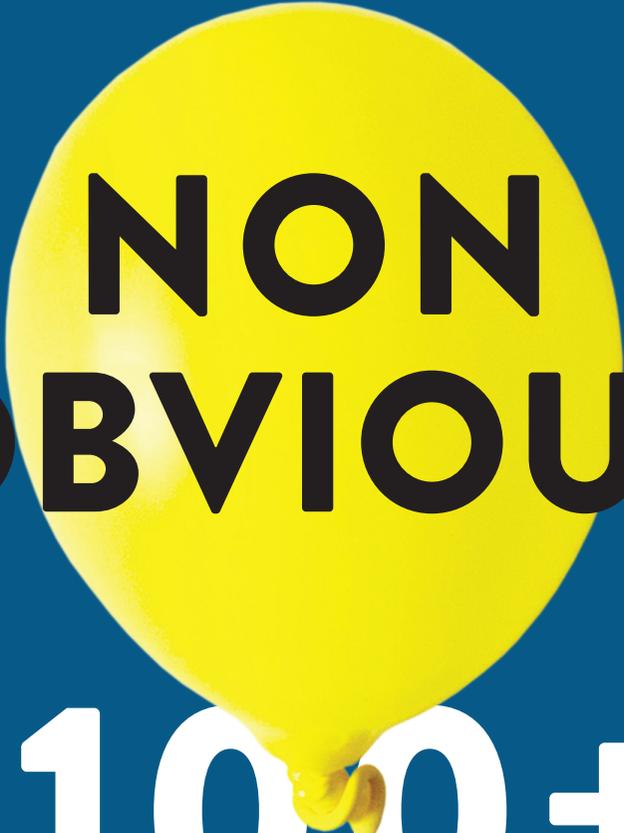


SPECIAL EXCERPT - NOT FOR RESALE



**NON
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TRENDS

ROHIT BHARGAVA

FOUNDER + CHIEF TREND CURATOR,
NON-OBVIOUS COMPANY

NON OBVIOUS

SPECIAL EBOOK EDITION

100+ TRENDS

ROHIT BHARGAVA

FOUNDER + CHIEF TREND CURATOR,
NON-OBVIOUS COMPANY



IDEAPRESS
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ABOUT THE *NON-OBVIOUS TREND SERIES*

For the past 10 years, the Non-Obvious Trend Report has been one of the most widely read collections of future insights in the world, reaching well over 1 million readers. It's used annually by hundreds of global brand leaders.

This 10th Anniversary Edition features 10 new megatrends curated from thousands of stories, dozens of interviews and over 100 past trend predictions.

WINNER OF 12 INTERNATIONAL BOOK AWARDS!

WINNER: Eric Hoffer Book Award (Business Book of the Year)

FINALIST: AMA-Leonard Berry Prize (American Marketing Association)

WINNER: Axiom Award (Gold Medal, Business Theory)

WINNER: INDIE Book Award (Gold Medal, Business)

FINALIST: International Book Award (Best Business Book)

WINNER: Non-Fiction Book Award (Gold Medal)

WINNER: IPPY Award (Silver Medal, Business)

WINNER: STEVIE Best Business Book Award

OFFICIAL SELECTION: Gary's Book Club
(at the Consumer Electronics Show)



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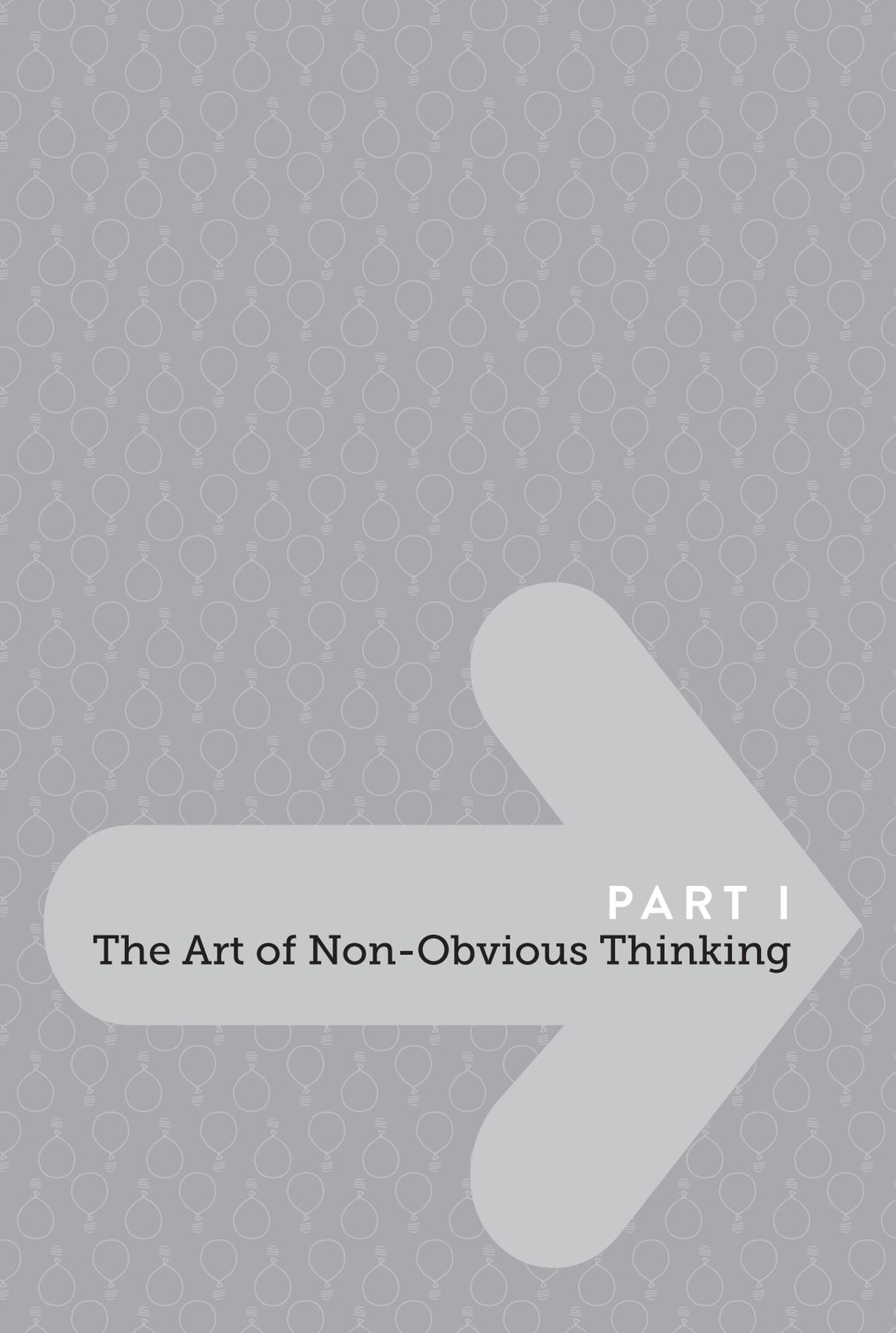
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PART I
The Art of Non-Obvious Thinking

INTRODUCTION

“I am not a speed reader. I am a speed understander.”

—ISAAC ASIMOV, author, historian, and biochemist

THE YEAR IS 1962, and a man named Robert Townsend has just fired his entire advertising department.

The company he recently took over hasn't been profitable in more than a decade and if he expects to reverse its fortune, he needs a big idea — but he doesn't have a big budget. In desperation, he sends a short brief to a handful of creative directors from the hottest ad agencies in New York, asking a single impossible question: “How do we get five million dollars of advertising for one million dollars?”

One agency responds with an unusual proposition. Bill Bernbach, founder of renowned ad giant Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB), asks for ninety days to study the business and agrees to take the job on one condition: Townsend must promise to run any advertising idea proposed by DDB exactly as written without question.

He agrees.

DDB starts by commissioning a series of focus groups, but the results are disheartening. The brand is a distant second place behind the dominant industry leader and there isn't much hope of closing the gap. Tasked with finding some insight they might use to build a campaign, an unknown copywriter named Paula Green has an unusual idea.

As a rare female copywriter during the notoriously male-dominated golden era of advertising, Green is already accustomed to bringing a different perspective to her work. Inspired by something she hears employees say during the focus groups, she writes a brutally honest new campaign tagline: *“Avis— We’re only No. 2. We try harder.”*

Townsend is skeptical at first.

Why would any brand spend money to advertise being second best— especially one struggling as badly as his? But true to his word, he reluctantly approves the campaign as written.

The ads are an instant hit. Less than 12 months after the campaign starts, Avis goes from losing \$3.2 million annually to earning \$1.2 million. Within a matter of years, some predict the campaign will soon need an update because Avis will no longer be number two. The tagline becomes a rallying cry for employees as well, serving as a manifesto they would use continually for the next fifty years. Today it is widely regarded as one of the best advertising campaigns ever.

Why did it become so iconic?

The question has inspired decades of debate. Some suggest it was the result of a unique trusted relationship between the brand and its agency. Others believe it was the humility in the tagline that helped humanize Avis and inspired their employees to indeed try harder in every customer interaction. Leadership experts instead credit Townsend’s renowned people-first management style.

Green herself suggested the campaign worked because it “went against the notion that you had to brag.” She also noted, with some irony, that as a woman in advertising, having to try harder was “somewhat the story of [her] life.”

Her comment suggests there may be an overlooked detail in this story. Of the dozens of people involved in focus groups, everyone failed to appreciate the significance of that one employee’s comment about trying harder.

Everyone but Paula Green, the one person who saw what everyone else missed.

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

This is a book about what it takes to see what no one else sees.

This skill is often described as creativity, and we live in a world that celebrates it. But finding the solution to a particularly tricky problem or discovering a world changing idea takes more than creativity—a fact I discovered one fateful day nearly two decades ago while sitting across the table from a man waiting to be inspired by anyone but me.

It is 2001 and I have been working in advertising for less than a year. It's long enough to understand the hierarchy. There are the *creatives*—who have cool titles like “Wizard of Lightbulb Moments”—and there are the rest of us.

I am not a creative.

We're sitting in a conference room on the top floor of an office building overlooking Darling Harbor in Sydney, outfitted with an enormous table made of Tasmanian oak (as our clients make a point of telling us). It is an intentionally intimidating setup.

As we present our epic game changing campaign idea, I can't help feeling quietly relieved that no one expects me to say anything. At first the presentation seems to go well. Unfortunately, as our pitch wraps up our client asks the one question we were not expecting: “What else you got?”

This is not good.

We had spent two months preparing for this meeting and our creative team was so convinced it was a winner, that they hadn't even brought a backup idea.

Our response to his question was truly terrible. Silence.

I slowly realized that the only person who could remember those abandoned ideas was the junior member of the team who had taken notes in all the meetings: me. Summoning my courage, I broke the silence and spoke up. It was a moment that would change my career . . . though not perhaps in the way you might imagine.

I did not pull a million-dollar idea out of my head. In fact, the truth is I don't remember what I said. But I do remember how I *felt*.

It was my first taste of what it meant to be on the other side, and I was hooked. I wanted to have that feeling again.

Unfortunately, creativity still wasn't my job. And judging from our failed client encounter, maybe creativity wasn't even the right word to describe what our clients actually wanted anyway.

Around that time I found inspiration in the words of an author who was once asked by novelist Kurt Vonnegut what it felt like to be "the man who knows everything."

WHY SPEED READING DOESN'T MATTER

Isaac Asimov has earned that reputation by writing nearly 500 books in his prolific lifetime. He is most widely known for his groundbreaking work in science fiction, but he also wrote everything from an illustrated children's guide to dinosaurs to a comprehensive two-volume guide to The Bible.

How could one man have interests and skills so varied that he could write and publish an average of more than ten books every year? Asimov credited his creative thinking to his legendary appetite for reading and learning about everything he could from a young age.

"I am not a speed reader," he once said. "I am a speed understander." *What if you could be a speed understander too?*

It's hard to imagine following Asimov's recipe for understanding in today's world. We are inundated by content, and most of it is not good. It has become nearly impossible to separate the bullshit from the believable. Digital tools have made it easy for everyone to share ideas, even if they are one-dimensional or idiotic. Yet bullshit, no matter how well packaged and easily distributed, remains bullshit.

To face this landslide of bad content, we are increasingly relying on a combination of algorithms and one-dimensional opinions shared on social media to help us filter the noise. And we've pioneered new methods of skimming out of sheer desperation. We watch television at accelerated speed, use speed-reading apps that flash a single word at a time, and turn to productivity gurus specializing in "time hacking."

None of these solutions work for long.

The problem is that expecting to get smarter from processing content faster is a bit like entering a speed-eating contest to enjoy a good meal. Eating 26 hot dogs in 60 seconds might satisfy your hunger, but you're likely to feel sick afterwards.

You can't understand the world better simply by reading about it as much as possible. You do so by being intentional about what you pay attention to in the first place. What if you could become a life-long learner, curious about the world and able to see, understand, and expect things others miss? What if you could use that skill to understand patterns, spot intersections and see around the corner to develop an observation of what the future might hold? And what if, once you put all the pieces together, you could actually learn to predict the future?

You can, and the ambitious aim of this book is to teach you how to do it. I call my approach *Non-Obvious Thinking*, and it can change your life. It changed mine, as I realized years ago after spending a memorable afternoon in Norway surrounded by 50,000 bottles of alcohol that I couldn't drink.

WHAT I LEARNED FROM A NORWEGIAN BILLIONAIRE

Christian Ringnes is one of the richest men in Scandinavia. A flamboyant businessman and art collector, he made his fortune in real estate and was the driving force and financier behind the critically acclaimed Ekeberg Sculpture Park in Oslo, Norway. Yet his legacy may come from a far quirkier accomplishment: amassing one of the largest independent collections of miniature liquor bottles in the world.

His decades-long obsession eventually ran into an insurmountable opponent: his wife, Denise. Tired of the clutter, she offered him an ultimatum: Find something to do with the more than 52,000 bottles he had amassed or start selling them. Like any other avid collector, Ringnes couldn't bear the thought of parting with his beloved bottles, so he did exactly what you might expect a

Norwegian real estate tycoon to do: he commissioned a museum for his bottles.

Today his Mini Bottle Gallery is one of the world's top weird museum destinations, routinely featured in offbeat travel guides. When I took a tour of the gallery, I was fascinated by how it was organized. Every room featured bottles grouped into quirky themes ranging from a "Room of Sin" inspired by a brothel to a "Horror Room" featuring liquor bottles with trapped objects such as mice or worms floating inside.

More important, like other well-crafted museum experiences, the Mini Bottle Gallery is carefully curated. Only about 20 percent of Ringnes' collection is on display at any one time. This thoughtful selection creates meaning for the entire gallery because each room tells a story, and those stories bring the experience to life.

As I walked out of the museum that evening, I realized just how important this idea of curation might be to my own work. What if the secret to having better ideas that clients loved was to get better at *curating* them before I needed them?

HOW I BECAME AN IDEA CURATOR

Back in the middle of 2005, I was part of a team tasked with starting what would become one of the largest and most successful social media teams in the world. At that time, social media basically meant blogging, so our services involved helping large brands find ways to engage bloggers directly.

Writing a blog seemed easy, so I decided to start one myself. My first few posts came easily, but then I ran out of ideas.

How was I going to keep my hastily created blog constantly updated with new stories when I already had a full-time day job? I needed a better method for collecting ideas.

I started seeking ideas everywhere. At first, I gathered them by emailing links of stories to myself. I scribbled possible blog topics on scraps of paper. I saved quotes from books and ripped pages out of magazines. As my collection of potential topics grew, I started saving them in a simple yellow folder with *Ideas* scrawled on the tab.

Soon worn from use, it was held together at its badly ripped seam by a tired piece of duct tape.

It worked, and I now had plenty of inspiration for what to write about. I did that religiously for four years, at times posting a new article every day.

During that time, I wrote more than a thousand articles and built a readership of hundreds of thousands of people. The blog won several awards, helped grow my network, and eventually helped me land a deal with McGraw-Hill to publish my first book, *Personality Not Included*, in 2008.

Two years later, I did something that would shape the next decade of my life.

THE BIRTH OF THE *NON-OBVIOUS TREND REPORT*

Near the end of 2010, I was reading article after article about trends for the coming year. Almost all of them were lazy, uninformed, or self-serving declarations of the obvious. According to one, the hottest trend of the year would be the iPhone 4. Another article suggested that “more people would express themselves on social media.” Yet another predicted that 2011 would be the Year of Drones. Not surprisingly, that one was written by the CEO of a company that made drones.

These weren't trends— they were profoundly obvious observations of the world.

At best they were wishful thinking, and at worst they were veiled pitches for products or services hoping to profit from being considered trendy. In a frustrated bid to do better, I published my own list of 15 trends and called it the *Non-Obvious Trend Report*, named as a not-so-subtle criticism of all the blatantly obvious trend predictions I had read.

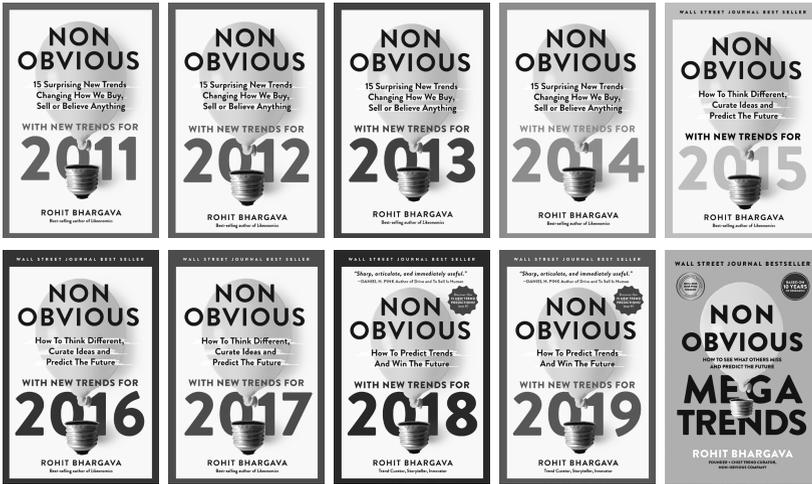
The report went viral as hundreds of thousands of people read and shared it.

Over the next five years, what started as a 20 page PowerPoint presentation shared online evolved into a robust annual trend report with hundreds of pages of research, interviews, panels and

eventually, in 2015, a bestselling print edition of the book you now hold in your hands.

Along the way, I left my job at Ogilvy, became an entrepreneur, spoke on some of the biggest stages in the world and published a new annual edition of the book with updated trends every January.

Now, ten years and nine editions later, my library of non-obvious trends has grown to more than a hundred predictions. The books have been translated into eight languages, earned nine prestigious international book awards, and reached well over a million readers. They also have led people to label me with a title I always struggled to embrace: a futurist.



WHY I AM A RELUCTANT FUTURIST

I am inspired by futurists who look at the world today and anticipate what will come. Reading *The Next 100 Years* by leading futurist George Friedman, for example, is like being engrossed in both a wonderful work of science fiction and a prescient description of potential reality. The year 2060 indeed might begin the “Golden Decade,” as he predicts. *That* is how futurists think.

In comparison, my team and I research trends to help brands and leaders understand the accelerating present and act on that

knowledge today. That's why "futurist" always felt like an overstatement to me.

In past interviews, I have described myself instead as a "near futurist." My lens typically focuses on trends that are affecting our behavior or beliefs right now. However, that doesn't mean my annual trend predictions expire; instead, if well predicted, they become more obvious over time.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

After a decade of making predictions, my team and I have seen some trends evolve into broader cultural or behavioral shifts while others have faded in significance.

In this tenth anniversary edition of *Non-Obvious*, we will take a look at the past decade of research and incorporate the most significant trends and stories while offering a broader context around the urgent need for more non-obvious thinkers in the world.

In Part 1, you will discover the five key mindsets required for being a non-obvious thinker, followed by a detailed look at my signature Haystack Method for curating trends and techniques for putting insights into action.

Part 2 of the book features predictions of ten powerful megatrends that will shape the coming decade, along with implications for culture, business, careers, and humanity. Each chapter also explores the potential implications each of the megatrends are likely to have in our world.

Finally, Part 3 includes a candid review of every previously predicted trend from the past nine years, along with a curated rating of how each one fared over time and the fascinating backstory of how the report itself evolved from year to year.

As you'll learn throughout this book, the benefits of learning to be a *non-obvious thinker* go far beyond just being able to identify trends. Seeing the non-obvious makes you more open minded to change and can help you disrupt instead of getting disrupted.

Non-obvious thinking can make you the most creative person in any room, no matter what your business card says and help solve

your biggest problems. Most importantly, non-obvious thinking can help you anticipate, predict and win the future.

Ultimately the biggest lesson may be that you don't need to be a speed reader to win the future. Being a speed understander is a far worthier aspiration. It's my hope that this book will help you get there.



PART II
Previous Trend Reports
(2011–2019)

OVERVIEW:

How to Read These Past Trend Reports

“The events of the past can be made to prove anything if they are arranged in a suitable pattern.”

—A. J. P. TAYLOR, Historian

IMAGINE FOR A MOMENT that you could go back in time and relive a moment from your life ten years ago. What might you think as you look back on how you used to see the world and what you once believed? Perhaps you have changed dramatically, or perhaps you're largely the same. Either way, most of us rarely get this sort of keyhole glimpse to witness our own growth.

The journey to write and update this book annually has given me a constant chance to do that. As I look back over the past ten years, I realize what a gift this is. I also have struggled with the temptation to engage in a bit of revisionist history.

Should I leave every word of every trend prediction unchanged from its original state? What would provide the most value for people reading these insights a decade or two or three later? The answer to both questions, I felt, was to update some trends for clarity, but not to change their meaning or intent.

The trends in this section tell a story about an evolving point of view of our culture. Each year I can honestly say—based solely on

the feedback of readers—the trends have gotten more insightful and enduring. However, they haven't all been winners.

In the following pages, you will see a visual and detailed compilation of every past trend published since 2011. For each year, I will start with a retrospective to give you a sense of the highlights and themes from that report, followed by a letter grade rating of how every trend fared over the years.

The grades range from A to D. Aside from flipping through this section to see the D graded trends (which I know you will do simply out of curiosity), you might wonder why no trends received an F grade?

I believe an F should be reserved for a trend that was never accurate, a situation that doesn't really apply to these trends because at the time they were published they were indeed non-obvious.

Those that received a D just failed to last beyond the initial year they were predicted.

It is impossible to grade yourself, so these ratings are not based on my personal assessments. Instead, my team and I gathered feedback from thousands of professionals who have participated in or listened to one of my signature keynotes or one of our workshops around the world. We combined their feedback with insights from readers who wrote to us or commented on the research online.

In addition, I made it a habit within our team to consistently seek out new examples of previously predicted trends so we could build a library and see just how many more relevant examples would come up since a trend was originally published.

This annual ritual of reviewing, grading, and critiquing past trends has made these predictions better. We learn from our mistakes as much as we celebrate our successes, and the book you hold in your hands today is the product of a decade of refinement.

As I shared early in this book, I think the most beautiful thing about well curated trends is that new ones don't replace old ones. Rather, they all present a collection of observations and insights that I hope will spur your thinking about opportunities today while reminding you that the best way to win the future is to become a student of the accelerating present.

Either way, the trends can be a spark for new ideas and an instigator for innovation. I hope this summary of past trends offers both of these things, as well as an interesting look back at the evolution of the last decade of research and insights.

BROWSE ALL PAST TRENDS AND DOWNLOAD EXCERPTS

www.nonobvious.com/trends



PREVIOUSLY PREDICTED TREND SUMMARIES

THE 2011 NON-OBVIOUS TRENDS OVERVIEW

Likeonomics
Approachable Celebrity
Desperate Simplification
Essential Integration
Rise of Curation
Visualized Data
App-fication of the Web
Relmaging Charity
Employees as Heroes
Locationcasting
Brutal Transparency
Addictive Randomness
Culting of Retail

THE 2012 NON-OBVIOUS TRENDS OVERVIEW

Corporate Humanism
Ethnomimicry
Social Loneliness
Pointillist Filmmaking
Measuring Life
Co-Curation
Charitable Engagement
Medici Marketing
Digital Afterlife
Real-Time Logistics
Social Activism
Civic Engagement 2.0
Tagging Reality
Changesourcing
Retail Theater

THE 2013 NON-OBVIOUS TRENDS OVERVIEW

Optimistic Aging
Human Banking
Mefunding
Branded Inspiration
Backstorytelling

Healthy Content
Degree-Free Learning
Precious Print
Partnership Publishing
Microinnovation
Social Visualization
Heroic Design
Hyper Local Commerce
Powered by Women
Shoptimization

THE 2014 NON-OBVIOUS TRENDS OVERVIEW

Desperate Detox
Media Bingeing
Obsessive Productivity
Lovable Imperfection
Branded Utility
Shareable Humanity
Curated Sensationalism
Distributed Expertise
Anti-stereotyping
Privacy Paranoia
Overquantified Life
Microdesign
Subscription Commerce
Instant Entrepreneurs
Collaborative Economy

THE 2015 NON-OBVIOUS TRENDS OVERVIEW

Everyday Stardom
Selfie Confidence
Mainstream Mindfulness
Branded Benevolence
Reverse Retail
Reluctant Marketer
Glanceable Content
Mood Matching
Experimedia
Unperfection

Predictive Protection
 Engineered Addiction
 Small Data
 Disruptive Distribution
 Micro Consumption

THE 2016 NON-OBVIOUS TRENDS OVERVIEW

E-mpulse Buying
 Strategic Downgrading
 Optimistic Aging
 B2Beyond Marketing
 Personality Mapping
 Branded Utility
 Mainstream Multiculturalism
 Earned Consumption
 Anti-stereotyping
 Virtual Empathy
 Data Overflow
 Heroic Design
 Insourced Incubation
 Automated Adulthood
 Obsessive Productivity

THE 2017 NON-OBVIOUS TRENDS OVERVIEW

Fierce Femininity
 Side Quirks
 Desperate Detox
 Passive Loyalty
 Authentic Fameseekers
 Lovable Unperfection
 Preserved Past
 Deep Diving
 Precious Print
 Invisible Technology
 Robot Renaissance
 Self-Aware Data
 Moonshot Entrepreneurship
 Outrageous Outsiders
 Mainstream Mindfulness

THE 2018 NON-OBVIOUS TRENDS OVERVIEW

Truthing
 Ungendered
 Enlightened Consumption
 Overtargeting
 Brand Stand
 Backstorytelling
 Manipulated Outrage
 Light-Speed Learning
 Virtual Empathy
 Human Mode
 Data Pollution
 Predictive Protection
 Approachable Luxury
 Touchworthy
 Disruptive Distribution

THE 2019 NON-OBVIOUS TRENDS OVERVIEW

Strategic Spectacle
 Muddled Masculinity
 Side Quirks
 Artificial Influence
 Retrotrust
 B2Beyond Marketing
 Fad Fatigue
 Extreme Uncluttering
 Deliberate Downgrading
 Enterprise Empathy
 Innovation Envy
 Robot Renaissance
 Good Speed
 Overwealthy
 Passive Loyalty



THE 2011 NON-OBVIOUS TREND REPORT OVERVIEW

Originally published January 2, 2011

Original Format: Visual presentation

The Backstory + Retrospective

The first edition of the Non-Obvious Trend Report focused solely on marketing and social media trends. The report used a 20-page visual style and included a short description of the trend along with three or four stories to illustrate each one. Despite its limited scope, the report quickly went viral when it was released, being viewed more than 100,000 times in the first several weeks of publication alone.

Some of the most popular trends introduced many firsts. The report was one of the first to predict the *Rise of Curation*, a precursor to the explosion of content marketing, and *Instant PR & Customer Care*, the rapid growth of real-time customer service through social media. It also defined the related trends of *Brutal Transparency*, *Corporate Humanity*, and *Employees as Heroes*, which all demonstrated a deeper level of transparency and humanity in marketing campaigns.

The most popular trend from the first report was undoubtedly *Likeonomics*, the idea that people choose to do business with people they like. That popular concept inspired a book of the same title, which I wrote and published the following year.

2011 TRENDS AT A GLANCE



Likeonomics



Approachable Celebrity



Desperate Simplification



Essential Integration



Rise of Curation



Visualized Data



Crowdsourced Innovation



Instant PR & Customer Service



App-fication of the Web



Reimagining Charity



Employees as Heroes



Locationcasting



Brutal Transparency



Addictive Randomness



Culting of Retail



LIKEONOMICS

Brands, products, and services succeed by being more human, mission driven, and personally likeable through their policies and people, gaining an advantage over less empathetic competitors.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The fundamental truth of human relationships underlying this trend keeps growing as more brands focus on building personal connections with customers and being consistently likeable.



APPROACHABLE CELEBRITY

As social media allow direct access to previously unreachable celebrities, politicians, and athletes, we see more of their personalities, for better or worse, and can engage with them as real people.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

Using social media to directly engage famous people has become easy, but that ease has forced celebrities to find new ways to manage the volume, filter cyberstalkers, and make themselves less approachable.



DESPERATE SIMPLIFICATION

Information overload drives consumers to desperately seek simplicity, aiming for balance through activities such as defriending and finding basic products and sites to help simplify everything.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

While “infobesity” persists, consumers’ need for simplicity gives way to tools that focus on optimizing or curating instead of culling friendships or content. This trend continues but with less desperation.



ESSENTIAL INTEGRATION

Marketers' biggest problem continues to be integrating efforts, which can be hard with few good examples. Yet the biggest successes feature a new level of integration that is still rare in the marketing world.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

During the past four years, integration becomes an even greater issue and daily struggle for marketers. With more tools and platforms to assist, this has become less of a trend and more of a standard practice.



RISE OF CURATION

Brands increasingly use curation as a much-needed filter to help find and bring together useful or entertaining content to win more trust and attention from consumers.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This trend successfully anticipated the explosion of content marketing and the importance for brands to focus on sharing expertise generously online with their consumers as a way to grow trust.



VISUALIZED DATA

To make sense of a real-time stream of information, more event managers, news organizations, and brands turn to visualization to leverage data, better understand it, and tell a clearer story.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

The widespread overuse of infographics has created more skepticism of visualization, but better user interfaces, gamified design, and narrative storytelling continue to stand out and attract attention.



CROWDSOURCED INNOVATION

Brands turn to crowdsourced platforms to collect ideas from consumers in exchange for the reward of recognition, financial earning, and simply being heard by the brands they purchase from every day.

Trend Longevity Rating **C+**

The growth of platforms for idea generation to problem solving continue, but the original narrow brand-oriented focus of this trend failed to account for other types of marketplaces.



INSTANT PR & CUSTOMER SERVICE

Real-time contact becomes essential as communications teams focus on instant PR to manage social crises and augment customer service with methods to deal with problems in the here and now.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

Customer service through social channels has grown dramatically, but today it is not solely driven by negative situations (as originally predicted) but rather used as a tool for positive engagement as well.



APP-FICATION OF THE WEB

As more innovative apps let consumers bypass the web for transactions and leisure, many activities from online banking to online shopping will shift to apps instead of the Internet.

Trend Longevity Rating **D**

Apps have grown dramatically, but the idea of doing everything through apps never happened. Instead, responsive design has made it more important to allow anyone to use any size screen on any device.



REIMAGINING CHARITY

Brands and entrepreneurs create innovative new models for social good, reinventing how people can do everything from donating money to sharing time and specific skills.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

This trend reflected a dramatic growth in how nonprofits and charities used digital tools. While this has continued, the efforts are more commonplace and less of a “redefinition.”



BRUTAL TRANSPARENCY

Aggressive honesty will lead to edgier and more effective marketing as brands reveal this unexpected tactic that consumers welcome.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The growth of social platforms and content marketing allows brands to share more truths about their business. While some may not be quite as “brutal,” this honesty continues to build trust.



EMPLOYEES AS HEROES

Brands of all sizes aim to prove their humanity by emphasizing employees as the solvers of problems and creators of innovation. Such stories anchor the company’s mission in the world.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

This trend has expanded far beyond the tech firms initially featured as employees are increasingly valued in ads, showcased by brands with high loyalty, and seen as visible and important ambassadors for a brand.



ADDICTIVE RANDOMNESS

Brands increasingly will use the addictive power of random content to engage consumers. This will lead to more campaigns where consumers can add content to a central archive to browse.

Trend Longevity Rating **D**

While this idea might still be used selectively in campaigns, it is a good example of the sort of trend that we predicted early on that really should have been nothing more than an *ingredient* in a broader trend.



LOCATIONCASTING

More consumers choose to broadcast their locations, enabling brands to tailor messages to a specific site and create more opportunities to engage their customers in real life.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

Mobile marketing increasingly offers geotargeting options. However consumers continue to be wary of privacy concerns and worry about the potential for “geospamming” as they walk down the street.



CULTING OF RETAIL

The best retailers create passionate users who not only buy products, but also rave about their experiences. They inspire their social networks to try for themselves.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The rise of social media enables a continued cult-like belief in brands and a willingness from fans to not only spend money on products and services, but also act as an ambassador for the brand.



THE 2012 NON-OBVIOUS TREND REPORT OVERVIEW

Originally published January 2, 2012

Original Format: Visual presentation

The Backstory + Retrospective

Capitalizing on the success of the first year's report, the second edition continued the focus on marketing and social media trends and surpassed the original's popularity. Topics covered in this edition included the sensitive yet emerging field of the *Digital Afterlife*, the rise of *Social Loneliness*, and the growth of *Corporate Humanism*. In contrast to the inaugural report, this update took a more human tone as many of the trends described cultural shifts and consumer behavior.

The second year had a few big hits as well as a few big misses. The overall trends that centered on the growth of humanity in companies and consumers stood the test of time. On the flip side, several trends from this year turned out to be overly quirky niche concepts. *Pointillist Filmmaking* and *Social Artivism* did not quantifiably take off as expected.

The mix of trends helped me hone the process and make a big leap the following year in both the quality of the predictions and the detail behind them.

2012 TRENDS AT A GLANCE	
	Corporate Humanism
	Ethnomimicry
	Social Loneliness
	Pointillist Filmmaking
	Measuring Life
	Co-Curation
	Charitable Engagement
	Medici Marketing
	Digital Afterlife
	Real-Time Logistics
	Social Activism
	Civic Engagement 2.0
	Tagging Reality
	Changesourcing
	Retail Theater



CORPORATE HUMANISM

Companies find their humanity as they create more consumer-friendly policies and practices, spend more time listening to customers, and encourage employees to represent them in public.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This may be the most enduring of all the trends we have predicted over the past nine years as we constantly see new examples of companies finding their humanity and avoiding facelessness.



ETHNOMIMICRY

Ethnographic analysis of how people interact in the real world inspires new social tools or products that mimic human behavior and social interaction as well as fit our lives.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

While some of the examples in this trend were dated (Google+), the concept of companies watching human interaction and tailoring products and services accordingly continues to have relevance.



SOCIAL LONELINESS

Despite online connections, people feel a real-world sense of loneliness, prompting them to seek ways to create deeper friendships or at least a chance to connect with people in deeper ways.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Loneliness persists, and our digital connectivity continues to be a double-edged sword, making us feel more connected and isolated simultaneously, particularly among youth and the elderly.



POINTILLIST FILMMAKING

Named after the painting form using dots to create larger images, this trend describes a form of collaborative filmmaking in which numerous short clips are merged to tell a broader story through video.

Trend Longevity Rating **D**

This trend is perhaps my favorite disappointment. I loved the idea, but it was just too narrow to truly grow into a full trend and should have been an ingredient that elevated to a bigger idea.



CHARITABLE ENGAGEMENT

More charities rethink their focus on quick donations and instead promote participation through gaming and other methods of behavioral engagement.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

While charities and nonprofits find more ways to engage donors, the predicted focus on participation hasn't really overtaken the breakdown between short-term fundraising and longer-term engagement.



MEASURING LIFE

A growing range of tracking tools handle individualized data to monitor and measure all areas of your life. They allow you to track your own health, measure your social influence, and set goals.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

What was a big idea in 2012 has now become mainstream as we seem surrounded by tracking devices — so this trend undeniably accelerated.



MEDICI MARKETING

Inspired by the book *The Medici Effect*, this trend describes how thinking from multiple disciplines is combined to make marketing more engaging, creative, or useful.

Trend Longevity Rating **B+**

Though the book is still excellent, the name was too limiting to describe the scope of this trend — but the idea that marketing is (and should be) a melting pot for multidisciplinary thinking continues.



CO-CURATION

Curation gets more collaborative as amateurs and experts combine forces online to add their unique points of view and bring together multiple angles of many issues.

Trend Longevity Rating **B+**

Even as new tools have made it easier for anyone to curate information, the idea that this would lead to more collaboration around that curation was perhaps overly optimistic and hasn't come to fruition.



DIGITAL AFTERLIFE

During the past year, more companies started to focus on the digital afterlife, creating tools, education, and services to help manage all the data that loved ones leave behind when they die.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

This trend perhaps more than any other exemplifies the frustrating reality of a trend that always seems to be emerging as a mainstream idea but never quite makes it into the wider conversation.



REAL-TIME LOGISTICS

Tech-savvy businesses use real-time conversation in social media to generate insights that help with supply chain and logistical planning to eliminate waste and maximize profits.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Supply chain software continues to grow more sophisticated as large retailers and other distributors implement new tools to get better forecasts and leverage social conversation data to run better.



TAGGING REALITY

Better-quality mobile cameras allow developers to create tools that can tag any object in reality to unlock interactive content.

Trend Longevity Rating **D**

The prevalent use of QR codes and tags that mapped reality to the online world seemed in 2012 as if it would be huge, but the trend never materialized as originally predicted.



SOCIAL ARTIVISM

The intersection between art and activism, known increasingly as *artivism*, get social as artists see social tools to reach more people and create greater societal impact.

Trend Longevity Rating **C**

Art is used frequently for activism, and social media amplify it, but this trend should have been part of an elevated idea that went beyond just art for social issues.



CHANGESOURCING

Crowdsourcing itself is evolving beyond sharing information to a point where people can use the collaborative power of the crowd to achieve personal, social, or political change.

Trend Longevity Rating **B+**

The basic idea behind this trend focuses on crowdsourcing moving beyond information and into action as people tap the power of crowds to achieve real things, which continues today.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT 2.0

A growing range of digital tools allows people to engage more actively with local governments on everything from reporting potholes to offering suggestions for improving their communities.

Trend Longevity Rating **B+**

Though civic engagement hasn't multiplied yearly, more people are adopting these tools to allow deeper citizen engagement, and tech-savvy cities are helping this trend accelerate into the mainstream.



RETAIL THEATER

In the coming year, more retail stores will create unique experiences using the principles of theater to engage customers with memorable experiences.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Retailers have tried to get even more theatrical to combat the dangers of showrooms and the rise of online retail. If anything, this is making retail experiences even more interactive and dramatic than before.



THE 2013 NON-OBVIOUS TREND REPORT OVERVIEW

Originally published December 10, 2012

Original Format: Visual presentation + ebook

The Backstory + Retrospective

In the third year of the trend report, the level of detail expanded to more than 100 pages as the report featured more real-life examples and broader analysis. This edition of the Non-Obvious Trend Report did not originally use the five categories introduced later for alignment with future years, so I retroactively applied them and created the icons. This was also the first year that I produced a companion ebook, which was sold online and included tips on how to put the trends into action.

Thanks to the audience built from the first two editions, this was an instant No. 1 business best seller online. Trends that resonated most from this report included *Precious Print*, on the importance of physical printed objects; *Rise of Women*, on growth of female leaders in the workplace; *Backstorytelling*, on why people trust organizations that tell better stories; and *Shoptimization*, on the growing focus in retail experiences on making it easier and faster for customers to buy. Many of the ideas and themes introduced this year continued to resonate and affect later years of trend predictions. They even provided early inspiration for some megatrends introduced in this book.

2013 TRENDS AT A GLANCE



Optimistic Aging



Human Banking



Mefunding



Branded Inspiration



Backstorytelling



Healthy Content



Degree-Free Learning



Precious Print



Partnership Publishing



Microinnovation



Social Visualization



Heroic Design



Hyper Local Commerce



Powered by Women



Shoptimization



OPTIMISTIC AGING

A wealth of online content and new social networks inspires people of all ages to feel more optimistic about getting older.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

This sense of optimism about the future remains intact but is increasingly tempered by rising fears about the long-term security of the environment, divisive politics, and a global economy in flux.



HUMAN BANKING

Aiming to change years of growing distrust, banks finally uncover their human side by taking a more authentic approach to services and developing real relationships with customers.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

Recurring financial crises and immoral activities underscore the importance of this trend, but growing inequality and continued distrust of banks remain hard to overcome.



MEFUNDING

Crowdfunding gets personal as individuals use it to seek financial support for everything from taking a life-changing trip to paying for college.

Trend Longevity Rating **C**

Although many sites featured as part of this trend remain available for donations, the widespread use of tools to raise personal funding has not accelerated the way we initially anticipated.



BRANDED INSPIRATION

Brands create awe-inspiring moments, innovative ideas, and dramatic stunts to capture attention and sometimes demonstrate their values to the world.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

While this trend was about using big moments for inspiration, we continue to see a reliance on stunts to attract attention, an idea also reflected in our *Strategic Spectacle* trend from 2019.



DEGREE-FREE LEARNING

The quality of e-learning content explodes as more students consider alternatives to traditional college educations.

Trend Longevity Rating **B+**

Lifelong learners and those starting their careers continue to seek direct ways to learn new skills, solve problems, and get smarter without the necessity for a degree attached to that knowledge.



BACKSTORYTELLING

Organizations discover that taking people behind the scenes of their brand and history is one of the most powerful ways to inspire loyalty and drive purchase.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

As earning trust continues to be a challenge, the impact of using stories to offer a reason to believe in a brand's mission and share it with others continues to be effective and necessary.



PRECIOUS PRINT

Thanks to our digital-everything culture, the few objects and moments we choose to interact with in print become more valuable.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The fact that we place even more value on the things that are printed because they are more valuable and rarer has continued unabated, leading us to bring this trend back in 2017.



HEALTHY CONTENT

Health care organizations feel pressure to create more useful and substantial health content to satisfy increasingly empowered patients who are skeptical of messages delivered in other ways.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The wealth of content about health online has exploded, as has the volume of credible and authoritative health care organizations publishing and sharing this content in multiple formats online.



PARTNERSHIP PUBLISHING

Aspiring authors, lacking a platform, and seasoned publishing professionals, in need of partners and content, team up to create a new "do-it-together" model of publishing.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

This trend inspired my wife and I to start Ideapress Publishing in 2014 and still drives a shift in publishing but has led many entrants of questionable ethics and quality into the industry.



MICROINNOVATION

Thinking small becomes the new competitive advantage as slight changes to features or benefits create big value.

Trend Longevity Rating **A-**

The focus on making incremental changes to products in ways that can deliver ongoing value continues to drive many companies to innovate in small, sometimes hard-to-notice but still measurable ways.



HYPER LOCAL COMMERCE

New services and technology make it easier for anyone to invest in local businesses and buy from local merchants.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

While local commerce continues to matter, threats from turnkey online competitors and the ability to have anything delivered make this a trend that has diminished in importance.



SOCIAL VISUALIZATION

To make data more accessible, new tools and technologies allow people to visualize content as part of their social profiles and online conversations.

Trend Longevity Rating **A-**

Tools for visualizing data continue to be commonplace and popular. This is one of those trends that were emerging when first written but seem obvious and still accurate.



POWERED BY WOMEN

Business leaders, pop culture, and ground-breaking new research intersect to prove that our ideal future will be led by strong and innovative women working on the front lines.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

As women take increasingly prominent roles in business and culture, this trend remains a powerful force. It was the precursor to a popular 2017 trend, *Fierce Femininity*.



HEROIC DESIGN

Design takes a leading role in the invention and adoption of new products, ideas, and campaigns to help change the world.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The growth of design thinking and a continued global need for audacious solutions to problems facing humankind have made this a trend we see renewed examples of every year.



SHOPTIMIZATION

The proliferation of smart phones, new mobile apps, and startups lets consumers optimize and enhance the process of shopping for anything online and off.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Shopping experiences are optimized as retailers in all categories develop better mobile-enabled interfaces, smarter kiosks, easy-to-use apps, and a faster one-button checkout process.



THE 2014 NON-OBVIOUS TREND REPORT OVERVIEW

Originally published February 18, 2014

Original Format: Visual presentation + ebook

The Backstory + Retrospective

The fourth edition of the trend report was heavily influenced by a dramatic growth in my speaking appearances at conferences across the world. The demand and popularity of the report also led me to leave my role at Ogilvy after eight years to become an entrepreneur, start my own consulting business, and launch a publishing business.

For the first time, the trends were broken down into five categories: Culture + Consumer Behavior, Marketing + Social Media, Economics + Entrepreneurship, Technology + Design, and Media + Education. Some of the most popular trends from this year were *Desperate Detox*, about consumers hungry to escape the ever-present technology around them; *Curated Sensationalism*, on the increasing use of attention-grabbing headlines; *Subscription Commerce*, about long-established brands and products shifting to a subscription model; *Branded Utility*, on brands making their marketing more useful; and *Obsessive Productivity*, about people's desire to optimize their time in any way possible. These categories were used for the next five years.

This report also incorporated some of the trend research on health care that co-author Fard Johnmar and I published in our book *ePatient 2015*.

2014 TRENDS AT A GLANCE



Desperate Detox



Media Bingeing



Obsessive Productivity



Lovable Imperfection



Branded Utility



Shareable Humanity



Curated Sensationalism



Distributed Expertise



Anti-stereotyping



Privacy Paranoia



Overquantified Life



Microdesign



Subscription Commerce



Instant Entrepreneurs



Collaborative Economy



DESPERATE DETOX

Consumers try to connect more authentically with others and seek out moments of reflection by intentionally disconnecting from the technology surrounding them.

Trend Longevity Rating

As technology remains omnipresent in our lives, we continue to see new examples of this trend in action almost every week. That led us to bring it back for our 2017 report.



MEDIA BINGEING

As more media and entertainment are available from any device on demand, consumers binge and are willing to pay extra for the convenience.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

As streaming options grow exponentially, we will see some fatigue with the idea of binge-watching as consumers feel overloaded and no longer obliged to stay up to date on every show.



OBSESSIVE PRODUCTIVITY

With thousands of life-optimizing apps and instant advice from social media-savvy self-help gurus, becoming more productive has become the ultimate obsession.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

People continue to fret over productivity as new books promise tips for life optimization. Many hack their daily chores and seek to save time through any means possible.





LOVABLE IMPERFECTION

Consumers search for true authenticity and reward minor imperfections in products, personalities, and brands by showing greater loyalty and trust.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

In the nine years of this report, this trend has been among our most popular. We brought it back in the 2015 report as *Unperfection* and in 2018 as *Lovable Unperfection*. It remains one of our most popular trends.



CURATED SENSATIONALISM

As the line between news and entertainment blurs, smart curation displaces journalism as engaging content is paired with sensational headlines to drive millions of views.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Media continue to rely on sensationalism, which makes this trend a precursor to many other popular trends in later years, including *Truthing*, *Manipulated Outrage*, and *Strategic Spectacle*.



BRANDED UTILITY

Brands use content marketing and greater integration between marketing and operations centers to augment promotions with real ways to add value to customer's lives.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

As content marketing continues to grow, brands increasingly find new ways to provide value, answer questions, and use marketing as a tool for education rather than purely for promotion.



DISTRIBUTED EXPERTISE

The idea of expertise itself shifts to become more inclusive, less academic, and more widely available on demand and in real time.

Trend Longevity Rating **A-**

Learning through experts online in many formats is gaining popularity, and learning platforms are growing quickly. Our ability to access expertise in real time will keep rising.



SHAREABLE HUMANITY

Content shared on social media gets more emotional as people share amazing examples of humanity and as brands inject more feelings into marketing communications efforts.

Trend Longevity Rating **C**

While human stories matter, this trend was negatively affected by fatigue from overly dramatic media stories and click-baiting headlines, which have made people far more skeptical of such stories.



ANTI-STEREOTYPING

Across media and entertainment, gender roles start to reverse, assumptions about alternative lifestyles are challenged, diversity increases, and perceptions of how people are defined continue to evolve.

Trend Longevity Rating **A-**

We see new stories that help us re-evaluate people, see gender as fluid, and challenge our long-held assumptions about identity and blurring of what were once distinct lines.



PRIVACY PARANOIA

New data breaches are leading to a new global sense of paranoia about what governments and brands know about us and how they might use big data in potentially harmful ways.

Trend Longevity Rating **C**

While privacy persists as a concern, we are seeing this paranoia shift to empowerment as better oversight makes organizations misusing data far harder.



SUBSCRIPTION COMMERCE

More businesses and retailers use subscriptions to sell recurring services or products to customers instead of focusing on one-time sales.

Trend Longevity Rating **B-**

More industries and brands are turning to the lessons of subscription commerce, but it has led to burnout as consumers sometimes long for buying products or services the old way.



OVERQUANTIFIED LIFE

The value of personal data from wearable devices, for example, is obscured by cute infographics and superficial results that prevent thoughtful analysis of the data and effects on life decisions.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

While finding value from the data we collect on ourselves continues to be a challenge, the analytical tools and personal desire to make such data actionable are helping manage the downside.



INSTANT ENTREPRENEURS

As the barriers to starting a new business begin to fall, incentives and tools mean anyone with an idea can launch a startup knowing that the costs and risks of failure are not as high as before.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

While entrepreneurship appeals to more professionals, governments around the world continue to see it as a growth engine and work to make starting a business easier for anyone.



MICRODESIGN

As communication becomes more visual, design gains more respect, and demand for design skills grows, leading to easier access to bite-sized chunks of design expertise.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

While the need for design expertise continues to grow, the narrow vision of this trend solely focused on design resources has limited application or relevance in wider situations.

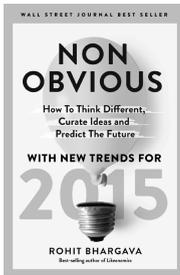


COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY

New business models and tools allow consumers and brands to tap the power of sharing and collaborating to find new ways to buy, sell, and consume products and services.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

We are firmly in the middle of the “sharing economy” as the idea of ownership shifts, people use and share products without owning them, and the economy stays collaborative.



THE 2015 NON-OBVIOUS TREND REPORT OVERVIEW

Originally published March 1, 2015

Original Format: Hardcover + Paperback + ebook

The Backstory + Retrospective

This year Non-Obvious was first published in hardcover format, and the trend report truly took off. The book was an instant Wall Street Journal best seller. For the first time it revealed my full process of trend curation, which I had shared previously only in private corporate workshops.

In addition to the explanations about becoming a trend curator and using my Haystack Method, the report introduced several popular trends that drew worldwide media attention. A few highlights from this report included *Unperfection*, about the preference people often have for naturally flawed and more human products and leaders; *Small Data*, on the personal information consumers collect on their own behavior; *Everyday Stardom*, about sometimes unrealistic consumer expectations that they are always VIPs; and *Selfie Confidence*, on the counterintuitive idea that taking and sharing selfies may be a form of building self-esteem.

Beyond the trends, the book's popularity this year introduced trend curation to a much broader audience, and the concept began to resonate globally. The book was contracted for six translated editions, and my speaking and workshop invitations, including more global appearances. The book's success also allowed the Non-Obvious Company to bring on more partners and team members, which in turn allowed us to expand the research and curation abilities and make the future reports even stronger.

2015 TRENDS AT A GLANCE	
	Everyday Stardom
	Selfie Confidence
	Mainstream Mindfulness
	Branded Benevolence
	Reverse Retail
	Reluctant Marketer
	Glanceable Content
	Mood Matching
	Experimedia
	Unperfection
	Predictive Protection
	Engineered Addiction
	Small Data
	Disruptive Distribution
	Micro Consumption



EVERYDAY STARDOM

The growth of personalization leads more consumers to expect everyday interactions to be transformed into celebrity experiences with them as the stars of the show.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

As companies use big data to personalize experiences and revamp customers' experience, consumers' expectations rise, sometimes verging on the impossible.



SELFIE CONFIDENCE

The ability to share a carefully crafted online persona allows people to use selfies to build their own self-esteem and confidence by portraying themselves as they wish to be seen in the world.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

The essence of this trend remains unchanged, but how we portray ourselves online or build our confidence has moved far beyond , as you can read in the megatrend of *Amplified Identity*.



MAINSTREAM MINDFULNESS

Meditation, yoga, and quiet contemplation become powerful tools for individuals and organizations to improve performance, health, and motivation.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Not only did we bring this trend back as a featured trend in 2017, but it has come to describe entire industries, new ways of thinking, and a strong movement to improve ourselves at home and at work.



BRANDED BENEVOLENCE

Companies increasingly put purpose at the center of their businesses to show a deeper commitment to doing good that goes beyond donating money or getting positive PR.

Trend Longevity Rating **A-**

This was the first of our trends to spotlight brands demonstrating a commitment to the environment, social issues, and ethical business practices, a theme that is discussed in the *Purposeful Profit* megatrend.



GLANCEABLE CONTENT

Our shrinking attention spans and the explosion of all forms of content online and offline lead creators to optimize stories for rapid consumption at a glance.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

Daily or hourly content keeps attracting attention and is appealing because it is quickly scanned. However, it is a double-edged sword as it pushes makers toward creating a spectacle.



REVERSE RETAIL

Brands increasingly invest in high-touch in-store experiences to build brand affinity and educate customers, while seamlessly integrating online channels to complete actual purchases and fulfill orders.

Trend Longevity Rating **A-**

Since this trend first was published, retailers have continued to focus on being experiential and immersive, a fact we further explored in our 2019 trend of *Strategic Spectacle*.



MOOD MATCHING

As tracking technology becomes more sophisticated, media, advertising, and immersive experiences like gaming and learning can be tailored to match consumer moods.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

As new technology such as the use of facial tracking AI becomes more widespread, the idea that you can be engaged or marketed to based on your mood is likely to gain more traction.



RELUCTANT MARKETER

As marketing shifts away from pure promotion, leaders and organizations abandon traditional silos, embrace content marketing, and invest in the customer experience.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

Marketing continues to evolve away from promotion and to incorporate lessons from sales, innovation, research, data, and more, which leads to marketers' reluctance about what to call themselves.



EXPERIMEDIA

Content creators use social experiments and real-life interactions to study human behavior in unique new ways and ultimately to build more realistic and entertaining narratives.

Trend Longevity Rating **B-**

It once seemed that media featuring social experiments would continue indefinitely, but this trend has slowed as the popularity of viral experiments to shock and awe wanes.



UNPERFECTION

As people seek more personal and human experiences, brands and creators intentionally focus on personality, quirkiness, and intentional imperfections to be more human and desirable.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The idea that brands and leaders are showing vulnerability and building trust through a willingness to share flaws continues to resonate and is a key ingredient in acting more human.



SMALL DATA

As consumers increasingly collect their own data from online activities, brand-owned big data becomes less valuable than small data in certain situations.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

The potential of small data to help customize experiences is vast, yet it remains underutilized and difficult to leverage in a meaningful way even though we still collect a lot of it.



PREDICTIVE PROTECTION

A growing concern for privacy coupled with elevated expectations of technology's role in our lives leads to more intuitive products, services, and features to help us live better, safer, and more efficient lives.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This trend is a precursor to our megatrend of *Protective Tech* and offered an early look at the importance of this type of intuition, an idea we also explore in our 2017 trend of *Robot Renaissance*.



DISRUPTIVE DISTRIBUTION

Creators and makers use new models for distribution to disrupt the usual channels, cut out middlemen, and build more direct connections with fans and buyers.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This trend has exploded in recent years and is likely to affect even more industries. It is a central concept that we brought back in 2018 and was a driver of the megatrend *Flux Commerce*.



ENGINEERED ADDICTION

Greater understanding of the behavioral science behind habit formation leads to more designers and engineers intentionally creating addictive experiences that capture consumers' time, money, and loyalty.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

If you consider the growth of everything from packaged foods to fantasy sports, this trend is central to how experiences can be engineered to be irresistible whether they are good for us or not.

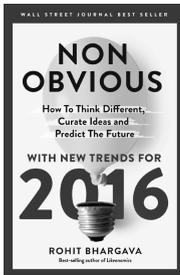


MICRO CONSUMPTION

As new payment models, products, and experiences become available in bite-sized portions, multiple industries will experiment with new micro-sized forms of pricing and payments.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

This trend continues to show huge potential. Unfortunately, platforms still quibble over micro-currency formats. It remains difficult to use, and microtransactions aren't mainstream.



THE 2016 NON-OBVIOUS TREND REPORT OVERVIEW

Originally published January 25, 2016

Original Format: Paperback + ebook

The Backstory + Retrospective

After releasing the book in print for the first time in 2015, it was tempting to return to digital for the new editions. The volume of my in-person appearances made this impractical, so I chose to publish a paperback update to the book less than 12 months after the original was released. The update followed the convention of previous years by introducing new trends. However, given the compressed time frame, my growing team and I realized that we might abandon some predictions before we explored their significance.

As a result, we decided on a new convention: Every year moving forward, we would curate ten new trends and renew five previous predictions with an update on how those trends had evolved since we first wrote about them.

In the 2016 edition, readers were introduced to the new ideas of *Strategic Downgrading*, about consumers choosing supposedly inferior earlier versions of products because they often worked better, lasted longer, or were easier to use; *Automated Adulthood*, on the growing range of technology making things easier for young people launching their independent lives; and *Virtual Empathy*, about the idea that technology might offer us a path to empathy for others unlike ourselves.

For the first and only time, the book included an ill-advised 2016 update in which each trend from the previous year was revisited with more examples. Most readers thought it was not essential and unnecessarily long. In future editions, we relied instead on a final section similar to this one to analyze past predictions.

2016 TRENDS AT A GLANCE

-  **E-mpulse Buying**
-  **Strategic Downgrading**
-  **Optimistic Aging**
-  **B2Beyond Marketing**
-  **Personality Mapping**
-  **Branded Utility**
-  **Mainstream Multiculturalism**
-  **Earned Consumption**
-  **Anti-stereotyping**
-  **Virtual Empathy**
-  **Data Overflow**
-  **Heroic Design**
-  **Insourced Incubation**
-  **Automated Adulthood**
-  **Obsessive Productivity**



E-MPULSE BUYING

Despite fears that the e-commerce might kill impulse buying, real-time marketing and smart interfaces entice consumers to make split-second emotional buying decisions online as well.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

As the sophistication of e-commerce grows, online selling is offering more opportunities to encourage impulse buys through upselling, retargeting, bundling, and many other techniques.



STRATEGIC DOWNGRADING

As more products and services get upgraded, consumers start rejecting these supposedly improved options and downgrading to simpler, cheaper, and more functional versions.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Since first writing about this trend, it has taken on a life of its own across the Internet. Consumers continue to seek simplicity, choose retro products, and reject excessive options.



OPTIMISTIC AGING

(Originally curated 2013)
After years of being sold anti-aging solutions, a generation of newly aging adults are embracing the upside of getting older and finding optimism in the time their “third age” can offer.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

This optimism about the future remains intact. However, it is tempered by rising fears about the environment, divisive politics, and a global economy in flux.



B2BEYOND MARKETING

B2B brands embrace their humanity, take inspiration from other sectors, and think more broadly about effectively marketing to decision makers as people first and niche B2B buyers second.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

This was one of those frustrating trends that were well predicted and quantifiably true, yet it struggled to accelerate because so many B2B brands resist different thinking.



MAINSTREAM MULTICULTURALISM

After years of being ignored, niche demographics, multicultural citizens, and their cultures find widespread acceptance through a growing integration of diverse ideas in culture and media.

Trend Longevity Rating **A-**

Though this trend continues to receive unsettling opposition from small-minded xenophobic politicians, there is an unstoppable generational shift towards acceptance and embrace of multiple cultures.



PERSONALITY MAPPING

As behavioral measurement tools build a detailed map of our personalities, organizations can use this information to bring like-minded people together and more effectively engage them.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

This trend had a high potential to engage people based on what they love, but in the past few years, it was wasted by overly segmenting audiences or trying to sell them something.



EARNED CONSUMPTION

The desire for authentic experiences makes consumers more willing to earn their right to consume, offering businesses a chance to build more loyalty and engagement by letting consumers “pay” them.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

The quest for status and recognition continues to entice consumers and can be rewarding for the right brands, but it remains a difficult task to stay worthy of this type of customer devotion.



BRANDED UTILITY

(Originally curated 2014)

Brands begin to focus on a combination of content marketing and a greater integration between marketing and operations to provide value through usefulness in customer’s lives.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

As content marketing continues to grow, brands increasingly find new ways to provide value, answer questions, and use marketing as a tool for education rather than purely for promotion.



ANTI-STEREOTYPING

(Originally curated 2014)

Across media and entertainment, gender roles start to reverse, assumptions about alternative lifestyles are challenged, diversity increases, and perceptions of how people are defined continue to evolve.

Trend Longevity Rating **A-**

We continue to see new stories that help us re-evaluate people, see gender as fluid, and generally challenge our long-held assumptions about identity and a blurring of what were once distinct lines.



VIRTUAL EMPATHY

The dramatic growth of virtual reality and immersive technology allows creators to tell deeper stories and lets people see the world from another point of view, growing their empathy for those unlike themselves.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The examples of virtual reality and tech used to improve and quantify human empathy have become too numerous to count. This trend was so popular that we brought it back in 2018.



DATA OVERFLOW

The growing amount of personal and corporate-owned data mixed with open data creates new challenges for better automated analysis tools, more AI, smarter curation, and more startup investment.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This is the first of a host of data-related trends from 2015 to 2019 that focus on the good and bad of data. A clear “bad” driving the continued relevance of this trend: There is too much of it.



HEROIC DESIGN

(Originally curated 2014)

Design takes a leading role in the introduction of new products, ideas, and inspiration to change the world in nuanced, audacious, irreverent, and sometimes unexpectedly heroic ways.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The growth of design thinking and a continued global need for audacious solutions to problems facing humankind have made this a trend we see renewed examples of every year.



INSOURCED INCUBATION

Companies desperate to be more innovative increasingly look to bring more outside innovators in-house, enticing them with funding, beautiful co-working lab spaces, and a feel-good pitch.

Trend Longevity Rating **B-**

While this activity remained popular for few years, limited results and an outsized focus on the theater of innovation led to a slowdown, a point we noted in 2019 trend *Innovation Envy*.



AUTOMATED ADULTHOOD

As more people go through a prolonged period of emerging adulthood, a growing range of technology and services helps to automate all aspects of their journey to adulthood.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

New tools for automated living, smart homes, and predictive tech are combining with co-living options to help softly guide emerging adults emotionally and physically into becoming somewhat fully independent.



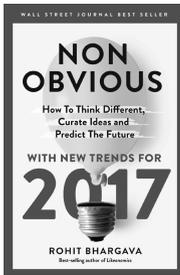
OBSESSIVE PRODUCTIVITY

(Originally curated 2014)

Thanks to our reduced attention spans and always-on technology, the necessity to be productive in every moment rapidly evolved into an obsession that underpins every moment.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

More than three years after this trend was curated, people continue to fret over productivity, hack their time, and desperately seek to save time through any means possible.



THE 2017 NON-OBVIOUS TREND REPORT OVERVIEW

Originally published December 5, 2016

Original Format: Paperback + ebook

The Backstory + Retrospective

If you ever looked at purchasing a new model of a car, you know that manufacturers don't revamp the entire design every year. Some years the model is relatively unchanged, and some years it is updated significantly. This was a "maintenance" year for the Non-Obvious Trend series: The interior design and format were largely the same as 2016. The book again had a big release, and for the first time it was distributed widely across desirable locations, such as airport bookstores, which helped broaden the audience.

More readers discovered the report for the first time, and more international translations entered the market. Meanwhile, my speaking dates and workshops continued to grow. From a content perspective, this was a popular year with several standout trends, including *Passive Loyalty*, about a shift in how brands actually gain loyalty; *Fierce Femininity*, on the new revolution in how women are portrayed in media and culture; and *Invisible Technology*, about how technology increasingly anticipates our needs and blends unnoticeably into our lives.

This 2017 edition also won the first of what would be many book honors, a Silver Medal for Business Theory from the highly competitive Axiom Book Awards.

2017 TRENDS AT A GLANCE



Fierce Femininity



Side Quirks



Desperate Detox



Passive Loyalty



Authentic Fame-seekers



Lovable Unperfection



Preserved Past



Deep Diving



Precious Print



Invisible Technology



Robot Renaissance



Self-Aware Data



Moonshot Entrepreneurship



Outrageous Outsiders



Mainstream Mindfulness



FIERCE FEMININITY

The fierce, independent woman has emerged in recent years, redefining the concept of femininity and reimagining gender roles.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Current events and the political and cultural climate continue to shift how we perceive women's place in modern society. Since publishing this trend, we see a new story reinforcing its validity almost weekly.



SIDE QUIRKS

A global shift toward individualism has led to a surge in side-hustle, entrepreneurs driven by passion, and a renewed appreciation for what makes people unique.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

People continue to create value from their hobbies, passions, and personality quirks. This desire to pursue side projects and the global rise of individualism inspired us to bring this trend back in 2019.



DESPERATE DETOX

(Originally curated 2014)

As technology, media clutter, and an overload of gadgets make life increasingly stressful, people are seeking moments of reflection and pause.

Trend Longevity Rating **A-**

Tech saturation continues to drive people to find a respite. Apps help people to disconnect, places in the real world offer tech-free zones, and people seek more peace and quiet.



PASSIVE LOYALTY

A new understanding of loyalty is challenging brands to get smarter about how they can generate brand enthusiasts.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Forward-looking brands redesign their loyalty programs and try delight to inspire loyalty. Given the focus on this, we decided to republish this trend in 2019.



PRESERVED PAST

(Originally curated 2014)

Technology is offering new ways to preserve history, changing the way we experience, remember, and learn from the past in the process.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This trend continues to be vitally important as work continues to preserve artifacts digitally and produce 3D libraries of cultural sites before they are damaged in war or consumed by natural disaster.



AUTHENTIC FAMESEEKERS

A new generation of creators is turning to social media to establish brands, attract eyeballs, and become the next big thing.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

Influencers continue to be a force online, but their constant quest to capture our attention is leading to fatigue with their supposed authenticity and diverting attention elsewhere.



DEEP DIVING

While brands compete for our shrinking attention spans with more content than ever, many people prefer to go all in on the topics and experiences that truly capture their interest.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

People still find enjoyment in content and storytelling that takes them deep into interesting topics. Podcasts, investigative journalism, immersive film, and other long-form experiences continue to be appealing.



LOVABLE IMPERFECTION

(Originally curated 2014)

Today successful marketing campaigns increasing focus on using the power of personality, quirkiness, and imperfections to create authentic with customers connections.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The idea that brands and leaders are showing vulnerability and building trust through a willingness to share flaws continues to resonate and is a key ingredient in brands acting more human.



PRECIOUS PRINT

(Originally curated 2013)

Thanks to the digital revolution, people are developing a more meaningful and emotional relationship with physical objects and printed material.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The fact that we place even more value on the things that are printed because they are more valuable and rarer has continued, leading us to integrate this trend into the 2018 trend of *Touchworthy*.



INVISIBLE TECHNOLOGY

As technology grows more sophisticated, it becomes better at predicting and anticipating needs, protecting us, and providing utility while blending seamlessly into our lives.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Technology continues seamlessly to make everyday tasks and transactions easier, cheaper, and more efficient. These benefits make this trend continually relevant and a key element of our *Protective Tech* megatrend.



MOONSHOT ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A new generation of entrepreneurs is thinking beyond profit and placing social impact, not financial performance, at the center of their organizations' missions.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The world's problems remain complex, and entrepreneurs generate social impact and fill the gap left by ineffective governments. This trend also inspired the trend of *Good Speed* from the 2019 report.



ROBOT RENAISSANCE

As robots' utility moves into the home and the workplace, they adopt more human-like interfaces and micro-personalities.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

As we live through this "renaissance age" of robots, we are tackling big questions about what we want them to do and what we don't. The debate and trend could shape the decade to come.



OUTRAGEOUS OUTSIDERS

Some of today's most innovative and influential ideas are coming from complete outsiders whose unconventional quirks disrupt entire industries.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

Outsiders continue to disrupt entire industries, countries, and global orders. We expect this trend will continue to affect everything from politics to music in the coming decade.



SELF-AWARE DATA

As technology advances, algorithms and artificial intelligence make real-time analysis so fast that it can move from input to insight to action all on its own.

Trend Longevity Rating **A-**

In contrast to our more alarmist trends of *Data Overflow* and *Data Pollution*, this trend suggests data might create value by analyzing itself — something that is showing signs of happening.



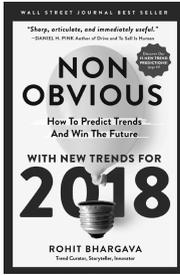
MAINSTREAM MINDFULNESS

(Originally curated 2015)

Meditation, yoga, and quiet contemplation become powerful tools for individuals and organizations to improve performance, health, and motivation.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Since the trend was predicted several years ago, it has continued to describe entire industries, new ways of thinking, and a strong movement to improve ourselves at home and at work.



THE 2018 NON-OBVIOUS TREND REPORT OVERVIEW

Originally published December 5, 2017

Original Format: Paperback + ebook

The Backstory + Retrospective

For this edition, I engaged a completely new team and introduced an upgraded and more visual interior design. The book incorporated more photographs and a unique color on the inside to add contrast.

Some of the most popular trends from this report included *Truth-ing*, about why we trust in face-to-face interactions more than any other type; *Brand Stand*, on why consumers buy from brands who are unafraid to share what they believe in; *Light-Speed Learning*, about why we expect to learn anything faster than ever; and *Manipulated Outrage*, on what happens when a news media culture of outrage starts to define an individual's identity.

Thanks in part to the updates, as well as submissions to many more industry book awards, the 2018 edition won six additional business book honors, including selection as a finalist for the prestigious Leonard L. Berry Marketing Book Prize from the American Marketing Association.

2018 TRENDS AT A GLANCE



Truthing



Ungendered



Enlightened Consumption



Overtargeting



Brand Stand



Backstorytelling



Manipulated Outrage



Light-speed Learning



Virtual Empathy



Human Mode



Data Pollution



Predictive Protection



Approachable Luxury



Touchworthy



Disruptive Distribution



TRUTHING

With trust eroding in media and institutions, people are engaging in a personal quest for the truth based on direct observation and face-to-face interaction.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

As distrust of the media, governments, and corporations spreads, this important trend describes a critical coping mechanism of looking inward that shows no sign of stopping.



UNGENDERED

Shifting definitions of traditional gender roles are leading some to reject the notion of gender completely, while others aim to mask gender from products, experiences, and even their own identities.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This trend not only has grown so quickly, but also has been so culture changing and defining that we selected a slightly redefined and elevated version of it as one of our megatrends, *Ungendering*.



ENLIGHTENED CONSUMPTION

Empowered with information about products and services, people are choosing to make a statement about their values and the world through what they buy, where they work, and how they invest.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This is a critical trend to watch because of the speed with which we access to real-time information to evaluate the impact our buying has on the world.



OVERTARGETING

Lured by the promise of big data, organizations segment audiences too narrowly and unintentionally end up abandoning large groups of potentially lucrative customers.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

While businesses frequently and unnecessarily narrow their audience, in many cases it has not raised the major issues or challenges that we initially predicted.



MANIPULATED OUTRAGE

Media, data analytics, and advertising are combining forces to create a perpetual stream of noise that is intended to incite rage and elicit angry reactions on social media and in real life.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This trend remains sadly important because of continued manipulation by evil corporations and self-centered politicians. It's exacerbated by gullible media who help amplify the manipulation.



BRAND STAND

Reacting to a polarized media atmosphere, more brands feel compelled to take a stand and highlight their core values rather than try to be all things to all people.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

In the year since this trend was first predicted, there have been many examples of brands utilizing this effect to inspire belief, share their values, and grow loyalty.



LIGHT-SPEED LEARNING

The road to mastery on any topic gets faster through the help of bite-sized learning modules that make education more time efficient, engaging, useful, and fun.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This trend has driven real business change and positive results, and it served as one of the primary inspirations for our megatrend of *Instant Knowledge*.



BACKSTORYTELLING

(Originally curated 2013)

Organizations use the power of stories to share their heritage, mission, and reason for existing with audiences. Their aim is to earn loyalty and position themselves as desirable places to work.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

If there is any trend that could be described as universally important, it would be this one. Though it has been brought back over time, the idea of stories as a way for brands to stand apart continues to be an effective strategy.



VIRTUAL EMPATHY

(Originally curated 2014)

Immersive experiences delivered through technology and personal interactions increase empathy by helping people see the world through foreign and unfamiliar eyes.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This trend has broadened beyond virtual reality technology to include examples of installations, art projects, and live experiences that offer people ways to feel more empathy.



HUMAN MODE

As automation increases, people hungry for more personal and authentic experiences begin to put a premium on advice, services, and interaction involving actual humans.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

While automation grows, we will see a rise in the importance of human interactions and a continued willingness to pay a premium in order to have a real person help you in real life.



APPROACHABLE LUXURY

Luxury is no longer defined by scarcity and privilege, but rather more down-to-earth authentic human experiences that create unforgettable moments worth sharing.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Alongside luxury that was approachable was luxury that was even more out of touch, designed for the *Overwealthy*, as described in our 2019 prediction.



DATA POLLUTION

As we create more methods for quantifying the world around us, data are manipulated, contaminated, and sabotaged, making it harder to separate true insights from useless noise.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

There is no doubt the flood of data is rising, and sorting through it to find what really matters is a serious problem that even smart AI has not been able to solve.



TOUCHWORTHY

Overwhelmed by digital, consumers turn back toward products and experiences that they can touch, feel, and sense to deliver a much-needed sense of calm, simplicity, and humanity.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The more digital things are becoming, the more important tactile experiences are. Sometimes we just want a more real and tangible experience that we can hold.



PREDICTIVE PROTECTION

(Originally curated 2015)

Organizations create smarter connected products, services, and features that can protect our safety, health, and environment by anticipating our actions or needs.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This trend was a precursor to our megatrend of *Protective Tech*. It returned to the report a second time after initially appearing in the 2015 edition.



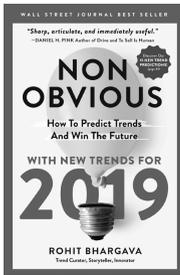
DISRUPTIVE DISTRIBUTION

(Originally curated 2015)

Traditional models of distribution get reinvented as businesses of all sizes seek more efficiency, build direct connections with consumers, and rethink their own business models.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This trend has exploded in recent years and is likely to impact even more industries since we first predicted it in 2015. It was also a driver for the megatrend of *Flux Commerce*.



THE 2019 NON-OBVIOUS TREND REPORT OVERVIEW

Originally published January 1, 2019

Original Format: Paperback + ebook

The Backstory + Retrospective

Continuing with the design introduced in 2018, this edition featured a similarly visual look and feel. Popular trends from this edition included *Innovation Envy*, about corporations desperately copying one another instead of truly thinking differently; *Muddled Masculinity*, on our shifting cultural understanding of what it means to be a man; *Artificial Influence*, about how we increasingly put our faith in influencers who are fabricated for us; and *Retrotrust*, on why we trust products and brands that we recognize from our past.

This new edition also included custom illustrations, updated visuals, and a comprehensive appendix reviewing all past trends. In terms of visibility, the audience for the report and trends continued to grow and receive worldwide attention across 2019. Several more foreign language editions were published, more translation deals were finalized and I continued to present the insights on larger stages and deliver more frequent talks. Foreshadowing the publication of this Megatrends edition, these presentations more frequently focused on multi-year insights and shifts curated across the past decade instead of just a single year's insights.

2019 TRENDS AT A GLANCE



Strategic Spectacle



Muddled Masculinity



Side Quirks



Artificial Influence



Retrotrust



B2Beyond Marketing



Fad Fatigue



Extreme Uncluttering



Deliberate Downgrading



Enterprise Empathy



Innovation Envy



Robot Renaissance



Good Speed



Overwealthy



Passive Loyalty



STRATEGIC SPECTACLE

Brands and creators intentionally use spectacles to capture attention and drive engagement.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

The use of spectacles continues to grow as a trend. The difficulty of capturing attention factored significantly into the definition of megatrend *Attention Wealth*.



MUDDLED MASCULINITY

The rising empowerment of women and re-evaluation of gender are causing widespread confusion and angst about what it means to be a man today.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

There have been continual signs since publishing this trend that the confusion is getting more pronounced and in some cases leading to significant re-evaluations of self-identity from men.



SIDE QUIRKS

(Originally curated 2017)

A global shift toward individualism drives people to follow their passion, start a side business, and appreciate quirks in one another.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Since we first published this trend, the world seems to be getting quirkier than ever. Individualism rises, subgenres grow, and many seem to seek and find new ways to express themselves.



ARTIFICIAL INFLUENCE

Creators, corporations, and governments use virtual creations to shift public perception, sell products, and even turn fantasy into reality.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

While Artificial Influence keeps rising, we are seeing subtle and direct ways that people are fighting back against this manufactured influence and demanding more authenticity.



FAD FATIGUE

Consumers get weary of innovations claiming to be the next big thing and assume none will last long.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Perhaps inevitably the speed of innovation and disruption has led to a continued relevance for this trend as people still feel this same fatigue and maintain their skepticism about all fads as a result.



RETROTRUST

Often unsure of whom to trust, consumers look back to organizations and experiences with brands that have a legacy as well as those with which they have a personal history.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This trend has plenty of new stories from the year since we initially spotlighted it, and it played a fundamental part in the definition for our megatrend *Revivalism*.



EXTREME UNCLUTTERING

To simplify daily life, people shed their excess stuff and seek pared-down experiences and ways to unclutter their digital identities, too.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

There are no indications that this sometimes desperate quest to reduce clutter is slowing down. Instead, people seek even more ways to simplify, get rid of “stuff” and declutter their daily lives.



B2BEYOND MARKETING

(Originally curated 2016)

B2B brands use non-traditional methods to embrace their humanity and reach decision makers along with a broader audience.

Trend Longevity Rating **B**

This was one of those frustrating trends that was well predicted and quantifiably true, yet it struggled to accelerate because of the resistance so many B2B brands have to different thinking.



DELIBERATE DOWNGRADING

(Originally curated 2016)

As tech-enabled products become overbearing, consumers opt to downgrade to simpler, cheaper, or more functional versions instead.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This trend, slightly revised from the original *Deliberate vs Strategic Downgrading*, continues to be widely cited as consumers skip excessively upgraded options and choose the option they prefer.



ENTERPRISE EMPATHY

Empathy becomes a driver of innovation and revenue as well as a point of differentiation for products, services, hiring, and experiences.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

An evolution from *Virtual Empathy*, this trend was written to encompass the many businesses now using empathy as a competitive advantage far beyond tech firms pioneering Virtual Reality experiences.



GOOD SPEED

The urgency of the problems facing humanity is inspiring corporations, entrepreneurs, and individuals to find ways of doing good and generating results more quickly.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

More examples appear of good being done by entrepreneurs and large brands alike as they feel the urgency to make an impact and share it with conscientious consumers who care.



INNOVATION ENVY

Fear leads entrepreneurs, businesses, and institutions to envy competitors and approach innovation with admiration or desperation.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

This was perhaps the most popular trend of the 2019 report, inspiring corporate leaders to launch internal initiatives to ensure they weren't engaging in some *Innovation Envy* themselves.



OVERWEALTHY

Growing income inequality leads to more guilt among the affluent, prompting them to seek more ways to give back.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

As income inequality worsens, the affluent try to find ways to help but often fail. Solutions to such large issues continue to evade us. This trend hasn't moved much.



ROBOT RENAISSANCE

(Originally curated 2017)

As robots adopt more human-like interfaces and micro-personalities, they are raising new questions and issues about how we relate to technology.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

As we live through this "renaissance age" of robots, we are tackling big questions about what we want them to do and what we don't. This debate and trend could shape the decade to come.



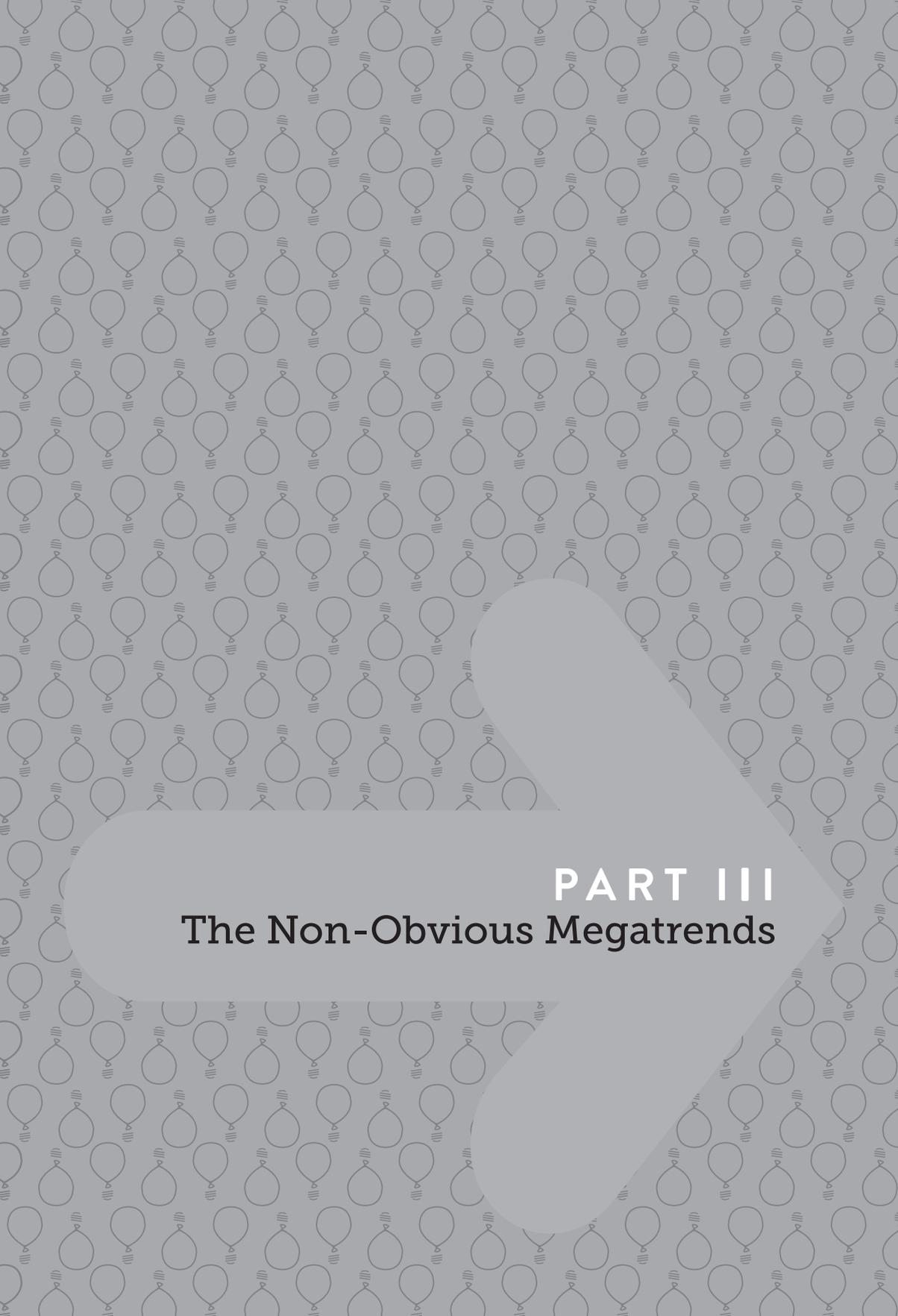
PASSIVE LOYALTY

(Originally curated 2017)

As switching from brands becomes easier, companies re-evaluate who is loyal, who isn't, and how to inspire true loyalty.

Trend Longevity Rating **A**

Forward-looking brands redesign their loyalty programs and try delight to inspire loyalty. Given the focus on this, we decided to bring back and republish this trend in 2019.



PART III
The Non-Obvious Megatrends

THE NON-OBVIOUS MEGATRENDS

AMPLIFIED IDENTITY

INSTANT KNOWLEDGE

UNGENDERING

REVIVALISM

HUMAN MODE

ATTENTION WEALTH

PURPOSEFUL PROFIT

DATA ABUNDANCE

PROTECTIVE TECH

FLUX COMMERCE

01 AMPLIFIED IDENTITY

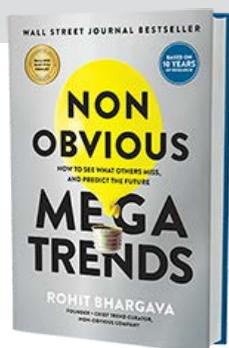


WHAT'S THE MEGATREND?

As individualism rises globally, people are carefully cultivating how they are perceived both online and offline, chasing stardom, and making themselves vulnerable to criticism in the process.

**This is a trend excerpt.
Want to read the full trend?**

**Buy a copy of *Non-Obvious Megatrends!*
*Available at bookstores worldwide.***



THE EVOLUTION OF AMPLIFIED IDENTITY

A review of past trends that relate to this Megatrend:

SELFIE CONFIDENCE (2015)

The ability to share a carefully crafted online personality allows people to use social content such as selfies (yes, selfies) to build their own confidence.



EVERYDAY STARDOM (2015)

The growth of personalization leads more consumers to expect that their everyday interactions will be transformed into celebrity-type experiences.



PERSONALITY MAPPING (2016)

As behavioral measurement tools map the details of our personalities, brands start using such data to bring like-minded people together to engage in unique experiences.



MAINSTREAM MULTICULTURALISM (2016)

After years of being minimized, multicultural citizens find widespread acceptance through a growing integration of diverse ideas and people in entertainment, products, and politics.



AUTHENTIC FAMESEEKERS (2017)

A new generation of creators become authentic fameseekers, turning to social media to establish their brands, build an audience, and become the next big thing.



OUTRAGEOUS OUTSIDERS (2017)

The rise of outsiders and their increasing willingness to say or do the things we might describe as outrageous to capture attention and influence.



SIDE QUIRKS (2017 + 2019)

As the global shift toward individualism continues, people of all ages embrace what makes them unique, follow their passion, can start a side business, and increasingly appreciate the quirky differences in one another.



AMPLIFIED IDENTITY

02 UNGENDERING

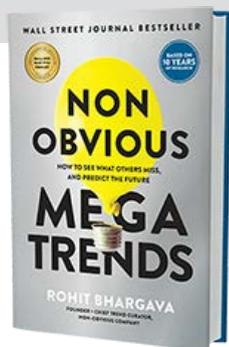


WHAT'S THE MEGATREND?

Traditional gender divisions and labels are getting replaced with a more fluid understanding of gender identity, forcing a reevaluation of how we see employees, customers, brands and one another.

**This is a trend excerpt.
Want to read the full trend?**

Buy a copy of *Non-Obvious Megatrends!*
Available at bookstores worldwide.



THE EVOLUTION OF UNGENDERING

A review of past trends that relate to this Megatrend:

POWERED BY WOMEN (2013)

Business leaders, pop culture, and groundbreaking research intersect to prove that our ideal future will be led by strong and innovative women working on the front lines.



ANTI-STEREOTYPING (2014 + 2016)

Across media and entertainment, gender roles start to reverse, assumptions about alternative lifestyles are challenged, diversity increases, and perceptions of how people are defined continue to evolve.



FIERCE FEMININITY (2017)

The fierce, independent woman has emerged in recent years, redefining the concept of femininity and reimagining gender roles.



UNGENDERED (2018)

Shifting definitions of traditional gender roles are leading some to reject the notion of gender completely, while others aim to mask gender from products, experiences, and even their own identities.



MUDDLED MASCULINITY (2019)

The rising empowerment of women and the reevaluation of gender are causing widespread confusion and angst about what it means to be a man today.



UNGENDERING

03 INSTANT KNOWLEDGE

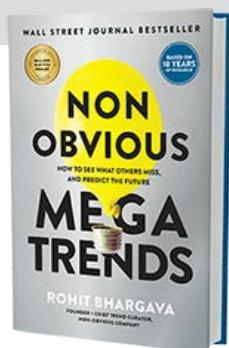


WHAT'S THE MEGATREND?

As we become accustomed to consuming bite-sized knowledge on demand, we benefit from learning everything more quickly but risk forgetting the value of mastery and wisdom.

**This is a trend excerpt.
Want to read the full trend?**

Buy a copy of *Non-Obvious Megatrends!*
Available at bookstores worldwide.



THE EVOLUTION OF INSTANT KNOWLEDGE

A review of past trends that relate to this Megatrend:

DEGREE-FREE LEARNING (2013)

The quality of e-learning content explodes as more students consider alternatives to traditional college educations.



METHOD CONSULTING (2013)

Successful entrepreneurs and companies create on-the-side consulting models to help others duplicate their success.



DISTRIBUTED EXPERTISE (2014)

As online platforms offer access to learn directly from experts, expertise itself becomes more inclusive, less academic, and widely available on demand.



LIGHT-SPEED LEARNING (2018)

The road to mastery on any topic accelerates with the help of bite-sized learning modules that make education more efficient, engaging, useful, and fun.



INSTANT KNOWLEDGE

04 REVIVALISM

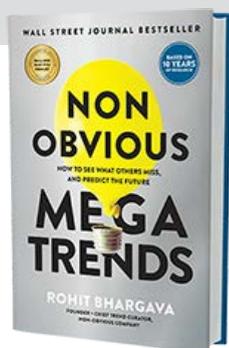


WHAT'S THE MEGATREND?

Overwhelmed by technology and a sense that life is now too complex and shallow, people seek out simpler experiences that offer a sense of nostalgia and remind them of a more trustworthy time.

**This is a trend excerpt.
Want to read the full trend?**

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Available at bookstores worldwide.



THE EVOLUTION OF REVIVALISM

A review of past trends that relate to this Megatrend:



05 HUMAN MODE

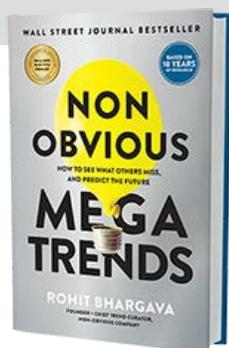


WHAT'S THE MEGATREND?

Tired of technology that isolates us from one another, people seek out and place greater value on physical, authentic and “unperfect” experiences designed with empathy and delivered by humans.

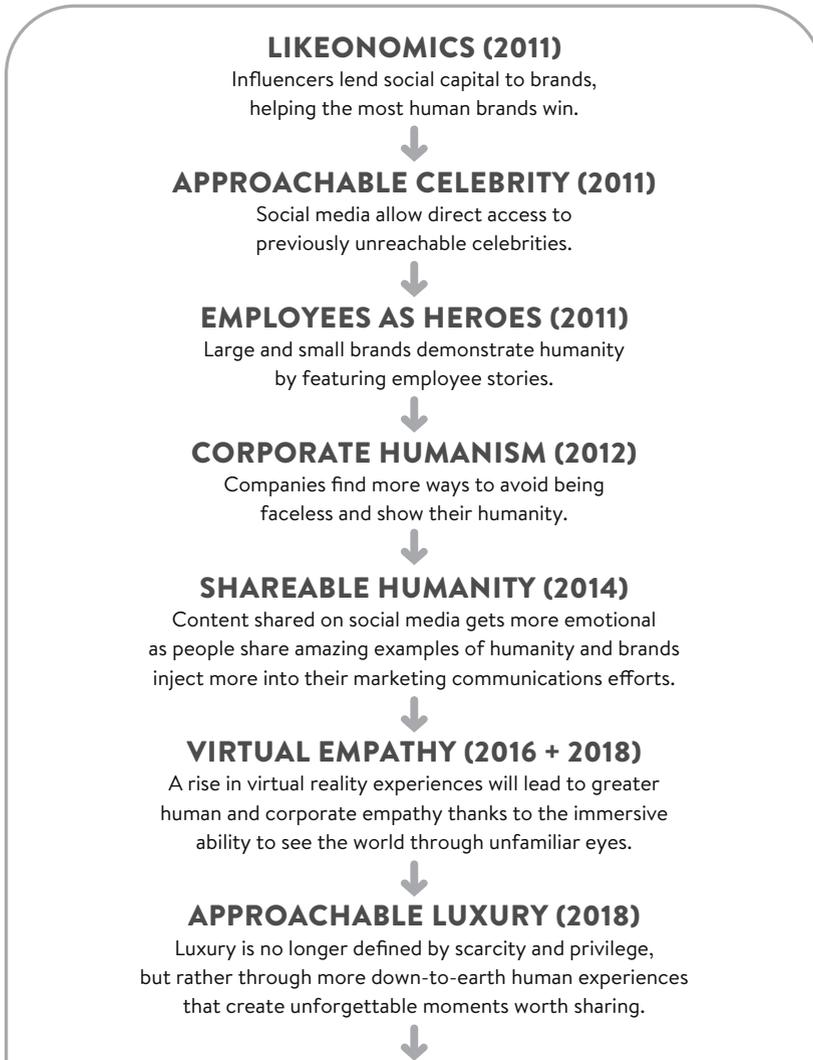
**This is a trend excerpt.
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THE EVOLUTION OF HUMAN MODE

A review of past trends that relate to this Megatrend:



continued →



(LOVABLE) UNPERFECTION (2014, 2015 + 2017)

As people seek more personal and human experiences, brands and creators intentionally focus on using personality, quiriness, and intentional imperfections to make their products and experiences more authentic and desirable.



HUMAN MODE (2018)

As automation increases, people hungry for more personal and authentic experiences begin to put a premium on advice, services, and interaction involving other people.



ENTERPRISE EMPATHY (2019)

Empathy becomes a driver of innovation and revenue and a point of differentiation for products, services, hiring, and experiences.



HUMAN MODE

06 ATTENTION WEALTH

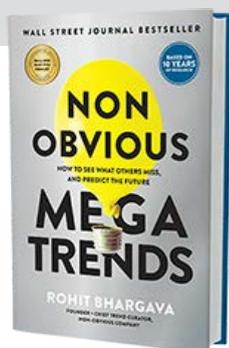


WHAT'S THE MEGATREND?

In the information economy, our attention is our most valuable resource, leading us to be more skeptical of those who manipulate us to get it, and instead seek out and trust those who communicate in more authentic ways.

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THE EVOLUTION OF ATTENTION WEALTH

A review of past trends that relate to this Megatrend:

BRUTAL TRANSPARENCY (2011)

Aggressive honesty will lead to edgier and more effective marketing as brands reveal this unexpected tactic that consumers welcome.



CULTING OF RETAIL (2011)

The best retailers create passionate users who not only buy products but also rave about their experiences. They inspire those on their social networks to try the products themselves.



RETAIL THEATER (2012)

In the coming year, more retail stores will create unique experiences using the principles of theater to engage customers with memorable experiences.



BACKSTORYTELLING (2013 + 2018)

Organizations discover that taking people behind the scenes of their brand and history is one of the most powerful ways to inspire loyalty and drive purchase.



CURATED SENSATIONALISM (2014)

As the line between news and entertainment blurs, smart curation displaces journalism as engaging content is paired with sensational headlines to drive millions of views.



REVERSE RETAIL (2015)

Brands increasingly invest in high-touch, in-store experiences to build brand affinity and educate customers, while seamlessly integrating online channels to complete actual purchases and fulfill orders.



MANIPULATED OUTRAGE (2017)

Media, data analytics, and advertising are combining forces to create a perpetual stream of noise that is intended to incite rage and elicit angry reactions on social media and in real life.



continued →



TRUTHING (2018)

With trust eroding in media and institutions, people are engaging in a personal quest for the truth based on direct observation and face-to-face interaction.



ARTIFICIAL INFLUENCE (2019)

Creators, corporations, and governments use virtual creations to shift public perception, sell products, and even turn fantasy into reality.



STRATEGIC SPECTACLE (2019)

Brands and creators intentionally use spectacles to capture attention and drive engagement.



ATTENTION WEALTH

07 PURPOSEFUL PROFIT

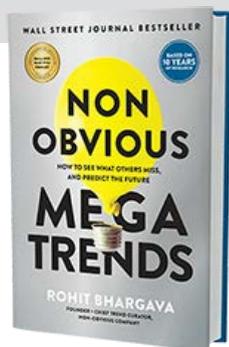


WHAT'S THE MEGATREND?

As consumers and employees demand more sustainable and ethical practices from businesses, companies respond by adapting products, taking stands on issues, and putting purpose first.

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THE EVOLUTION OF PURPOSEFUL PROFIT

A review of past trends that relate to this Megatrend:

HEROIC DESIGN (2013)

Design takes a leading role in the introduction of new products, ideas, and campaigns to change the world.



BRANDED BENEVOLENCE (2015)

Companies increasingly put brand purpose at the center of their organizations to show a deeper commitment to doing good as a part of business.



MOONSHOT ENTREPRENEURSHIP (2017)

Our tendency to celebrate visionary entrepreneurs inspires a new generation of startup founders to think beyond profit and consider how their businesses can make a positive social impact and even save the world.



BRAND STAND (2018)

Reacting to a polarized media atmosphere, more brands feel compelled to take a stand and highlight their core values rather than try to be all things to all people.



ENLIGHTENED CONSUMPTION (2018)

Empowered with more information about products and services, people are choosing to make a statement about their values and the world today through what they buy, where they work, and how they invest.



GOOD SPEED (2019)

The urgency of the problems facing humanity is inspiring corporations, entrepreneurs, and individuals to find ways of doing good (and generating results) faster.



PURPOSEFUL PROFIT

08 DATA ABUNDANCE



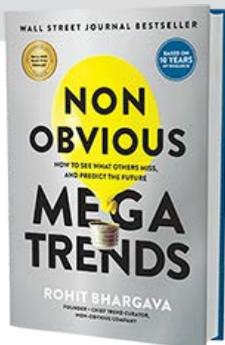
WHAT'S THE MEGATREND?

The growing ubiquity of data and the myriad ways it can be collected raise big questions about how to make it truly useful, who owns the data, and who should stand to profit from it.

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THE EVOLUTION OF DATA ABUNDANCE

A review of past trends that relate to this Megatrend:

MEASURING LIFE (2012)

Tracking tools offer individualized data to monitor and measure all areas of your life.



OVERQUANTIFIED LIFE (2014)

Wearables offer new ways to collect data, yet their usefulness remains limited to superficial analysis that fails to offer actionable insights.



PRIVACY PARANOIA (2014)

Data breaches lead to a new global paranoia about what governments and brands know about us and how they might use this information in illicit ways.



SMALL DATA (2015)

As consumers increasingly collect their own information, brand-owned “big data” become less valuable than immediately actionable “small data” owned by consumers themselves.



DATA OVERFLOW (2016)

An overload of personal, open, and corporate data leads organizations to go beyond algorithms and look to artificial intelligence, curation, and startups to make the data meaningful.



DATA POLLUTION (2018)

As we create more methods for quantifying the world around us, data gets manipulated, contaminated and sabotaged, making it harder to separate true insights from useless noise.



DATA ABUNDANCE

09 PROTECTIVE TECH



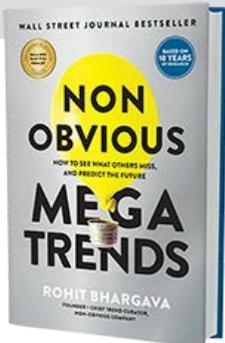
WHAT'S THE MEGATREND?

As we increasingly rely on predictive technology that keeps us and our world safe and makes life more convenient, we must contend with the privacy trade-offs required to make it work.

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THE EVOLUTION OF PROTECTIVE TECH

A review of past trends that relate to this Megatrend:

PREDICTIVE PROTECTION (2015 + 2018)

Brands are increasingly creating smarter products that monitor our safety and health, alerting us when we need to take action.



AUTOMATED ADULTHOOD (2016)

As it is taking longer to emerge into full adulthood, innovative services are helping us automate common adult tasks.



ROBOT RENAISSANCE (2017 + 2019)

Advances in robotics, including human-like interfaces, are leading us to raise questions about how we relate to that technology.



INVISIBLE TECHNOLOGY (2017)

Technology becomes better at anticipating and predicting what we need while simultaneously blending more seamlessly and unnoticeably into our lives and the world around us.



PROTECTIVE TECH

10 FLUX COMMERCE

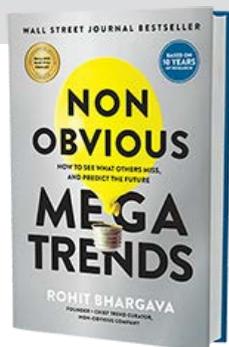


WHAT'S THE MEGATREND?

As the lines between industries erode, how we sell and buy anything changes constantly, leading to a continual disruption of business models, distribution channels, consumer expectations and even innovation itself.

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THE EVOLUTION OF FLUX COMMERCE

A review of past trends that relate to this Megatrend:

HYPER-LOCAL COMMERCE (2013)

New services and technology make it easier for anyone to invest in local businesses and buy from local merchants.



INSTANT ENTREPRENEURS (2014)

As the barriers to starting a new business begin to fall, incentives and tools mean anyone with an idea can launch a startup knowing that the costs and risks of failure are not as high as before.



COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY (2014)

New business models and tools allow consumers and brands to tap the power of sharing and collaborating to find new ways to buy, sell, and consume products and services.



SUBSCRIPTION COMMERCE (2014)

More businesses and retailers use subscriptions to sell recurring services or products to customers instead of focusing on one- time sales.



DISRUPTIVE DISTRIBUTION (2015 + 2018)

Creators and makers use new models for distribution to disrupt the usual channels, cut out middlemen, and build more direct connections with fans and buyers.



REVERSE RETAIL (2015)

Brands increasingly invest in high touch in- store experiences to build brand affinity and educate customers, while seamlessly integrating online channels to complete actual purchases and fulfill orders.



INSOURCED INCUBATION (2016)

Companies desperate to be more innovative increasingly look to bring more outside innovators in- house, enticing them with funding, beautiful co- working lab spaces, and a feel good pitch.



continued →



FAD FATIGUE (2019)

Consumers get weary of innovations claiming to be the next big thing and assume none will last long.



INNOVATION ENVY (2019)

Fear leads entrepreneurs, businesses, and institutions to envy competitors and approach innovation with admiration or desperation.



FLUX COMMERCE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ROHIT BHARGAVA IS ON A MISSION to help the world be more open-minded by teaching others how to be non-obvious thinkers. He is the founder of the Non-Obvious Company and an entertaining, original and “non-boring” keynote speaker on innovation and trust. He previously spent 15 years in leadership roles at two renowned ad agencies: Leo Burnett and Ogilvy. Rohit is the *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author of six books and has been invited to deliver keynote presentations in 32 countries around the world. His insights have been used by the World Bank, NASA, Intel, Disney, Colgate, Swissotel, Coca-Cola, Schwab, Under Armour, NBC Universal, American Express and hundreds of others to win the future. Rohit is a popular Adjunct Professor of Marketing and Storytelling at Georgetown University and also writes a monthly column for GQ magazine in Brazil. He believes in listening before talking, is a lifelong lover of the Olympics and lives with his wife and two boys in the Washington DC area.



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