



What could/should “advertising” look like in 2020?

Advertising in 2020 harnesses the expansive power of creativity and the reductive power of science and big data to usher in a new era of marketing communications.

Winning the “hearts” and “minds” of consumers will be increasingly driven by science and data, and less by instinct and experience.

- 1. Advertising will be more emotionally relevant to consumers.** While “relevance” is not new, it remains at the heart of successful advertising. The volume of advertising messages fighting through the clutter of modern media continues growing, coupled with the reality that each consumer’s circle of influence has the potential to ripple through the path-to-purchase like never before. Today’s American preteens and “screen natives” enter the workforce self-identifying as a media channel, having been supported by advanced digital technology their entire lives. In order to make an impact, advertising needs to be emotionally relevant to their experiences and aspirations.
- 2. Advertising will be smarter about the context and platform attributes that are unique to each communication channel.** Advertisers also need to create emotional triggers that help consumers navigate through their media experience, so that it fulfills the reason for turning on the TV, going to the movies, surfing online, or posting a status update on a mobile phone. Neuroscience-informed models suggest that some platforms offer audiences an experience that generates *immersive engagement*, where the consumer’s intent is to escape into an emotional story or journey. During immersive engagement on platforms like scripted TV, someone else is the director of the experience. Other platforms enable the consumer to direct their own journey and generate *flexible engagement* patterns – allowing audiences to seek out information, communicate their own messages to friends, family, and other members in their circle of influence or tell their own stories online, increasingly through tablets and mobile devices. Being more emotionally intelligent about context and platform attributes, and the mind and brain states they foster, means tapping into each platform more efficiently to support what the consumer needs.
- 3. Advertising will take advantage of synergy across media platforms and communication vehicles to support products, brands and services all the way to the point of purchase and beyond.** Experts use the “emotional pull through” that cross-platform communications offer. They reach consumers where and when they are involved with media. This means bridging them emotionally through an advertising experience that feels natural and genuine, while leveraging the technology powering

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everything just below the surface. Mobile devices and the increasing rate of e-commerce mean that on one platform, content is created and distributed while products are consumed, reviewed and shared. This offers new advertising opportunities throughout the whole purchase journey, including the traditional retail environment and new/emerging online marketplaces.

4. **Storytelling will evolve.** As the line blurs between content and advertising, storytelling becomes increasingly nonlinear and the next generation of content creators tells more complex stories. Recent cross-generational results from studies using biometrics and eye tracking throughout a day in the life of consumers revealed the first media-related evidence of dramatic changes between *digital immigrants* and *digital natives*. Rapidly increasing time spent with digital media, shorter attention spans and altered patterns of nonconscious emotional response mean new ways of consuming stories. Future generations change their story telling and listening patterns to orient toward more “bite-sized snacking” and less “five-course dining” with fragmented, nonlinear arcs and stories with multiple endings.

What do we need to do now for this future?

1. **Advertisers need to develop a better understanding of emotion that is informed by scientific models reflecting both nonconscious and conscious brain processing.** Modern neuroscience clearly demonstrates the tremendous importance of nonconscious processing in the brain. The emotional centers receive and process information from the senses prior to the cognitive and more rational centers, exerting considerable influence on advertiser relevant brain activity. These include the powerful role of emotional responses generated in the brain and experienced in our bodies to direct attention, enhance learning and memory, and ultimately drive behavior. Because the emotional centers occupy distinct areas of the brain and lack direct connectivity to the language centers, stated or self-reported responses from consumers are incomplete and often biased by both social context and complex cognitions. This interference clouds recall and confuses projections of behavioral intent. Research needs to do a better job of guiding advertisers to stories full of emotional triggers and relatable characters while integrating benefits and subtly addressing features. Advertisers need to embrace a new understanding of the neurosciences that complement and extend traditional measures.
2. **Advertisers need to expand their toolbox to include new research tools and technologies, as well as learn when to use them for the best return on investment.** Researchers should work closer with creative directors to accelerate the learning exchange, support ideation and enhance the efficiency of creativity. It is critical to not only study consumers as they evolve, but to evolve along with them. New techniques like biometrics and eye tracking, facial coding, and implicit memory testing will become part of the new normal. Blending new tools with traditional quantitative and qualitative research measures, as well as social and the new value derived from big data will be critical. Experiments with new platforms and channels for storytelling will evolve; learning from experience

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and adopting the combinations that work in iterative ways will be key to making the most of each communication and driving ROI.

3. **Market research needs to become more of a profession.** Other *professions*, such as medicine and law, share a common curriculum, a common language, standards for excellence, governing bodies, and the ability to evaluate new advancements and technologies objectively. These shared bodies of knowledge make for more efficient training and increase confidence in quality. New education programs in market research at the undergraduate and graduate levels are needed. These curricula should include more rigorous training in statistics, study design, behavioral economics, psychology and neuroscience. The opportunity for market research to inform business strategy has never been greater, but change is needed to fulfill the real promise of 2020.

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