



2010: SOME 'NEXT BIG THINGS'

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Making predictions is difficult, especially about the future, as quantum physicist Niels Bohr once said: They will inevitably fail to predict the next big thing because the discontinuous novelty of the future is what is most exciting about it. That said, looking at some of the most next-looking things around right now might give us some clues.

1 GESTURES

Gestural interfaces are the future of human computer interaction, at least until we find a way to connect something straight into your brain. Despite the excitement the first multi-touchscreens triggered and the seeming ubiquity of the iPhone touchscreen paradigm it spawned, little has been made of their potential. Things like FluidTunes – an app which lets you control iTunes by waving your hand in front of the built-in webcam – and interactive installations triggered by similar motion detection both show new ways to interact with content, experiences and brands.

2 BANNERS

I've spent years saying that banners are a misguided attempt to transpose a media trope from linear passive media onto hypertextual interactive media – a classic McLuhan mistake. But, things have been changing since that first "click here" extortion on HotWired in 1994. Increasingly I'm seeing banners that you could easily mistake for content, like the recent cooking show banner Goody, Silverstein & Partners created for eBay. Thinking about banner networks as ways to distribute samples of interesting content to your audience might lead them to earning their own attention. Check out Bannerblog.com.au for some of the best oddly shaped online content. On their site they had an anti-banner. I predict massive click-through rates.

3 THE SOCIALIZATION OF MAINSTREAM MEDIA

Social media gurus are generally a bit caught up in the awesomeness that the radical decentralization of the economics of cultural production has brought about. But, once again stealing from McLuhan (this is a Canadian magazine after all), new media do not displace old media. They simply change what it is for. Social media needs things to talk about. Good or fashioned things like television still provide fodder for the new chattering classes. Expect to see lots of traditional media incorporate more social elements, like *The Hills'* Twitter backchannel game, called *Backchannel*, which is hosted on the MTV website and allows viewers to "bitch" in real time.

4 CONTENT

As an industry built around the creation of content it should be surprising that new jobs like "content strategist" are suddenly appearing. But it isn't. Advertising has been historically blessed with forced exposure. So the onus in these spaces that advertisers are paying for has been to communicate in a way that is appealing to the audience. But, the emergence of the web as a different kind of content distribution platform forever changes what all content is for. TV commercials live forever on YouTube, where they must earn attention. Increasingly, formerly quiet consumers are using content – reminding it, spreading it – to express themselves. To get in on the spread requires content strategy, and the lack of media scarcity online means we need to "think like a dandelion" – produce as much content as possible and see what catches the breeze.

5 HYPER-CONNECTIVITY AND TRANSMEDIA

I'm betting these will get huge traction this year. Hyper-connected smartphones, which Nielsen is predicting will be in the majority in the U.S. by the end of 2010, are always-on, broadband-enabled computers (available where you have 4G), which act like "spines" – devices that know where they are in space and time and who you communicate with most – and tailor the web accordingly, using context to make content more useful. I call this "geotility." I suspect that phone numbers will begin to die out as Facebook, Foursquare or Motorola's Blur technology connect your social network profile to your phone, removing the need for a separate ID number.

Transmedia planning is the idea I stole from Henry Jenkins, who writes about transmedia narratives in his book *Convergence Culture*, of creating non-linear brand narratives across channels and platforms, rather than endlessly repeating the big idea everywhere. Coca-Cola is looking to it as the content deployment model for the "Happiness Factory" this year, and lots of other brands are getting into it.

In the spirit of transmedia planning, the final part of this article is a video I made with more predictions about 2010, which is posted on my blog at <http://bit.ly/O9Y8L>.