categories that are mentioned less often (e.g. fear of dead people, fear of corpses, fear of the fate of the body after death, premature death, loss of social identity etc.). We do not contend that these aspects are not connected to legitimate wants. For example, fear of dead people is a major concern in many parts of the world, and many practices and rituals have evolved in attempts to limit anxiety. While research on death fears and attitudes is informative to conscious reactions towards the phenomenon of death, a recently emerging stream of research guided by terror management theory also informs on death-related wants, but studies unconscious reactions towards mortality salience.

Terror Management Theory

Terror management theory (TMT) posits that awareness of mortality engenders a potential for paralyzing terror. This terror is managed through the defense of cultural worldviews and the bolstering of self-esteem (Solomon, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski, 2000). TMT is easiest explained

by its research methodology. It uses an experimental approach, in which the experimental condition is created by giving half of the sample a reminder of death, for example by asking them to think about death and to write down their reactions. In order to mask the death reminder, the participant has to fill in bogus personality or memory tests before and after the death reminder. The other half of the sample receives a neutral assignment. After the experimental conditions are created, dependent variables are measured. The results show that reminders of mortality lead to greater striving to maintain self-esteem and to adherence to the cultural worldview. This is, for example, manifested by increased liking for people who support one's own worldview and hostility toward those with alternative worldviews. TMT explains these results by stating that cultures share claims that the universe is meaningful and orderly. By meeting the cultural standards of value, self-esteem is bolstered as one believes to be a valuable member of a meaningful universe. Further, living up to the standards of the worldview gives the promise of literal or symbolic immortality. Thus, mortality salience creates two wants: first, to defend and propagate one's worldview, and second, to increase self-esteem. TMT states these processes function unconsciously, in contrast with conscious reactions to mortality awareness that are distorted by defenses such as denial and rationalization. This is consistent with the psycho-analytic roots of TMT, as psycho-analysis posits that basic biological wants exert a strong influence on behavior, and that these influences occur primarily when these wants are outside of consciousness (Pyszczynski, Greenberg and Solomon, 1997). In sum, TMT suggests that people learn to manage death fears by finding meaning in life and value in themselves (Pyszczynski, Greenberg and Solomon, 2000). Wants are defense and expression of the cultural worldview and efforts to increase self-esteem by living up to the standards of the worldview (Mikulincer and Florian, 2000).

Bereavement Related Wants

The problems connected with the loss of loved ones are discussed in the literature on bereavement. Wants connected with bereavement are quite different from the wants connected with the prospect of one's own death. Currently, task approaches are in vogue in theorizing about bereavement (Kastenbaum, 2000). Without reviewing the field, we will take the model of Corr, Nabe and Corr (2000) as an example. They distinguish four tasks that must be fulfilled after losing someone with whom one had a strong

attachment. They label these tasks as cognitive, affective, behavioral, and evaluative. The cognitive task is to obtain a right understanding of all the circumstances that contributed to the death of the loved one. The affective task is to live through a set of emotions that are connected with bereavement. The behavioral task is to give expression to one's grief in materialized form, for example by engaging in rituals in order to commemorate the loved one. Finally, there is the evaluative task. This task consists of the development of a framework that gives meaning to the death of the loved one. The funeral is only one occasion on which these tasks can be fulfilled, albeit a very important one. Corr *et al*, distinguish three functions of the funeral: to dispose of the body, to realize the implications of death, and to assist in reintegration. Tasks can be translated into want as tasks implicate that something "wants" to be done. Thus, the work of Corr *et al*, points to wants for cognitive understanding, for working through an emotional process, for giving behavioral expression, and for a meaningful context.

New Ideas for Death-Related Products and Services

Does individualization processes result in different death-related wants, or does the mere expression of existing wants change? The classification of death-related wants, derived from thanatology, bereavement and TMT research, builds to a large extent on studies carried out in the U.S., which is one of the most individualistic countries in the world (Hofstede, 1980; Veenhoven, 1999). Therefore, we will take the position that at least in my data, individualization processes change the manner in which wants are expressed. We will now discern what innovations on the market for death-related issues have already emerged.

Ideas for new products and services serving death-related wants were derived from the contents of a Dutch quarterly called "Doodgewoon" ("Death normal"). This magazine had 29 hard copy issues between summer 1994 and spring 2001, after which it continued as an e-magazine (to be found at <http://www.dood.nl/>). The magazine is directed to the general public, and informs about every possible topic that is related to death. The editors state that the goals of Doodgewoon are to be a platform for innovators with regard to death-related issues, and to increase the awareness of death in Dutch culture. The ideas proposed in Doodgewoon as well as their propagators are of diverse character. The innovators are sometimes undertakers, sometimes owners of funeral shops, sometimes artists, sometimes thinkers, sometimes spiritual persons claiming knowledge about the state

of death. The ideas differ in content as well as in degree of refinement, as they range from ideas from artists to fully developed business concepts for existing firms. All ideas have been announced to be put into practice, but, of course, some initiatives have never got started. If started, some of them met with limited success. For the purpose of this study, it is not essential whether all ideas are fully articulated successful business concepts. Our primary concern is the trends that can be detected in these new ideas, and that these developments relate to the death related wants and the individualistic tendencies that have been distinguished. The author went through all 29 hard copy issues and noted every idea for a new product, service or practice. Then, he categorized these ideas on the basis of similarities and differences, resulting in three main categories. These three categories correspond directly to the three characteristics of individualization that have changed the manner in which we deal with death.

Permanence

The first category concerns innovations that serve the self as sense of permanence. This corresponds to the importance of the self as part of individualism, and to the death-related wants of permanence (as identified by thanatology) and worldview expression (as identified by TMT). Examples of innovations to convey a sense of permanence are listed in subsets 2A and 2B of Table 2. The first subset of ideas (2A) takes immortality literally. Virtual cemeteries offer an infinite increase in the possibilities for commemoration, and do not deteriorate. One can be present on the Internet forever with pictures, video's, voice fragments, one's favorite music, or whatever. Another approach is taken by people who want their DNA frozen in order to be revived in the far future, whenever that may become possible. An American firm operating on the Internet offers the possibility to send gifts out of your name on particular dates long after you are gone (Bereavement Express). Another idea is to spread your ashes on a French wine field, and to return bottled with your picture on the label. The second set of ideas (2B) is concerned with having a souvenir of your loved one or of the funeral.

Table 2. Permanence.

<i>2A: Immortality</i>	<i>2B: souvenir</i>
Virtual cemetery	Ash medallion, hourglass urn, urn in dashboard
Freezing cells, the head (extropians)	Glass bowl with teaspoon with ash
Bereavement express ltd: sending gifts	Death portrait (painting, photograph)
To disperse ash on a French wine field, return bottled with photo on the etiquette.	Post-mortem photography
	Funeral report: funeral on video, photograph, CD-rom

Expression

The second category concerns innovations that help the individual in self-expression. It corresponds to the importance of identity expression as part of individualization, and to the behavioral task as identified by bereavement research, and death-related want of worldview expression as identified by TMT. Innovations in the subsets of Table 3 list ideas on what you can do yourself with regard to a funeral (3A), ideas of presentation and decoration (3B), and ideas on expressing one’s values (3C). The first subset of ideas (3A) is about taking an active part in giving shape to the funeral. In Great Britain this ideal has given rise to the so-called ‘do-it-yourself funeral’. A possibility is to hire the undertaker just for the paperwork. Companies have sprung up that specialize in giving the bereaved more prominence in shaping the funeral. In some cases, it is the dying person himself who expresses wishes on how the funeral has to be shaped. Do-it-yourself activities also extend to making your own tombstone. CD ROM’s are on the market with which you can design your tombstone as well as packages with a stone, curls, stones, pebbles and glue.

The second subset of ideas (3B) is about innovations with regard to decorations. While the traditional funeral is very sober in terms of expression, some people feel a want to add a little color. A company in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, for example, has attractive young women carrying the coffin to the grave instead of stern looking old men. Other ideas concern creative conceptions of coffins, urns, tomb lights etc. The third subset of ideas (3C) is also on innovations with regard to giving shape to the funeral, but here the emphasis is on having people express their values instead of merely decorations. An initiative has been taken by a crematorium in Amsterdam, which bought part of the redundant Ajax football field when Ajax moved to a new stadium. People can choose to have their ashes (or their relatives' ashes) dispersed on the grass on which their soccer idols

used to play. This is a good example of value expression, as for many Ajax fans their soccer team has been their primary interest in life. Some other ideas on value expressions are coming from the environmentalists. A carbon coffin has been designed (called eco-coffin), so no wood needs to be wasted, which will disintegrate anyhow. A funeral can also be made more lavish: a company in Holland (Dignity & Care) specializes in funerals in which the dead body is transported in an expensive sports car, and after the funeral oysters and champagne are served. Virtual cemeteries offer platforms for expositions of whatever the deceased person found important.

Table 3. Expression.

<p><i>3A: do-it-yourself</i></p> <p>Do-it-yourself funerals Use the funeral company only for boring jobs (paperwork etc.) CD Rom to design one's own coffin Do-it-yourself tombstone package with curls, stones, pebbles and glue</p>	<p><i>3B: decoration</i></p> <p>Painted coffin, specially shaped urn Live music at the burial or cremation Innovation of printed matter: e.g. obituaries Sexy girls carrying the coffin Tomb lights, tomb borders Cosmobile, mourning-bicycle Digital display of poems To spread the ashes in space (www.celestis.com) Last rest rocket (ash rocket)</p>
<p><i>3C: value expression</i></p> <p>Eco-coffin Burial without coffin: thatched basket, swaddling cloth Green burial grounds with tree instead of tombstone Ajax cremation ground Oysters and champagne, sports car or mourn-carriage Mobile crematorium Virtual cemetery</p>	

Integration

The third category concerns innovations that are directed to developing a perspective on death and to giving death a place in life (Table 4). This corresponds to the death-related wants of making death known (as identified by thanatology) and being able to evaluate death in a meaningful context (as identified by bereavement research), and to the importance of independent development of norms, views and opinions as part of individualism. The first subset (4A) is concerned with perspectives on what happens after death. Bookshops these days offer an abundant supply of texts on experiences during death or near death. The second subset of ideas (4B) is

concerned with making death as unknown known by having an experience of death. One example is making the cremation visible (instead of taking the coffin away and burning it a few hours later). Another example is to turn death related sites and events into a tourist attraction, for example by exposing mummies and corpses, or by excursions to burial grounds. Another example of this subset, again organized by Crematorium Westgarde in Amsterdam, is a laser show depicting near-death experiences.

Table 4. Integration.

<i>4A: death as unknown</i>	<i>4B: experience</i>
Books on what happens after death Books on what happens during near-death experiences Reincarnation information database (sarcotheek)	To see the fire at a cremation Excursions to burial grounds, funeral art Expositions of mummies and corpses Day of the death in Mexico as a major tourist attraction Laser show imitating near death experiences
<i>4C: integration into regular life</i>	<i>4D: rituals and symbols</i>
"death education" coffin as closet TV program with VIP's planning their funeral Courses/clubs for death dances Cemetery as nature reserve Cemetery, crematorium as multifunctional area (e.g. theatre) Death candy, e.g. chocolate or sugar skulls	Day of the death Death songs during wakings Bereavement meal Official bereavement period Bereavement handkerchief, hat, flag Edible tombstone Inflatable stretcher

The third subset of ideas (4C) has to do with the so-called absence of death in our culture that were referred to earlier. Various ideas have been offered and initiatives been taken that have as goal to integrate death into our culture. For example, a TV program has been launched in which well known Dutch personalities planned their funeral. People have called for teaching so called "death education", educational programs in which all sorts of topics that are death related can be discussed. Other initiatives have tried to integrate the cemetery or the crematorium into society, for example by staging plays or by opening as parks. On another level, a Dutchman called Pim Felen sells coffins as closets (with shelves that can be taken out after you've died). The fourth subset (4D) is concerned with similar issues, but on a more behavioral level (Wouters, 2002). People have called for a day of the death, in which one visits cemeteries or is otherwise conscious of death in general or particular people that have died. There is a general want for symbols and rituals to make death visible again. For example, it is stated that people do not mourn in public any-

more, and are also expected to resume their life shortly after a loved one has deceased. In response, a bereavement hat, a bereavement napkin, and a bereavement flag have been brought on the market.

Framing the Market Differently

The innovations that spring up in response to the individualization of consumer demand can be viewed through theories of strategic innovation (Markides, 1997). While this literature customarily takes big firms as units of analysis, strategic innovation can also take place through the efforts of small newcomers in an industry. Markides (1997) states that one can speak of strategic innovation if the rules of the industry are changed. If we take a funeral company as the bases for comparison, we see a change in the definition of the “playing field” when the goal becomes:

- to give the customer a sense of permanence or immortality
- to help people express their personality
- to have people deal with death in a more autonomous way
- to raise the consciousness of the general public on death-related issues
- to offer the public an intense experience
- to supply people with rituals and symbols that help to deal with death
- to reduce uncertainty about death

WRAP UP: OPPORTUNITY EMERGENCE

My starting point was to assist a starter of new activities on the market for death-related issues and concerns. We wanted to provide information that might be helpful in thinking about new opportunities. We have seen that whenever death-related wants and features of individualization meet, a number of innovations have sprung up (Table 5). More entrepreneurial opportunities may be present with respect to the individualistic features of the wish for permanence of the self, the importance of self-expression, and the individual development of views and opinions. These three features can be conceived of as market niches. There is one other category of individualization that meets with a death-related want. It is the want for self-esteem as a reaction to mortality salience, as identified by terror management theory. This want is even more important in an individualizing soci-

ety as the worth and status of individuals is often measured in terms of their personal achievement. We found no innovations with respect to this want. There is certainly room for initiatives that help people expose their contributions and their achievements.

Table 5. Death-related Wants, Individualization, and Innovation.

Death-related wants	Individualization	Innovations
<i>Conscious reactions to own death:</i>		
<i>Death Attitudes etc.</i>		
Permanence, continuance, immortality	Identity continuation and expression	Table 2
Reduce fear of dying process, pain, discomfort	Self-determination	-----
Take care of others, financially/emotionally	-----	-----
Knowledge, integration	Development of views	Table 4
Influence afterlife fate	-----	-----
<i>Unconscious reactions to own death:</i>		
<i>Terror Management Theory</i>		
Worldview expression and defense	Identity continuation and expression	Table 3
Self esteem	Success, achievement	-----
<i>Loss of others: Bereavement</i>		
Affective tasks	-----	-----
Cognitive tasks	-----	-----
Behavioral tasks	Identity expression	Tables 3, 4
Evaluative tasks	Development of views	Table 4

Some wants have not been discussed yet, either because they are not part of the individualistic value system, or because they cannot be served by a market. One such category is fear of a painful dying process. A phenomenon that emerges in order to avoid a painful dying process, euthanasia, is clearly related to individualism, as individualism emphasizes self-determination (Kearl and Harris, 1981). The Netherlands has a reputation for being one of the most liberal countries with regard to euthanasia. In fact, the Minister of Health recently astonished the world by promoting the suicide pill of Drion. However, the Dutch themselves think their approach is very careful and full of checks and balances. Euthanasia is highly regu-

lated, and certainly there is no market on which demand has unrestricted access to euthanasia. Another category, concern for others, is not exemplary of individualism. However, financial concerns for those left behind are important from a business perspective, with many people carrying a funeral insurance. Finally, afterlife concerns have not been discussed, insofar as it concerns organized religion. In individualized countries one usually finds processes of secularization and privatized religion (Luckmann, 1963). For the individualist there is certainly a want to get a perspective on the afterlife. However, as the individualist has to find his own way in this area, we have considered the wants associated with developing perspectives on the afterlife under the heading of the category of uncertainty and the unknown.

CONCLUDING NOTE: IMPACT

Thus far we have tried to assist the potential entrant with idea generation without regard to idea realization. The question is whether ideas can be turned into initiatives, and whether the initiatives can be brought into practice effectively and successfully. In answering this question four categories must be taken into account that each represents a threat and an opportunity. The categories are juridical rules, the customer, the competition, and the initiative taker (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001). First of all there are legal restrictions, for example, many cemeteries have restrictive rules about what is permitted and prohibited. At the same time, this implies that cemeteries and crematoria can assume a progressive profile by broadening their rules. The second issue concerns the competition of the innovators: the established companies. Funeral companies have considerable power in the undertaking industry. The funeral companies select or recommend suppliers such as stonemasons and coffin makers. In the Netherlands, the incumbent firms have often taken a conservative position, and do not feel comfortable with the innovations just discussed. The inability of incumbents to accommodate to changes in preferences of demand offers opportunities for entrants. Given the fact that economies of scale and technology play very minor roles, small entrants can potentially be quite successful. A third issue concerns the person or organization who comes up with the innovation. (S)he may not be able to gather the necessary resources, or lacks the skills and knowledge to successfully bring an innovation to the market. While changing preferences have given the impetus to innovation on this

market, the last barrier is perhaps most important and concerns the value of these ideas and innovations for the customer. Market research shows that 15% of the consumers are interested in innovations with regard to funerals (van den Akker, 1997; NSS, 1997). This is a very important finding, because a group of forerunners is wanted that makes the possibilities visible for those who were before not conscious or interested (in order to create bandwagon effects). But if a service or product is not able to bring about satisfaction and value for the customer, it will ultimately fail.

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