

The secret of Passion Economy hidden behind the
recipe for the finest pistachio ice cream

"What is your passion?"

This is the unavoidable question I was asked every time I started interviewing for a new job. And I always answered, "I am passionate about travel, writing, reading, learning new languages, and ice creams."

Everything was clear until I mentioned ice creams. That was the point where they usually got lost. Most of them thought I just eat a lot of ice cream (which is not untrue), because how else could you have a passion for ice cream?

I have always loved ice cream. Anyone who knows me a little better knows that. So at some point, while traveling, I started taking photos of ice cream and sharing them on my personal Instagram account with a hashtag I created. This did not go unnoticed, so I decided to create my own Instagram account dedicated to ice creams and travel after a while. The idea was simple at first: I wanted to post pictures of ice creams and write about the places I had visited and the flavors I had tried.

When I started my ice cream profile on Instagram, I came across a niche of people who love ice cream very, very much. And soon I was receiving photos and stories from all over the world. People started sharing their experiences with me, flavors they had tried, traditions related to ice cream, travel habits, places they had visited, and any other interesting information I could not find out any other way but directly from them.

Looking at the numbers, my profile with almost 10,000 followers would not fall into the influencer category. I know, yes, the passion economy is leveraging the power of modern technology to build careers around the things we love. I would not say that I have built a career around ice creams but I believe that it *served* me an even bigger and equally important purpose. It allowed me to learn and gave me direct and very personal insights into many aspects of the digital ecosystem. I learned about new business models, new concepts of branding, platforms, creativity, and what it means to be a digitally ready brand!

Who knew a simple thing like being passionate about ice creams could help with all of that.

Fun fact: The amount of air added to ice creams is known as overrun and is something that strongly contributes to the sensory properties of the ice cream.

You don't think about it too much, you can't see it, and some people are not aware that air even exists in ice creams. It is not visible but it's there and it's very necessary. Without air being added to ice creams, we would have a dessert that probably would not taste very good, it would have an ice texture and would be impossible to scoop or eat. Finally, we would not be able to call it ice cream.

Like ice creams, the Passion Economy has its air-like ingredients – things not so visible to the naked eye, something people don't think about very often or at all - but very important.

In this essay, my idea is to share a series of stories I have discovered over the years (kudos to my ice cream page), followed by a few thoughts and lessons that, I think, represent the air of the Passion Economy.

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Los Paleteros is an ice cream shop in Costa Rica, whose innovative spirit goes far beyond just ice cream flavors. ¹

What you (probably) don't know about this country is that the electoral law in Costa Rica doesn't allow political polls to be published a week before the presidential elections. So, to keep voters informed during the closest elections in the history of this country, Los Paleteros launched the popsicle elections.

They created two ice creams, same size, same flavor, but one in the yellow, the color of the liberal party, and the other with the blue, the color of the conservative party. They sold these ice creams and published the results of their sales from each store on their social media and website. This campaign became viral as they were the only ones 'doing the polls', so much so that even the presidential candidates went to get their ice cream.

By using their business and organizing the political polls based solely on ice cream sales, this brand has made a very important impact on their customers in a very critical time. And customers, on the other hand, by simply buying ice creams, became part of a highly important movement. Very eloquently, they shared their voice and let their community know where they stand.

And, if you are wondering, the ice creams guessed right!

Lesson #1:

Being passionate about something drives innovation and creativity. Los Paleteros clearly understood what was important to their customers at that time, they reacted quickly and found a creative way to deliver the solution to an unsolvable problem. Even though they used ice cream sales as means, the idea behind this initiative was a focus. And even more important, they demonstrated that you don't have to be a big player, corporation, an enterprise, to make an impact on an individual or a whole country. For me, this is the biggest victory of the passion economy and this is why it's here to stay.

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We all know Ben & Jerry's. And everybody who likes ice creams has their own Ben & Jerry's favorite flavor. The company is known for its outrageous and unique flavor combinations. To

¹ <https://ticotimes.net/2018/04/03/how-popsicle-sales-predicted-costa-ricas-election-result>

come up with all these flavors, they experiment a lot, and experimentation comes with risk. So, throughout the years, many flavors have been discontinued.

What do companies usually do when they make a mistake and when something doesn't turn out as they hoped? They bury it and pretend it never happened. Not Ben & Jerry's. They decided to display their mistakes by creating a Flavor Graveyard.²

The Flavor Graveyard began as an online exercise for Ben & Jerry's discontinued ice creams. Little after that, they decided to create an actual graveyard, located behind the Ben & Jerry's factory in Vermont. Every discontinued ice cream has a headstone, year of birth, and year of death listed together with a funny little poem that contains information about the flavor combination and how it ended up six feet under.

Some of the flavors are gone for good, but some of them are merely de-printed for a while. If you, as a customer, really feel that a certain flavor should make a comeback, there is an option. On the website, you can file for a resurrection, and if enough people petition for the same flavor as you, that flavor could come back.

By displaying and celebrating their failures in a very humorous way, they made themselves approachable to their customers. Even as a large enterprise, they have found a way to listen to a special niche of customers, or even the individual ones. Failures are expected and a very important part of an innovation process and with their Flavor Graveyard concept, they showed that you can never be too big to make mistakes. They took a risk and this innovative concept led them to have increased brand engagement and very valuable and direct sources for product development.

Lesson #2:

Passion is fun! The important thing to remember while pursuing your passion is to have fun, play around, try new things and make mistakes.

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A special and very important place in the passion economy have influencers. With the technological innovations and advanced platforms we have today, everybody has a new level chance for exploring and monetizing their passions.

There are many people on Instagram who call themselves influencers. Not to sound rough, but they do so mostly considering the number of followers and pretty pictures. A lot of them worry more about having consistency in how their feed looks and less about the consistency of the sponsored collaborations they do. Sadly, they cooperate with everyone willing to pay them. The messages they are sending are not clear and very inconsistent. This leads to short-termed non-organic influence and more importantly, an influence without actual credibility.

² <https://www.benjerry.com/flavors/flavor-graveyard>

From a company's point of view, influencers are essentially branding tools for companies. And how they select these influencers, tells a lot about their marketing strategy. If a company chooses to collaborate with an influencer just based on a superficial thing like the number of followers, and without having a value or passion fit, the result will be the inconsistency of the message being sent – for both sides.

This is why cross-referencing the terms Instagram, influencers, and passion, for me always has the same result - Chiara Ferragni.

Chiara Ferragni is the pioneer of influencers and the „founder“ of this term. She is an influencer all other influencers aspire to. She is also the only influencer that has been consistent on my feed throughout the years.

So, what can we learn from her?

But, one of the most important things, she is very transparent in her collaborations and she won't accept just any brand deal because it pays a lot of money. The collaboration has to align with her vision, and she prefers working with brands that share her positivity and values.

You may think that this is now the case just because she is an influencer that every fashion brand wants to collaborate with so she can now actually afford to choose who she wants to work with. But even at the beginning of her career, when she was a regular person with no credibility in the fashion industry, her passion and values were the same. She has been building her business and influence, step by step, from the ground up all these years. The consistent factor that has never changed during all this time, has been a combination of passion, integrity, and determination, that has shaped who she is now, across all her roles.

So a person who is following her, or a person who is wearing something from her brand, shares her values, passion, and determination.

For that reason, I would like to wear something from her brand because, for me, that would send a very strong statement and a message to the world - „I can do it“.

Lesson #3:

Passion nurtures integrity, and integrity is a loud ingredient in one's business in Passion Economy. Influencers can add serious credibility to your brand, but only if people find them credible. Staying true to your passion has proven to be a very hard job these days. This is why, for the ones who succeed in doing that, the rewards are long-term. So, choose wisely.

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According to a Harris Poll/LEGO® survey, being an online creator is twice as popular as being a film star, and three times as popular as being an astronaut.³

³ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/02/how-the-passion-economy-is-shaping-the-future-of-work/>

To be clear, there is just no way to predict the future of work and adapt the education system to its future needs. But, the education systems can do two important things.

1. First, they can at least stop trying to make it harder.
2. Second, they can pivot in their focus on what is important for the future of work.

For example, I have heard that some schools in the United States decided to cut arts, poetry, music, and drama clubs from their curriculums because these activities do not directly contribute to making money. They decided that students' time is better spent preparing for standardized tests and not on trivial things like poetry. I believe that some of the arguments were that poetry will not help them get a job and make money.

Let's let that sink in for a bit.

Now, for me, this caused many emotions. First anger, but for the most part, sadness.

I think that Nikola Tesla, who enjoyed poetry, and Albert Einstein, who once said:

"The theory of relativity occurred to me by intuition, and music is the driving force behind this intuition."

would strongly disagree.

Also, a team of fifteen researchers at Michigan State University discovered that Nobel Prize winners had much more engagement in various artistic hobbies as opposed to ordinary scientists. They discovered that music (playing an instrument, composing, conducting) gives you 2x greater chances of winning a Nobel Prize, relative to typical scientists; arts (drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpting) 7x greater chances; and writing (poetry, plays, novels, short stories, essays, popular books) 12x greater chances.⁴

Our brain has to relax now and then. It also needs to be creatively stimulated. If you just constantly work work work, then you stop learning. If you try to focus 100% of your time solely on being productive and exclusively on things that will make you money, the effect of your time will be counterintuitive and short-term. School, at any level, should be encouraging, in allowing us to find and follow our passion. And most importantly, it should learn us how to learn, because this „skill“ is long-term. This „skill“ is easily adjusted to any kind of passion, economy, or time.

Lesson #4:

Not everything has to be super obvious. What kind of quality of life are we looking at if we only learn the things that will make us money. Learning how to learn and finding your passion, is, I think, something of greater importance. It is imperative that these things are nurtured and encouraged from a young age. Because, later in life these will become the encouraging force,

⁴ Adam Grant, *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World*, Viking (2016)

directly – by being able to turn your passion into a business, or indirectly – by being the driving force behind it.

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So, to put all things mentioned into context – pistachio ice cream!

A couple of months ago I stumbled on a podcast overlapping two focus subjects - Morgenstern's Finest Ice Cream and Passion Economy. In this podcast, Nicholas Morgenstern, the founder, summed pretty well the concept overview of the pistachio ice cream that I strongly agree with. He said:

„People have a really strong connection to pistachio. I would often go to the ice cream shop, and get the pistachio and I would be disappointed. You see it on the menu and you conjure an idea of what pistachio could be and you eat the thing and it's just okay.“⁵

In my life, I have only tried a couple of pistachio ice creams that I thought were really good. This is why I use this flavor as a filter by which I rate the ice cream shops. Let's say that it helps me see how ice cream shops perceive what good ice cream is.

Making a great pistachio ice cream is not an easy job. There are few common practices in the ice cream industry. First, most ice cream manufacturers tend to use „easy“ and cheap ingredients, like egg yolk and sugar. These ingredients impede the release and intensity of the flavors. Second, most of them usually use one base ice cream and add the various flavors to have a big palette of flavors. This is how you wind up getting 3 scoops and they somehow taste the same, or very similar. And third, in many cases, the founder comes up with a certain concept, then he outsources recipe-making ice cream manufacturing to other companies, and then he sells the idea of ice cream „he“ created – both in-shop and on social media. This approach, no matter the industry, is the recipe for an „okay“ economy.

Nicolas founded Morgenstern's Finest Ice Cream with one idea – **to figure out a way to make the ice cream that will exceed the expectations**. And passion is the main conductor for **wild experimental creativity and uniqueness**, and a driving force in the innovation process. **He's playing around, having fun, and often he makes mistakes**. This enables him to create **unexpected and loud** flavors like green tea pistachio and durian banana. His team writes all of the recipes, one by one, and they are orienting these flavors to the **feedback** they receive from the customers regarding **how they want this to feel when they eat it**. He is involved in every menial task and every big idea because **there is no way to automate the passion**. All of this enables them to create a perfect recipe for pistachio ice cream that will blow your mind, that you will remember and go back to, time after time.

⁵ All references and/or quotes mentioning Morgenstern's Finest Ice Cream were taken from and/or inspired by this podcast: <https://www.iheart.com/podcast/867-the-passion-economy-68626993/episode/ice-cream-that-churns-a-profit-69173436/>

So, when you try really good pistachio ice cream, you think: „**Whoever made this, has a passion for ice cream.**“

In the process of turning vision into reality, passion is the air ingredient. You don't think about it too much, but it's there, it's in the DNA and it's part of every step you make. It's what sets you apart. It's what makes you loud and visible. No matter the industry, no matter if you are a big company or an individual. The „small“ ones have just as an opportunity as the „big“ ones. The „big“ ones are never big enough and have to approach customers with the „small“ ones attitude.

Passion has become a crucial filter for the future of work, the future of all business ecosystems.

And just if you're curious, **what happens when you try bad pistachio ice cream?** Well, I'm gonna tell you what I do. If pistachio is bad, I move on to the next one, without looking back.

Because in today's world, no matter if you are a company selling a product, an employer trying to find a new unicorn employee, or if you are that unicorn employee interviewing for a new job, you are never too big or too small, and you have one chance to make an impression.

The Passion Economy will not forgive you if you try doing that with bad pistachio ice cream.