

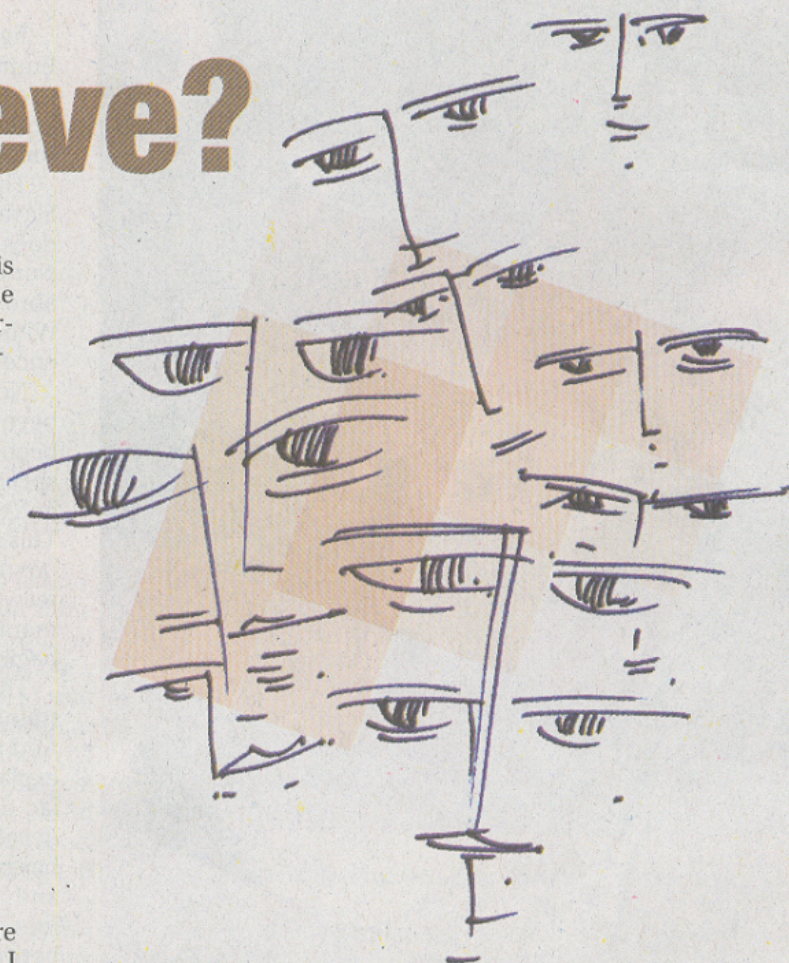
I Believe?

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MY friends will see two changes in me this year. One, I have become a believer. The best I could manage to convince my otherwise cynic self was to start by believing in something, say, brand tag lines. After all, millions are spent every day around the globe creating fancy (if somewhat bizarre ones, at times) slogans. Having known the penniless (and stingy) breed of brand managers from close quarters, the least I can do is to be sure they will not be pumping their money into the ad agency coffers if they didn't personally believe in what they said. Two, and as an extension of the first resolution, I have decided to turn brand conscious. That still doesn't mean I'll shell out a fortune buying the Godzilla price-tagged Levi's jeans in place of an equally comfortable export surplus denim picked up from Hawker's Market, but it does mean that I'll try and correctly associate the brands with their tag lines and logos. So I'll no longer think that the Nike swoosh belongs more appropriately on a Teacher's whisky bottle.

Armed with this new belief that the marketers are there to pamper me with the elixir for wellness, I walked into the supermarket to buy myself the basic toiletries. For the first time in my life, I spent time choosing the ones I thought suit my temperament and personality. To give you an idea, here's what I picked up in the trolley:

- Striped toothpaste that gives you the confidence to do the Axe Effect (saving pennies there, these marketers, you see? As consumers, they assume you know what the 'axe effect' is. It doesn't go with my personality, but wanted to try it for a lark.)
- Shower gel that soothes tired, aching muscles, creating a relaxed and calm feeling throughout your body through the day. (The sticker on the container showed a cactus and a canary. To tell you the truth, I didn't see why either should be there on a soap bottle, or how the two could possibly be linked, but in the larger scheme of things of the brand manager and the advertising agency, these seemingly unconnected things would certainly have made sense. I cringed at the thought of the cactus caressing my skin, but picked it up all the same. You have to have faith in your belief....)



- Clear Mountain Spring Fresh Fruit Shampoo: 'A clear shampoo for natural shine, swing and fragrance with fresh lemon and orange zest for treating your hair' (and using as the basic ingredients for lemon soufflé, in case of a crisis). 'Made with mountain spring water. Enjoy the aromas of cool sea air each time you use this.' (And you thought only humans have an identity crisis.)
- Hair conditioner that invigorates and rejuvenates because it 'Revitalises the scalp with eucalyptus and peppermint. Adds shine with lavender and geranium.'
- Luxury Aromatherapy Body Lotion: 'Botanical extracts of magnolia create a relaxing aura as this moisture-rich lotion is smoothed onto the skin. Use regularly for improved resilience and elasticity.' (The Hubby said this should be food for my mood instead, but I ignored it.)

Here's what I didn't:

- Anti-aging body gel that gives you back the skin you had as a foetus.
- Scintillating toothpaste that makes you want to dance on your car roof.