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# The Advent of Brand Culture

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**Recognizing the Need for Reinvention**

Whether you work with brands every day or want to develop your own brand, your success lies in a different place than most experts would have you look.

We have a tendency to travel the same road, again and again. We talk incessantly about the same problems: The trade, the economy, the licensor, the licensee, the deal. It's an endless, circuitous, chain of circumstances with little time or effort directed toward understanding the changing consumer.

## Who is The New Consumer?

They are Millennials. They are your strongest advocates. We're not the first, nor the last to mention them. But, if you don't know who they are...the short answer is they're your future. Their values, attitudes and demographic characteristics are different than all previous generations. They are driving digital technologies that are changing media habits; enabling consumers to self-edit, while at the same time, by choice, become advocates of what is meaningful to them. It's causing brand-marketers and licensors to reconsider how they are reaching the right audience at the right time with the right message in the right place.

Like it or not, they are tethered to technology. Successful products offerings enable Millennials to participate in their own experiences. It is tribal; technology is the acoustic rhythm to their narrative. As a result, the convergence of technology (xbox 360 Kinetic, Apple iPad) and the interplay of mobile phones (apps), immersive retail experiences and location based (touch-screen) venues are the new brand media mix.

### Millennials

Millennials, there are about 80 million of them born between 1980 and 1995. They are the prize. They are who you must embrace. They are not just consumers, they are the owners of your brand. They are advocates who dictate purchase patterns and are the voice of authority.

Millennials are setting the new social agenda, in a context called BrandCulture™. We are just beginning to witness the nuances and shifts of their consumer behavior. The real ah-ha will arrive when we unlock the coding of this generation and the hardwiring of their brains. If you know a Cognitive Scientist, hire them; they'll be your most trusted resource when unraveling the mysteries of your new consumer and the behavior that is driving businesses, brands and culture in the 21st Century.

### Consumer Attributes

1. They think in pictures: Images are the narrative of culture. 32,000 years ago the earliest of cave paintings served the same purpose. They're hard wired into our brain. They work like semeiotic messages. Meaning, the images are the language of story-telling. It's the earliest form of personal and cultural brand messaging. (Consider: Facebook, Flickr and the iPhone).
2. They remember stories; so, don't repeat facts: Brands are emotional stories. They are experiences, merging interest with intent by igniting curiosity and inviting consumption. "Your brain didn't retrieve a fact about an experience," says Douglas Merrill, former Chief Information Officer of Google, "...your brain retrieved the story."
3. Their brand is their message: Messages are everywhere. They work as reoccurring themes that bond culture. They establish a context and work like scaffolding in your brain. They function in a setting of story-telling and myth-making where symbols are language and images are text.
4. They embrace the "authentic" power of Social Media: Okay. I get it. We know Social Media is important. But, do you really know why? It's not because of its instantaneous reach or ubiquitous use. Social Media dominates all other media because of its relevance. It's your story, shared with others, that touches the same core emotions.
5. They use technology: "It's not just their gadgets, it's the way technology has been fused into their social lives." This is the new "collective-connective," a social dynamic requiring participation -- real, authentic participation. It's that simple.

### Why We Believe In What We Create?

We remember things that are important when they are experienced as stories. Our brains take notice of them. We become conscious of them. They become relevant, take on a purpose and meaning and move to our memory. Cognitive scientists call this process encoding, which means something is being converted from one format into another.

### Cultural Myth, Story Telling And Recurring Themes Bond Culture

It is based upon the uniquely human capacity to symbolically classify experiences, link and then to share them...the process through which an older generation induces and compels a younger generation to reproduce the established lifestyle, consequently a culture that is embedded in a person's way of life.

This multi-generational social condition is called the "Cultural Evolution Theory" which states, "that traits have a certain meaning in the context of evolutionary stages, and they look at relationships between material culture and social institutions and beliefs."

The importance of realism amid such heightened realities in worlds of fantasy make characters, specifically heroes and their powers, when stripped away, real to an audience that wants to believe they really exist. This transformation is a blurring of "reality's" fantasy.

Captured in symbols and an extremely evolved iconography, popular, recurring themes understood completely or not, become folklore...create a suspended disbelief: a new reality for a new generation... borrowing from the past and making them their own...a form of branded history, with its own images indelibly marked on the minds of a new global audience. The images they represent, from myth to folklore, become the legacy that defines a brand.

Central to this process is the concept and arch of the Brand...or as we will call it: BrandCulture

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