

# 10 MUST-KNOW CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TRENDS

Understand the memes that will influence various businesses in 2018 to be more relevant to today's consumers

**M**emes are units of cultural transmission that cause ideas to catch on and propagate themselves, by jumping from brain to brain across the world. Mapping and tracking memes allows us to better inform new initiatives across the worlds of technology, design, communication and consumption.

Memetic Institute at Future Ideas (part of the Future Group) has gathered data from more than 400 million Indian consumers with the objective to understand how ideas, events, and trends influence the way in which societies and cultures evolve. The memes can be used as learnings to help businesses understand what's coming next and be better informed about new initiatives across the worlds of technology, design, communication and consumption. Here are the top ten memes that will affect 2018.

## 1. PARENTING

From 'mommy groups' on WhatsApp to parenting apps and blogs – the hysteria around parenting is everywhere. We also live in the age of what is popularly called 'sharenting'



### ► Modern-day parenting as a meme will continue for years

– where according to some studies the average parent shares almost 1,500 images of their child online before their fifth birthday.

**Noteworthy:** Modern-day parenting as a meme will continue to remain popular for years to come. From Mompreneurs juggling small businesses with baby duties, to Millennial Dads who participate intensely in the parenting process, today's parents continue to find new strategies and coping mechanisms for rearing children in the challenging environment of 21<sup>st</sup> century India.

## 2. CONNECTED CONSUMERS

The next wave of consumption

is about pervasive layering of technology over centres of consumption. The customer will be connected real time with the store – at any time and from anywhere. With a constantly connected customer, it is not only retailing that will change. The way brands are created and destroyed too will undergo a metamorphosis. Brands are now becoming open water bodies, with connected consumers joining brand owners as co-navigators, giving brands their flow, colour and future direction.

**Noteworthy:** People are constantly connecting through digital technology – this creates

opportunities for marketers to identify the digital moments that best align with their brands. Specific screens no longer own times of day or aspects of consumers. Therefore, brands must develop adaptive content strategies that enable the best possible experience on all possible screens.

### 3. PLURAL IDENTITIES

Today, we lead multiple lives and avatars in a single lifespan, both in virtual and real worlds. Multi-dimensional descriptions of one's profile are the norm. The meme of plurality generates multiples alternate realities which in turn make seemingly contrary ideas credible.

**Noteworthy:** What we need to watch closely is how this meme will influence and give birth to newer memes. Will plurality polarise, or will it showcase some new mainstream and new cult ideas?

### 4. NEW ADULTS: 18 IN 2018

In 2018, those born in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will enter adulthood. They are the first generation to have no connection with pre-liberalisation India. Their parents benefited from opportunities that economic liberalisation and consumerism brought in. They have none of the baggage that defines the cohorts that precedes them. As a result, their demands from brands and businesses, workplaces and social spaces, politics and politicians are quite different. Everything is within the realms of possibility for them — a credit line or few clicks away.

**Noteworthy:** The 21<sup>st</sup> century generation, born into a constantly wired world, expects a digital footprint for a brand or a service as a basic hygiene factor. Soon they will have numerical power to seriously impact election outcomes. If they

decide to patronise a new product or brand, they will have the ability to make it a cult phenomenon.

### 5. ENTER THE DRAGON

Over the last decade, China has pivoted from an economy driven by exports to an economy led by domestic consumption. Chinese brands are not afraid to test new products, fail, and try again, rather than adhering to a rigid schedule of product launches. They've become increasingly sophisticated in their use of multimedia and multiple channels to reach and engage consumers. What's more, they're at the forefront of using data, analytics, and consumer insights to better understand the customer—and are moving towards true consumer-driven product development. That the future of consumption lies in China is undisputed.

**Noteworthy:** The world today is looking East. China's consumer boom probably started in 2005 when Chinese per capita consumption crossed \$2000. Globally, the \$2000 mark is seen as an inflection point beyond which discretionary consumption changes the nature and scale of consumption. India, now at \$1750 per capita consumption or Rs 4.5 lakh annual income per household, is within a striking distance of the \$2000 mark. The need of the hour now is for India to forge its own path and use its own ideas in driving a domestic consumption-led economy, instead of blindly aping the West.





### 6. THE LONELY INDIAN

Technology is aiding the creation of an increasingly individualistic identity within India's bustling and typically cramped homes. Living rooms of the country are not 'family centrals' any more — WhatsApp family groups are. Man is the most social of all animals yet technology is nudging us towards more isolated living than ever before. Singledom, individuality and the longevity have brought new consumption arenas to the economy. From single member households that have their own unique needs, to travel for the elderly, being alone is increasingly being cherished in today's India.

**Noteworthy:** Expect more attention to be paid to the individual consumer, the needs of those living alone, and the ravages of loneliness. Loneliness can be big business.

### 7. THE RISE OF VISUAL LANGUAGE

The visual language of emoticons,

GIFs (graphic interchange formats), and hashtags is helping overcome literacy deficiencies, and has become an intuitive part of our life. Embedded in emojis and GIFs are a plethora of emotions, feelings and thoughts — making them a rich and extremely popular form of communication. 2017 saw GIF files (that support both animated and static images) become the calling card of modern digital culture. Like language, it is emerging as a tool for social interaction, representing real life happenings and conveying complex thoughts.

**Noteworthy:** We'll use visual languages more. That is because we have 85 billion neurons in the brain which analyse the sounds we hear and draws meaning, saves the memory of the meaning, retrieves them. (So comprehending the written word) takes a little longer because the sounds go to the neurons through the ears; (whereas)

images go through the pre-frontal cortex and take much less time. This meme is big. Marketers take note!

### 8. INDIA 2: INCLUDED

India's billion plus people can broadly be defined by three segments. India-1, known as the more affluent consuming class, those with access to domestic help. This group consists of people who are most deeply embedded in the arena of consumption, with incomes that make them eminently bankable. India-2 can be referred to, respectfully, as the serving class, or those primarily involved in work that serves the needs of India-1. They form the backbone of Indian society, and tend to be the serving class that provides products and services to India-1. Meanwhile India-3 are India's most deprived, the struggling class — classified as those struggling to get two square meals per day.

Through Aadhaar, the government is creating a biometric identity system and tracing the lives of the billion plus population in India-2 and 3. As a result, today they increasingly have access and an identity that opens doors for them into the formal economy. As India-2 enters the mainstream a fresh memetic wave of aspirations will be unleashed. The combination of affordable phones, low cost data plans, and intuitive apps that don't require the ability to read — has the potential to revolutionise the lives of India's next billion (at present

about 450 million of India's 1.3 billion strong population has access to the Internet).

**Noteworthy:** This next billion will engage with the consumption ecosystem and the Internet uniquely. They will learn, evolve and engage so as to ensure a fit for their needs and skills. Not only will manufacturers and service providers have to adapt to their requirements, but they will also leapfrog generations of physical and technological consumption. Those who never had a landline will be proud owners of multiple mobile phones, even smart phones. Many will perhaps leapfrog high street retail and find themselves in malls and hypermarkets. With India's next billion now connected and identified, India tomorrow is likely to live in new and unique ways that cannot entirely be anticipated.

### 9. NURTURING LEADERSHIP

In today's times, leadership requires a nuanced, context-specific approach. As India evolves into a period of abundance, after decades defined by scarcity and constraints, a fundamental rethinking of new models of leadership is needed. Mediums of communication have fundamentally changed and most importantly, we are living in times defined by surplus. The role of leaders now is not to battle and survive, but to make impact, change and grow. The ability to nurture, empathise, show sensitivity to change and evolve with times are



### ► The Rise Of Visual Language

the key defining traits of leaders in this new world order.

**Noteworthy:** A new era of leadership is here. It suggests, perhaps, a shift away from the hyper-masculine template of the past, and ushers in a new narrative for leaders in the modern world.

### 10. BOREDOM AND EXPERIENCE SEEKING

Our brains are busier than ever before. Notifications, alerts, likes, retweets, facts and pseudo-facts rule our daily engagement. The average smartphone user spends almost four hours a day on it, tapping, typing, swiping or clicking 2617 times. And that's just one of the screens. There are laptops, television screens, tablets, fitbits and Alexa's to attend to. It is as if, we are on a constant need for a high from a digital screen.

However, much of technology in the past decade had focused on

delivering these highs through our visual senses. The boredom and superficiality created by visual-based technologies tied to digital screens is already driving a counter-trend – one that has led to a surge of interest in ever more authentic, multi-sensorial experiences. The food service industry is seeing a similar trend play out, with quick service restaurants chains slowing down and focus going back into a more detailed and richer sensorial experience.

**Noteworthy:** The search for newer, multi-sensorial experiences, for escape from urban stress, for more genuine human connection is perhaps the biggest growth market in the world today. Blended commerce that combines online shopping, with real world physical experiences is now all the rage. Expect 2018 to see the market for experiences take off, and offer a rich alternative to the isolated dopamine seeking grind of digital media. 😊