How to Sell Time Travel Convincingly

Hannibal Brooks
People like new things

Anticipation  Experience  Memory

Familiar Favorites  Innovative Products

The choice between the known and novel adds distinct dimensions to experience.
But people naturally avoid risk

Risk Society Hypothesis:

“Risk is directed toward some facets of social experience, but not others. **Risk can be associated with any product** (eg: a small object as a choking hazard), **but it becomes especially salient when complex systems and technical expertise are involved.**”
Roller coaster deaths per year

4

Sink deaths per year

100
How was anyone convinced this was safe?

Harnesses
Volatile forces!

Complex system!
The 1930's Airlines & Perceived Risk
Airlines faced a problem.

People were fascinated by flight, but viewed it as a daring adventure.

Airlines needed to sell the idea of business and leisure travel – not thrill-seeking.
Marketers teamed up to find a solution

- Customer expectations were subverted with behavioral context cues.

- Determining off-limits context cues redefined the consumption environment.
Simplifying provided a non-alarmist way to address safety concerns. Research shows striking the right balance is crucial - don’t overload.
One demographic challenge remained...

Market research showed women had the highest concerns, mainly about their spouses and children flying.

Agencies rolled out plans that increased trial and demonstrated relative advantage, winning over doubters.
Social proof matters for innovative products

In the 2019 study *Seeding as Part of the Marketing Mix: Word-of-Mouth Program Interactions for Fast-Moving Consumer Goods*, researchers found WOM is most valuable for risky or complex products.
The 1910's

The Telephone

&

Relative Advantage
The telephone faced a harsh initial reception. Its seeming complexity allowed a wide range of risks to propagate, leading to material damage. Social concerns emerged as well, with dire predictions about health effects.
Telephones were seen as a menace to public manners

Impolite New York

The general use of the telephone instead of promoting civility and courtesy is the means of the fast dying out of what little we have left.

A 1907 New York Times article, lamenting the state of the affairs the telephone was set to bring.
Two factors defined the introduction of the telephone

Relative Advantage

How much of an improvement is this product over existing offerings?

Perceived Risk

What’s at stake if I use this innovation?
Telecom companies simplified and proved their advantage.

Telephone manufacturers overrode these risks by pairing detailed diagrams of their product with illustrations of its huge advantages for national commerce.
Redefining context was the final, and crucial step.Ads were developed emphasizing the communal nature of the phone, redefining the consumption atmosphere and adding social proof.
The 1810's

Ice & Gameification
Frederic Tudor saw the potential in a basic product used by Northeastern farmers, but in a much different environment - the tropics.

His first voyage, carrying 130 tons of ice to Martinique, was an unmitigated disaster.
Gamification changed the equation

Tudor encouraged product trial, staging bar demos to showcase the wide range of commercial applications.

Gamification boosts adoption by increasing **playfulness** and **curiosity**, magnifying perceptions of relative advantage.
Product experience sealed the deal

Tudor’s venture ultimately ended successfully, remaking global commerce, supply chains, and drinking culture.
Marketing launch factors for innovative products

- Simplify the concept
- Highlight the advantage
- Gamify the experience
- Demonstrate social proof
- Reduce the risk


