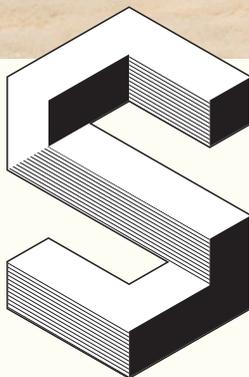# The 10 Year Marketing Challenge

So it's the start of a New Year... People are posting #10YearsChallenge photographs of them today next to them ten years ago. Media is reporting a rise in Veganism in the West, a decrease in alcohol and sugar consumption, and Millennials quitting lucrative jobs in order to travel to places like Bali – in order to find their purpose, work remotely, and live the dream. I have also never seen so many adverts and brands championing ethnic, religious, and gender diversity in their campaigns.

But depending on which news stories are recommended to you in your social media feeds, or what stories your friends share, you may be presented with an alternative reality. Wired and Forbes have asked whether the 10 Year Challenge was in fact a way to mine data for facial recognition AI.

There are stories of people plunging themselves into $10,000 of credit card debt: spent on clothes, restaurants, hotels, and flights to exotic locations - in an attempt to become Instagram influencers. Teenagers are undergoing plastic surgery to look like they do with Snapchat selfie filters, that has resulted in a new mental illness scientists are calling 'Snapchat dysmorphia'.

The USA and UK have recorded rises in religious, race, and gender hate crimes. According to UK government Home Office data, the total number of hate incidents has more than doubled since 2012/13. They reached a record 94,098 from April 2017 to March 2018 - a rise of 17% from the previous year. Just over three-quarters of those - a total of 71,251 - were classified as "race hate". The Brexit EU Referendum is cited as one of the contributing factors.

Also, there still remains a gender pay gap, and in December 2018 findings have revealed an ethnicity pay gap between academics at UK state universities. And this week, a study by experts based at the Centre for Social Investigation at Nuffield College, University of Oxford, found that in the UK, applicants from minority ethnic backgrounds had to send 80% more applications to get a positive response from an employer than a white person of British origin.

So, what's really going on and who's right? We are definitely entering a new age of spin. Not that it hasn't existed before - as those who have followed the work of Noam Chomsky or read Edward Bernays' book from 1928, 'Propaganda' will know. But the propensity for speed, volume, and reach of disseminating news has never been greater. For me, often what are being reported are shades truths and realities.

However, another critical question is whether these stores are accurate representations proportionally of what is happening in the world, or even your region - when often they are shared globally in a social media age. For example, I doubt top graduates in lucrative jobs in Southeast Asia are quitting them within five

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years to hang out on the beaches of Bali like westerners. But that's not to say that they wouldn't in the future, if the influence from other regions becomes great enough. Also, the population of Asia is equivalent to roughly 60% of the total world population – so is this trend as significant globally, and shouldn't marketers in the West be careful about projecting their experiences onto the rest of the world as a universal truism? Furthermore, do non-white western Millennials think and behave in the same way?

On a recent flight to Bangladesh I watched Crazy Rich Asians followed by BlacKkKlansman back-to-back. It's clear that ethnicity, culture, wealth, and social mobility are still very powerful push and pull factors, which split groups dramatically.

Now, let's take a look at how cultures and technology have changed our working environments over the past ten years, and possibly what we could look forward to in the future.

We're firmly fixed on using smartphones, so much so that research points to higher numbers of people than you think using them on the toilet. But now I see more tablets at the receptions of companies or as restaurant menus. So it seems that we've got used to using smaller screens, whilst at the same time having larger televisions and computer monitors.

Does anyone still use Viber? Vine has shut down and Google+ is about close. Whilst they're still here, has Skype become the video communications force that people thought it would, or Google Glass?

On the horizon we can see augmented reality video conferencing, which will add makeup, change your outfit and hair colour – perfect for working from home! But who knows, soon we might be communicating with holograms like in Kingsman and Star Wars films. If we pair this will real-time translation from apps like Google Translate, then multi-language simultaneous communication could be the real game changer.

Interestingly though, people seem to be making less phone calls or leaving voicemails, and instead preferring audio and text messages. Perhaps this is because we have never been multitasking as much as we do now, or using our phone for so many things other than its core function. Coupling this with most phone calls revealing the caller through caller ID: will these factors bring an end to unscheduled phone calls? How many of you now put in a speculative text to see if someone is free, or check someone's online status before you contact them? Did we think that keyboardless phone devices would be so ubiquitous? Have you started to use emojis in business

communication yet?

From my own experiences and talking to other professionals, Slack hasn't really ignited free flowing business and project conversations in the way that people thought. But PowerPoint is still going strong after decades since it's launch at the end of the 80's, and has seen off more innovative programmes like Prezi.

Also, I hear from students that they're pulling away from FaceBook and towards Snapchat. Seeing their parents and grandparents on the same platform and the recent privacy crises haven't helped FaceBook. Generation Z have been reported to behave differently to Generation Y, in that Gen Z are more likely to take down images after a while, which fits in with the Snapchat ethos - while Gen Y, after having invested the time in picking the right photo and filter are looking to create a legacy.

No job is for life - forcing professionals to consider moving employers more frequently, and even start a side hustle. This has made people focus, and use social media more with a purpose. LinkedIn have expanded their platform from being simply a job-hunting and careers portal. I have heard more professionals say that they have cut back on FaceBook, instead investing that time on LinkedIn, and doing so in a more social way. For now, there's less trash talk and trolling on LinkedIn than FaceBook, and people are building personal brands and diverse networks, to ease themselves into that next job. There's been a growth in people gaining professional certificates and publicly announcing them – especially from prestigious universities, so that it shows up as the last alma mater on your LinkedIn profile headline.

I mentioned this several years ago, and think that it's only a matter of time before companies like Google catch on and make it even easier to receive recognition for activities like time spent online reading content and engaging with it - in the form of a qualification, which might even rival degrees. Tracking software already knows where we visit, how long we spend on pages and even which parts of the page we stay on. Eye tracking software, and algorithms assessing our responses could strengthen these verifications.

With such a pull towards smartphones, data connection, on-demand, streaming and cloud storage, it's likely that we won't be reliant on in-flight entertainment selections for much longer. People will have access to more and more content stretching back decades, and so my strong advice is you should start producing video content now. You never know who might search and find your content in the future, which may lead to

unpredicted business opportunities.

What I do wonder though is how we will use all of the photographs that we are taking in the future, as image formats are likely to change. Do you still use your VHS player? Some department stores have stopped selling DVD players – but you could argue that vinyl records made a cult comeback. Sadly, I'm old enough to see some of my Polaroid photographs fade. Key factors affecting formats therefore are going to be how we consume media and the devices that we use.

Currently, photographs carry the date, time, location and devices can detect who's in the pictures. How long before they can also detect the objects and brands, and then suggest possible purchases based upon this data? Point, touch, and purchase is only going to get better, more common, and quicker. It's been predicted for nearly twenty years now, but could this be the decade that we see more product placement in movies and shows that allow us to click through directly from what we are watching and make purchases?

Finally, I'd like to shout out WhatsApp as the breakthrough change. It's been reported that professional football and rugby teams set up groups, so that players and managers can communicate quickly. Some gamers, by chance, have found a way to grab the attention, connect and make money from professional footballers playing online games like Fortnite. They meet playing games, chat, bond, and then migrate to WhatsApp to sell them exclusive hard to find designer clothing, sourced through bots. Also, sports agents equally have seen the benefits, by being able to schedule secret encrypted WhatsApp conversations and calls for those players looking to transfer, in a
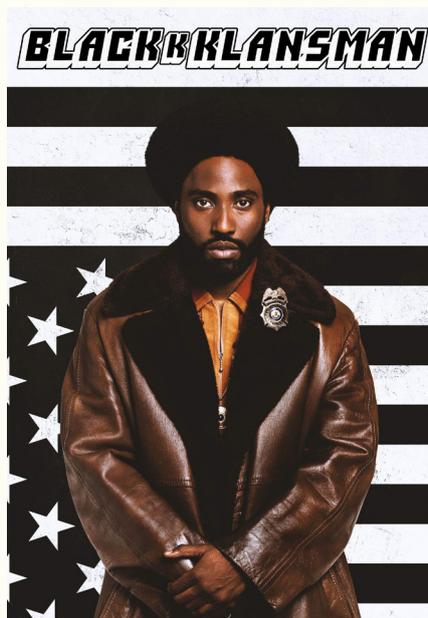
more efficient, appropriate, secure, and less rigid way than things like email.

I have actually been offered work, received contracts, and invoiced through WhatsApp – the key benefits being that you can see when someone has read your message; and leave a quick text, emoji, audio, or phone call, all in the same thread. I've seen this trend more outside of Europe and North America, where I think a mobile phone number is still more of a private thing. Also, I think developed economies are entrenched with a mindset that is based upon following every iteration of business software and programs – making them more resistant to change than in emerging markets.

So what will the next ten years hold? More of my work now can be done from home. I'm wondering how many more businesses will decide against having company offices and spare their employees from rush hour traffic. This would create more time, save costs, and would open up opportunities for more flexible working.

If I still have a column with *The Marketeers* and I do another piece like this, then I'm sure that many of the Apps, programs, and devices won't be around any more. Also, that the battle for your eyeballs and attention is only going to increase, communication will never be easier, you will have less time, less physical possessions, and more distractions.

I don't think that marketers are going to lose their jobs to machines just yet - but we will have to retrain and change what we do and how we work, and it is going to get harder to justify our existence and activities. But if we take a lead from the music industry, I do think that almost paradoxically, the live experience will be more important than before. When these interactions do take place, then they will mean more and generate greater social capital.

So my advice to you is double-down on practising your ability to communicate personally, in a variety of lengths and formats, and start creating content. Build your networks and keep your eyes open for behavioural changes. Be ready to respond to unexpected opportunities and ride your luck. Humans will always be much better at understanding humans and appealing to emotions – which ultimately drive us more than anything, and even at times against the conventional wisdom that algorithms look to predict our behaviour from.