

Technology & Human Behavior

How does this impact marketing?

A study by: Jenessa Carder (jenessacarder@gmail.com)
Emerson College Integrated Marketing Communications
Graduate Student
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Introduction

Today we live in an envelope of swarming information. Technology has caused the access to information and building of connections with other people to seem like a commodity. We multitask to balance it all, and experts say the youngest among us have already developed a continuous state of partial attention. Each new tidbit of information is tugging at the attention strings of our brains, and as a result, our brains, or at least one part of our brain, are becoming overloaded. This is creating exponential hurdles daily for marketers to cut through.

How has this happened, what does this mean, and how does it apply to marketing?

Innate in man, since the beginning of mankind, have been the desires to consume, produce, and to share, each of these activities validate our individual existence. Mankind has been hardwired for social behavior, and time has conditioned our brain to enjoy socializing. Even though our brains are conditioned for socializing, never before has there been an outlet for humans that satisfies the desires to consume, produce, and to share simultaneously. That is until the Internet — and more specifically social media. People are empowered, seeking out like-minded individuals with which to consume, produce, and share simultaneously and globally. We are continuously searching for like-minded people who mirror ourselves. Rather than acting as individuals, we are forming networks that act and think cohesively. Yet, we are witnessing how one individual is capable of a domino-like influence on another individual's networks.

We're enveloped in an experience that embraces our existence and validates our thoughts through other individuals. It's conditioning our brain to associate social media with the validation that evokes happiness. It is here that our needs are met, our brains are happy and we're happy.

As we become conditioned to expect and desire these experiences, we crave new and additional opportunities in which to consume, produce, and to share online even more. We multitask more and more to keep up the pace as more and more information flows through our networks. Our brains have become ceaselessly inundated with information — so much so, some parts are overwhelmed and we are left to making purely emotional decisions.

As marketers we should understand the current brain of our target and the evolution of it. By understanding how the past evolution of technological developments and human behavior shifts have laid a prime foundation on which to engage consumers with today, we will better equip ourselves for understanding and leveraging future developments. A future where we can make smarter decisions about our messaging, its strategy, and the target audience the message should be delivered to. We can also see that some of the tools in which we research, develop strategy, and evaluate our work upon, that are outdated and today's society calls for a change.

Unfortunately, the storm has already arrived. To most, the arrival was silent, but all in the industry will hear the storm's departure, leaving the industry in a state almost unrecognizable. Luckily, by taking a peek at the past, one will be armed to weather the storm and equipped for leadership in the aftermath.

Looking at history

Technology Evolution

Technology has evolved over the course of mankind. Alvin Toffler, author of the *Third Wave*, describes how this evolution has come in waves. "The first wave spanned about 3,000 years, while the second, featuring the transition between the agricultural society to the industrialized one lasted about 300. The next wave, the third wave, began around the 1950s, and features the computer era, where we can communicate on a global level.¹" Each subsequent stage will be a fraction of the stage before it. Thus, each new advance in technology gives us the ability to advance technology at a faster pace.

Through his explanation, we understand the quickening pace of technological developments is exponential. *But how are these developments influencing humans?*

In the beginning, language was developed so that we might better communicate. It enabled us to multitask by directing our attention, through language, to multiple receivers. It enabled us to bond socially with other individuals. Compared to prior history, this was socially efficient, yet it wasn't efficient enough, and so the written text was developed. This allowed communication to travel without the distortion made by those in-between the sender and receiver. Yet, the transition wasn't smooth. In fact, as technology has evolved into the modern day, the adoption of a new technology has always sacrificed something. In a review of the book *The Shallows* by Nicholas Carr, Jonah Lehrer puts it this way, "The rise of the written text led to the decline of oral poetry; the invention of movable type wiped out the market for illuminated manuscripts; the television show obliterated the radio play. Similarly, numerous surveys suggest that the Internet has diminished our interest in reading books."² Yet with all this sacrifice

¹ Yair, AmichaiHamburger. [The Social Net: Understanding Human Behavior in Cyberspace](#). Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005.

² Lehrer, Jonah. "Our Cluttered Minds."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/06/books/review/Lehrer-t.html?fta=y> May 27, 2010.

occurring, eventually, society realizes the new technology's benefit and roll within the world.

Society molds the technology into a useful place, a place that helps satisfy the innate human desires to consume, produce, or to share in search for validation. The technology that has been adopted in the past enables these activities more efficiently, either by allowing them to be addressed quicker, or enabling communication to more recipients, than predecessors have allowed for.

Throughout technology's evolution, there has always been a communications gap between the timestamp of the sender's message, and when the intended receiver receives and decodes the message. This process of sending and receiving messages gives human beings a reward in the form of happiness. When we receive a message, we know someone is thinking of us, and when we send a message, we're thinking of the other person and hoping to receive acknowledgement back. As technology becomes more efficient at enabling the communication activities (consuming, producing, and sharing), the time gap for delivering our message (to one or many recipients) and receiving a response back continues to shrink. As the gap shrinks, we are increasingly moving toward synchronous communication, and a continuous stream of communication. Essentially, as this continuous stream continues to develop, we're increasingly feeling the emotional highs of being thought-about.

Thus, it is human behavior that elicits a technological evolution and the adoption of technology as tools for evolution, and not technology that develops to later influence humans. Each new medium is ultimately shaped by how society utilizes it to satisfy their search.

Generations

The evolution of technology is impacting the methods that generations experience the world with. And as a result, each generation has been exposed to a vastly different technological landscape. This landscape is the lens through which they experienced and interacted with the world. The following profiles the generations.

*Generation Technology Profiles*³

- *Post-war Generation (approximately 1928–1945)* – These individuals were introduced to computers late in life and most have not adopted the technology. Those that have adopted the technology are motivated by the desire to be connected to their children. They recognize that their typewriters are obsolete, and they must e-mail in order to communicate in the modern world.
- *Older Baby Boomers (approximately 1946–1954)* – As a group, they are experimental, individualistic, and social-cause oriented. Introduced to

³ Norman, Kent L. Cyberpsychology: An Introduction to Human-Computer Interaction. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

computers later in life, the Older Baby Boomers experienced a childhood based on print media, and later developed a mind for the electronic media.

- *Young Baby Boomers (approximately 1955–1964)* – This group of Baby Boomers is less optimistic, distrusts the government, and is more cynical. They saw the rise of the computers in their late 20s and early 30s, and adapted them because of their jobs.
- *Generation X (approximately 1965–1981)* – These individuals are entrepreneurial and desire informality. They were introduced to computer and video games in high school, and as they entered into their young adult years, bought a computer for their personal use at home.
- *Millennials (Generation Y) (approximately 1982-2000)* – This generation saw the rise and bust of the Internet during their childhood, and search for physical security and safety as a result. They are connected, social, and tech savvy. Technology was available at home, in schools, and everywhere they turned. Technology has multiple forms, including computers, cell phones, and video games, and each provided a hands-on interactive experience.
- *Generation Z (approximately 2001-Present)* – This generation has grown up with mobile technology. They are also connected and tech-savvy, and desire hands-on experiences.

Influence of Millennials

Understanding this technological revolution paints a picture on human interaction with technology. One of the greatest shifts can be seen with the Millennials, who experienced the evolution of the Internet as a child. This experience laid a foundation of expectations for a lifetime – and the foundation on which future generations will share. But, they're not only leading the way for future generations, older generations are following in their digital footsteps in order to keep up. This is something that has never before happened with human evolution, the young are teaching and influencing the old not only how to engage online, but how to incorporate it into their daily ritual 24/7.

The Millennials grew up in a period that allowed them constant connection to not just their immediate environment, but far beyond their local communities. They're constantly being validated by communication from others, which evokes a natural feeling of self-importance in the world. This constant connection begins to paint the picture of the 'entitled narcissistic generation' that is commonly conveyed.

The Millennials didn't have to simply be viewers of a medium or just readers growing up, they became users, they learned to manipulate and interact with the medium in which they were engaging with. To them, "time on the Internet is not passive time (as seen by other generations), it's active time. It's reading time. It's investigation time. It's skill development and problem-solving time. It's time analyzing, evaluating. It's composing your thoughts time. It's writing time."⁴

⁴ Tapscott, Don. Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation. New York : McGraw-Hill Publishing, 1998.

The Millennials have learned to think in a non-linear format. Its because they're bouncing around to and from all these activities in a non-orderly fashion. They 'process' all the information in short chunks, and this short chunk processing is the way they keep up with the massive information inflow. Its not that all this information is being synthesized, but rather, the brain is recognizing the information's existence briefly before passing it by on route to the next activity. The brain is essentially registering the 'highlight reel' of the content before moving on, but takes little or no time to digest the real 'meat and potatoes' aspects.

Through all this information, the Millennials are color-blind, see no state lines, and hardly any country boundaries. They're plowing through online environments and resources seeking individuals of like-mindedness – regardless of location or time. Unlike previous generations, who organized their daily activities around media, such as the evening news broadcast, Millennials live in a state of constant 'news' connectedness. The news no longer defines what information is important and in what order news will be delivered. Today, who the individual places within their network does. They have come to value constant connection to this network, and crave it. They expect technology to efficiently aid them in their endeavors, connecting and sharing themselves in pursuit of like-minded individuals, who in-turn validate their own existence.

Social Networks of the past & present

Therefore, with such a high demand for connectedness, it seems as if the average social circle is expanding and people are receiving more information and influenced by a wider group. However, by looking at history, we can reveal a different picture. The common number of social connections throughout history has been 150. 150 members were usually apart of an ancient tribe, 150 members were apart of an army brigade, and today on social networking sites, most people actively engage with only 150 individuals consistently, despite the quantity of friends. Though, it is important to note that this 150-person group is in constant flux. Furthermore, a study based on the pictures of people and individual tags on Facebook revealed that the average Facebook user has only 6.6 close friends they regularly entertain. This includes the Millennial generation, who claim to have around 700 friends on Facebook. Today's definition of a network of 150 'friends' however, extends beyond these 6.6 individuals who are close and includes many weak ties. It is these weak-ties, who are like-minded in some regard, that are connected to other networks and serve to infuse your network with information. This is the cause for information to spread between networks — the essence of word-of-mouth.

The 6.6 close people, also play apart in this word-of-mouth transfer. They receive information introduced into their network from their weak-ties, but when transferred to your network, from such a trusted source, the information has been elevated to a new level of trust. If a good friend suggests something, one is more likely to listen, and soak in that information. Through this networked flow of information, the network of our networks directly influences us. This is essentially peer-to-peer vouching. Today, it is the networks we surround ourselves by that have become the filters and aggregators of new information flowing to us and shape our experiences online.

Information is not the only thing, however, that travels through networks. Humans have a tendency to mirror individuals around them in actions and words. If one individual within a network is affected, others feel closer to the issue, whatever it may be and are more likely to act. Furthermore, if this is on display within a network, then people become increasingly motivated by other's actions as long as they have not taken action. Therefore, if one person within a network increases a donation, others are likely to follow suit. "We give to sustain our network."⁵ Online, this can easily be demonstrated through the live feeds of sites such as Twitter or Facebook.

Additionally, individuals have a strong attachment to these networks, as with each network, a piece of the individual is mirrored. They are apart of a collective group of people with shared identities, beliefs, or values. As such, the network acts as a group, rather than individuals, engaging and contributing. While each individual engagement and contribution provides short-term benefits (explained in the next section) for the individual, the group receives the long-term benefits of the contribution. These contributions enhance the collective knowledge and future benefits of the group. Thus, these online networks are micro social-collectivist societies, sharing information within the network, but individually receiving something in return.

This shift in society, from individual behavior, to that of a network, marks a change for humans, when we look back into history. But, by taking a look at how the brain behaves, one can understand this change has been deeply rooted within us.

How human behavior influences technology

It is imperative to look at first how the brain works in general and then what happens when individuals are engaged within online networks to understand how human behavior influences the technological evolution.

Understanding the Brain's processing power

The information processing part of the brain is made up of two parts – the rational and the emotional. All of our thoughts and our stimuli we have or feel are first perceived by the emotional brain, and then filtered through the rational brain. The rational brain, however, isn't too powerful, and only has the ability to process about 7 (some say as little as 5) pieces of information at a time. For whatever reason, if the rational brain's 7 slots are full, then the excess information overflows into the emotional brain, which then makes the decision. These decisions are based on what *seems* like a good decision.

This is illustrated in a study from Columbia University about jam. The study affirmed a theory about consumer behavior: when people are confronted with too many choices, they freeze and ultimately make a final decision based on how they *feel*. When

⁵ Christakis, Nicholas A., and James H. Fowler. *Connected: The surprising power of our social network and they shape our lives*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009.

confronted with more than 7 choices, the rational brain's slots are all utilized. This is when people freeze, they're unable to make a clear rationally based decision. Any additional choices more than 7, forces the brain to base decisions emotionally.⁶ This emotional decision can be aided by previous conditioning of experiences and associations with the given choices, however.

Multitasking

Earlier, it was stated that Millennials are increasingly processing information in short bursts. This is an adaptation which helps humans keep pace with the rapidly evolving environment of information. Other generations are following suit by becoming involved with the Internet, and thus on the whole society is increasingly multitasking to balance the heightened flow of information. Our attention is divided among several activities whether we realized it or not. Online, there are hyperlinks, and banner ads that may catch our eyes for a moment. On the television there's scrolling text updates to distract our eyes. Outside, there's the buzz of the traffic. Each of these environmental factors fills a slot in the rational brain. Multitasking is being performed by all of us unintentionally all the time. With the addition of unintentional multitasking to what is traditionally defined as multitasking— talking on the phone while watching television for example, our attention is split even more. This is particularly the case online, where distractions for unintentional multitasking are frequent. As a result, we're devoting less time to thinking through information, as we jump from one attention draining activity to the next, and process things in these short bursts in attempt to keep pace. Our rational brain's 7 slots are continuously in use, attempting to 'process'. Thus, by multitasking, we're increasingly forced into making more emotional decisions, as our rational brain can't handle the load being placed on it.

So if our attention is being split across multiple stimuli, so much so that we can't process it, why do we do it?

Happiness & Dopamine in the brain

The simple answer is we like it. People tend to crave stimulation; they want to test the boundaries of what is possible. When we are stimulated, the challenge and skill demand tends to be high. The result is a state of mind where "one loses oneself" and becomes unaware of time and self. This is known as flow. This is a pleasant state of being for the brain. During pleasant sensations in life, the brain releases dopamine that sends messages to our pleasure centers in our brains. It is a commonly reported symptom of those engaging in activities on Facebook.

For our experiences with technology, skill is defined as the ability of rational brain to process and challenge as information flow. When there is a balance, we are happy. Multitasking helps us achieve this balance of new information and verbal cues. It helps us accomplish our goal: to validate our existence by producing, consuming, and sharing. The constant influx of new information, auditory, and verbal cues leads our minds into a state where they perpetually demand new information attempting to avoid boredom, or

⁶ Tugend, Alina. "Too Many Choices: A problem that can paralyze". The New York Times. July 11, 2010 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/27/your-money/27shortcuts.html>>.

pain.⁷ New technology can engulf us for hours because of this thrill. The pace of development has just amplified this desire even more.

Thus, the digital natives are drawn to new technologies; they enjoy the thrill of experiencing the new thing. Without a stimulating environment, boredom will set in quickly for today's minds. Motivated by a desire to subdue boredom, individuals continuously seek these new online experiences.⁸ The reward for discovering the new experiences is pleasure, through the release of dopamine. Therefore, when combined with the thrill of validating our existence through communication with others, the social media technology of today, provides multiple avenues for which the brain to experience pleasure.

While we are in a constant hunt for new experiences and new information, recall that the information is beginning to only be processed in a 'short-bursts'. We do however experience a brief rush from being stimulated, though we have little time to process the message before our attention is directed elsewhere. We may not be digesting and learning the intended message, yet we are still learning. Our learning is the conditioning of our brains.

Conditioning an addiction (or loyalty) in our brain

Our brains have plasticity, meaning that they have the ability to learn and adapt with time. When we experience something, our brain records the result — was it positive and rewarding, or was it negative? It makes connections between situations and stimuli. Thus, it is natural, with all the new experiences available on the Internet; the brain is becoming rewired as a by-product, conditioned to associate the Internet with positive experiences⁹.

Because humans like pleasure more than pain, we continuously reach for the Internet more and more to satisfy our needs to consume, produce, and share to receive validation for our existence. The Internet is above all previous technological developments in its ability to deliver on this need by efficiently enabling all three activities simultaneously.

In part, what is enabling this to happen is that communication is highly synchronous on the Internet; the gap between the sender and receiver is rarely more than a few hours. Younger generations, who have been exposed to this speed of communication for a greater portion of their lives, have developed a tendency toward instant gratification. Messages must be responded to quickly, or else the communication is no longer synchronous, and additional information to the situation will be added as the time gap

⁷ Richtel, Matt. "Your Brain on Computers: Hooked on Gadgets, and Paying a Mental Price". <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/07/technology/07brain.html?ref=garden> June 6, 2010.

⁸ Tapscott, Don. Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation. New York : McGraw-Hill Publishing, 1998.

⁹ Parker-Pope, Tara. "The Defense of computers and the Internet and Our Brains." <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/11/in-defense-of-computers-the-internet-and-our-brains/?ref=technology> June 11, 2010.

grows. For instance, not receiving communication back within a few hours after sending out a message, translates into something is wrong for younger generations¹⁰.

Humans have always received a high from socializing, but more synchronous communications, delivers this heightened emotional state more frequently. Yet, because these exchanges are occurring with shorter time gaps, the emotional effects also last a shorter amount of time, as it is expected something new will come along shortly. Ultimately this is creating a perpetual thirst for communication and a built up desire for heightened and more pleasurable emotional states.¹¹ By participating in online social networks, we're conditioning ourselves to desire and need more and more in the future.

It is not the Internet, it is us

It is important to note, however that it isn't the Internet itself that is causing this addiction and high expectations, it is the application or activity on the Internet that is enabling this growing addiction.

The Internet is inherently a mass of information. The applications that run on the Internet (such as Facebook), are tools for human evolution and existence that enhance and enable. By leveraging the tools available to humans throughout history, humans have been able to validate our existence. Today, humans are more productively able share, consume, and produce in search of this validation. To date the technological advancement that has leveraged these human behaviors the strongest is social media. The biological reactions within each of us, attracts us to social media as a tool. The power of these biological reactions in creating a near addiction-like and highly emotional state for many, illustrates the presence of this deeply rooted desire to search for validation through producing, consuming, and sharing. While social media will no doubt evolve into an almost unidentifiable form in the future, the principles upon which this Internet application enable will be the basis for future technological evolutions that humans are drawn to.

What are the impacts for marketers?

As marketers, we must understand these principles, before the current wave concludes and next wave of technology comes. There are several take-a-ways for marketers to understand. Social media is not just a phase, rather a technological revolution rooted in satisfying deep human desires. Human beings are hardwired to behave in the manner that social media is enabling and as a result the technology is flourishing. Flourishing because humans are becoming conditioned to the emotional highs the technology produces, and in return demand to engage more often, and multitasking to balance it all. Multitasking, resulting in overloaded rational brains, is yielding quick decisions based on emotions.

¹⁰ Fenichel, Ph.D., Michael. "There Here and Now of Cyberspace". May 22, 2010 <<http://www.fenichel.com/herenow.shtml>>.

¹¹ Yair, AmichaiHamburger. The Social Net: Understanding Human Behavior in Cyberspace. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005.

This communication is fueled through the information flow through networks of weak ties. As marketers, it is the weak ties, with plugs into multiple diverse groups who have similar minds, which are key. These weak connections are the ideal targets for the infusion of new information; They're plugged into multiple networks and connected to hundreds of other somewhat similarly minded people (remember humans mirror themselves in their connections) in other networks.

In the past, most believed the ideal target should be the people who are the most well connected or the most popular. This is somewhat right. It's not about which person is the most popular that matters; it is about targeting the people who have the most connections to *different* networks. The people that are popular with a diverse grouping of people, not the people most popular in one group. They are your links to many that will begin a waterfall viral-like word-of-mouth spread of content and ignite success. This will occur as information trickles from the weak-ties of a network into the hands of the important hub of 'influencers', the 6.6 people, of many networks.

Thus, we must re-examine our target audiences with the new understanding of information flow. It might even effect how your campaigns are rolled out. The common method of targeting the people who are many people's influencers perpetuates information and message sharing in much of the same social circles. The information spins around like a hamster in a wheel, and goes no where. There is likely significant overlap between the 6.6 influencers of you and the 6.6 influencers of one of your influencers, resulting in little diversity. Therefore, there's less opportunity for information to flow freely through social circles of like-minded individuals who are virgin ears to the messaging.

However, by targeting those who are influencers to a diverse group and are weak-ties to many, marketing messaging will have the opportunity to infiltrate more social networks of virgin ears. Yet, these virgin ears will be similarly minded and mirror attributes of the original individual and network. Thus, marketers must not just consider the individual, but the entire network(s) of similarly-minded people.

New content flowing through networks has an effect on your audience, and its emotional. The new stimuli is engaging and pleasurable – its causing dopamine to be released. At least this is the expectation. Remember why individuals are drawn to social media in general, the ability to consume, produce, and share simultaneously in search for their own personal validation. If this stimulus in which you are infusing a network with doesn't deliver on satisfying each of these three activities, then the stimulus won't be pleasurable. The brain will perceive it as pain, the stimulus will fall short, and ultimately your budget will be spent in vein. Social media's benefit is the application's ability to consume, produce, and to share simultaneously. A marketing effort that doesn't deliver on the primary reasons individuals are continuously reaching towards social media, fails to satisfy innate human desires which social media so successfully meets, and leaves the conditioned brain of the target disappointed. This is not an emotion that your brand should be associated with.

Furthermore, social networks are enabling your target to consume, produce, and to share with like-minded individuals in search of the emotionally high experience of validation by others. The transfer of information and messages through the activities of consuming, producing, or sharing with others is how this emotionally high experience occurs. As a network member, individuals enhance their individual validation through contributing to the group. People are being socially collectivist. Marketers must realize this point. Today, communication is no longer about the individual, it is about the network, and how the network helps its members. Thus, we must re-evaluate our strategies to ensure our brands are contributing to the collective benefit of the network. Our strategies must help the individuals consume, produce, and share in pursuit of their personal validation.

Additionally, marketers must be aware of just how fragile every brand is. Because brains have plasticity, and are able to constantly be molded, they remember each experience, the good and the bad. Repetitive rewarding experiences build expectations of pleasure. Yet, even one negative experience can begin to erode this conditioning. It's the psychology principle of B.F. Skinner. Given multiple positive experiences, individuals will return again and again seeking this emotion. This is the essence of loyalty, and a foundation for brand loyalty. The repetitive delivery of a positive experience is conditioning and will ultimately associate your brand with pleasure.

In order to create a pleasurable experience and build this loyalty, remember what's happening to today's brains, they're multitasking. These multitasking brains base decisions mostly on emotional principles as they're making decisions quickly while hopping from one stimulus to the next. They're 'processing' in short bursts of information, and they're valuing the opinions of their 6.6 influencers. As marketers, we shouldn't overload these minds further by appealing with rational jargon they must think heavily about in the overloaded rational brain. Instead, we know that they're making emotional decisions in part based on previous experience. Visual cues are quick and help to trigger the previous connections a mind has made, and often can be deciphered with little processing in quick glances. With time, repetitive use of these visual emotional appeals will help condition brains. This conditioning will build an association of the brand with positive experiences, and ultimately a positive bank of past associations on which to base a future decision on. Remember, positive experience conditioning equates to brand loyalty.

While it should be noted that not every brand should be present on social media, there is no better environment today for brands to communicate emotionally than through social media. While constantly filtering through page stimuli and thereby multitasking, the brains of the online target audience are making the emotional decisions. But, not only that, they can be found in a heightened emotional state exploring stimuli and engaging in synchronous communication. They're receiving messages that affirm their value of self from others, most likely their 6.6 friends, and its boosting their emotional highs. People are constantly thinking about them. The online target audience is increasingly more happy as a result of these highs. Your brand, by contributing valuable messaging to a network, can be associated with these highs too.

When happiness is evoked, we tend to remember positive experiences and gloss over the negative ones, transferring these positive emotions to other aspects of our lives at the given moment. For brands, this is extremely valuable. With the multiple contributors that strengthen positive emotions within social media, one can see why social media is both here to stay, and a medium that should not be taken lightly.

Because the emotional highs social media offers means the medium is here to stay in some form, we need to know how to measure it properly. Often, surveys and focus groups are turned to to evaluate or project marketing activities. Yet, these methods rely on the rational brain to process reasons and develop a *why* answers to behaviors. If consumers are increasingly making emotional decisions based on what *seems* right, why should we expect them to develop a rational explanation for their decision? We shouldn't. Essentially, by relying on focus groups and surveys, we're forcing a rational answer where there is no rational answer. The answer is emotional. Most marketing managers today accept what the target says, refusing to look beyond at how they feel and behave in relation to their values and goals¹².

However, Gerald and Lindsay Zaltman have begun making headway in understanding the emotional brain's purchase motivations. With every experience, we emotionally equate the experience through the use of metaphors. The Zaltmans have unleashed 7 major metaphors present in what humans "think, hear, say, and do"¹³ in their book *Marketing Metaphoria*. These 7 metaphors are balance, transformation, journey, container, connection, resource, and control. They relate to emotions, in that they are "unconscious operations that are vital perceptual and cognitive functions...and they are universal", though interpreted slightly different based on individual experience¹⁴. Yet, because these metaphors are universal, humans use roughly the same set of metaphors. Marketers must acknowledge that these similarities exist, and cease placing so much emphasis on product differences when at a fundamental level the target uses the same set of metaphors to relate their emotional motivations and prescribe value for almost everything. Marketers must start delivering and speaking to the true emotional motivation, the metaphor, especially now as consumers are making more emotional value based decisions. Begin researching which metaphors evoke value to your target and drive the emotional decisions to choose your brand. Then, appeal to customers in this way online (if appropriate) and elicit a positive response based on the deep emotions and core values of individuals. Your target's mind is changing, and so must your marketing methods.

In Conclusion

¹² Gerald , Zaltman, Lindsay Zaltman. Marketing Metaphoria. Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2008.

¹³ Gerald , Zaltman, Lindsay Zaltman. Marketing Metaphoria. Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2008.

¹⁴ Gerald , Zaltman, Lindsay Zaltman. Marketing Metaphoria. Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2008.

Social media is nothing new, the behavioral foundations for its existence have accompanied man for eternity. They're deeply rooted and hardwired into the brains of mankind. Only recently has technology evolved to capitalize on each of these behaviors. Just as the past has illustrated the strength of today's technology and the reasons why we've adopted it, the same will hold true for future technology. Whatever it is, the newest waves will enable mankind to consume, produce, and to share more efficiently in pursuit of our individual existence's validation.

Blazing the trail into the future technological wave are the Millennials. The old are looking to them as teachers, while the young are following in their digital footsteps. Just as the Baby Boomers of the past revolutionized society, the Millennials are now taking over. They're already shown society they recognize products of the future, most recently, adopting social media when society just laughed it off as a trend. Not every marketer can or should target the Millennials, but everyone should take note. What technology they spend time with in the future will impact us all.

It's important not just to pay attention, but to understand *why*. The why – rooted in the past, but looking towards the future, will help you utilize the tools of tomorrow in the most powerful way. The way that satisfies mankind's desires on an emotional and biological level, and in return build loyalty, which as marketers we all desire.

We're already experiencing the storm of change, and so, the question for marketers today is what are you going to lose tomorrow if you wait today and don't react? Are you willing to risk the extinction of your brand?

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