

Let's face(book) it

How marvelous, the wonderful world of online... And how ironic that virtual society is evolving along the same line as social behaviour in the real world.



By [Gavin Mills](#) 13 Jan 2013

Let us compare...

Think of moving to a new town in some exciting new country. It's a brand new world, full of exciting new places and faces. Every interaction is an adventure. You get to know the supermarket staff, the postman, your neighbours, anyone and everyone you happen to come across in your brand new world gets a happy 'hello' and an enthusiastic smile.

But then with time, the passion subsides. The supermarket attendant short-changes you. The guy at the petrol station has bad attitude. You wish the neighbour would control that stupid dog that howls the night away - every night - when you're trying to put the kids to bed and get some sleep yourself. The homeless man at the traffic light pestering you day after day for change, food or clothes mutates from a worthy cause into a pest to your conscience and test of your patience.

No longer friendly smiles to all and sundry. Before long, your attention, grace, goodwill and hospitality is shared only with selective friends, everyone else relegated to acquaintances at best, irritations to be tolerated for the most part, and a handful of undesirables who most times would be better appreciated if they didn't exist at all.

An insatiable infatuation with novelty

The degradation of appeal of our recently blissful new universe may predictably be attributed to basic human nature. Humankind suffers from an insatiable infatuation with novelty. Anything new, whether it be good, bad or indifferent, arouse our curiosity and stimulates our interest. The expression 'the grass is greener on the other side' is not without justification. However, with time every new treasure without exception loses its lustre, and when novelty fades, it is labelled and forgotten in the archives of experience and perception.

Facebook and social networks also appeal to a second powerful trait of humanity: our preoccupation with acquiring, collecting and hoarding. It is within our nature to acquire and collect. One needs only to plunge into the average 'man-drawer', more times than not boasting useless collections of old-keys-to-lost-locks, half dead batteries that might come in useful some day, and a host of other useless trinkets and keepsakes forming an arsenal of rubbish and souvenirs for posterity and 'that rainy day'.

Another good example of our quest to hoard would be stamp collections. Sure, there are serious philatelists out there who collect stamps for investment potential, and many more who kid themselves that this is their justification, but like their sons collecting soccer cards, stickers, book matches and a spectrum of other useless treasures, the main attraction of the pastime is in answer to our instinctive nature to collect and hoard.

Facebook gave us the ability to collect, label and categorise our friends in exactly the same way - being able to store everyone we ever knew in neat little folders in alphabetical sequence - despite the fact when given due consideration, most of these old time friendships were never even friendships in the first place.

But with time, just as happens in the real world, some of these friendships wear thin and become more effort than they were ever worth, and though we still keep them safely stored in our catalogues of acquaintances, it would take a revelation of epic proportions from them, to motivate us to like, let alone share.

Relevance to online marketing

So what does this suggest for the journey of online society moving forward, and more importantly, how is this relevant to

online marketing?

Firstly, the journey thus far seems to suggest that online engagement will eventually mature and mellow to be consistent with natural human behaviour whether it be in the real world, online or on any fantastic future medium or platform which might arise.

Secondly, with regard to utilising for marketing, the hype will probably cool as well, and the response will be no more or no less than that to any other medium since the beginning of time.

Radio, when it first arrived, created a ripple, moving pictures created waves, television had its day. Digital marketing is doing its thing, but inevitably, when the frenzy dies, response and impact will once again be governed not simply by a presence, but by creative and effective use of the medium, not simply the genius or attributes of the fad, fashion or innovation.

ABOUT GAVIN MILLS

Gavin Mills is the MD of Don't Forget George Events, (www.dontforgetgeorge.co.za), a specialist event production and communications company launched in 1998. He is as passionate about life as he is about his business, and believes it is up to voices of reason in a turbulent world, to help craft our future, not just accept it. Contact Gavin on tel +27 (0)11 791 3308, gavin@dontforgetgeorge.co.za and follow @Gavinmills on Twitter.
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