



2019 Global Brand Letter Winter Edition

from SMoss

“Let no new thing arise.” - Spanish toast

“I wish I’d invented a lawn mower.” - Mikhail Kalashnikov

“Hungry man is an angry man.” - James Joyce, *Ulysses*

Spent too much time on Oumuamua, where I met an omnichannel ethnonationalist prankster who tried to get me to take a significant position in malfeasium. She produced geospatial evidence, exercised plausible deniability, accused me of *pseudologia fantastica*. I said: it must be attributable to quantitative tightening, the consequence of incessant surveillance and interaction.

Updates on last season’s hot topics

“*Odi et amo. Excrucior!*” (I hate you and I love you. I am tortured!) - Catullus 85

Advertising

If you can trust developers, there is a direct correlation between the reduction of stress and the amount that passengers spend at **airports**. That’s why you may soon discover yourself unconsciously engaging in compulsive retail therapy while waiting for flights. Get ready to encounter improved shopping and dining options and food courts more reminiscent of Whole Foods than Burger King. The big focus will be in emerging markets - shoppers spend 30% more at some airports, which helps to keep aeronautical charges down. The state of US airports infrastructure is dismal. The biggest challenge remains the moderating of information overload while motivating purchase. One thing that won’t change: yowling video screens.

Payless pushed *the social-experiment genre* to new heights, persuading a group of influencers to pay up to \$600 for shoes worth \$20 at a bogus pop-up luxury store fake-branded Palessi. The agency explained that they wanted to make a cultural statement and remind consumers the brand was still a place to shop for affordable fashion. All the money was returned, and the influencers allowed to keep the shoes. The agency then created a series of ads broadcast on cable and social media showing the prank victims’ reactions. Following the campaign, Payless filed for Chapter 11 and began to shut down 2,500 real stores.

Seasonal **luxury campaigns** ran the gambit from enhanced technology concepts to embracing diversity. Tiffany focused on nostalgia; Gucci employed animated digital paintings with AR and VR installations; Burberry showcased its new orange and white logo print in a digital campaign with a counterfeit mistake. But Balmain attracted the most attention with its trio of influencers, each with her own IG account and army of followers. Media took note. After which the company was forced to reveal that the three were actually custom-designed virtual digital models.

Should you detect an unusual 7 degree backslant, gaps in each letterform and element of *desirable difficulty* while browsing stray advertising copy, you may have uncovered evidence that the brand boys are at work again on your consciousness. An Australian university's behavioral business lab and design school created **Sans Forgetica**, a typeface purported to use psychological and design theories to aid memory retention. It cannot be called beautiful. Compared to classic Bodoni it looks like an unresolved, airheaded stencil font.

Tobacco products shall not be advertised in the UK, where Ecig use is championed by British public health agencies. In the USA brand recognition is driven by advertising, the market dominated by a fashionably-designed USB-shaped device called **Juul**, used by 70% of US vapers. The Brits watch closely as the brand debuts on their shores, even with such products regulated at a lower nicotine content. Teenagers the earliest adopters, represent the highest growth rate of users.

The **lifestyle brand** bandwagon lumbers on. You may recall our friends at Chipotle suffered an enduring hit to public confidence in 2015. Last year they announced Chipotle was no longer just a food brand but a *purpose-driven* lifestyle brand. Everybody loves that language. Godiva will leverage their culinary expertise to expand beyond chocolates. Blue Apron, IHOP and Pizza Hut now describe themselves as lifestyle brands, in hopes that they represent something larger than the goods they sell. Since millennials already surpass boomers in trips taken, a choice strategy involves lifestyle co-branding with hospitality to support this message. Hottest partnerships across categories: Armani, Baccarat, Bulgari, Equinox, Muji, Nobu, Paramount Pictures, Restoration Hardware and Versace, all to offer themed hotels, most with shopping options. While promotion centers on conventional media platforms, these brands will focus more on event-driven strategies. Endurance and consistency required. A woman approached Samuel Johnson - who never bathed - at a party and said, "Dr. Johnson, you smell." "Incorrect, madam," Johnson replied. "I stink. You smell." One Johnsonian lifestyle property plans a dedicated room screening comedies all day, each floor with its own unique fragrance, scented elevators and LPs played in the lobby - when the album changes, a new fragrance gets spritzed.

"Hypotheses non fingo." (I feign no hypotheses.) - Isaac Newton

AI

While **Natural Language Understanding** struggles to puzzle out exactly what humans mean when they speak, it's too early to crack the complexity and ambiguity of verbal communication. The process necessarily begins with a devaluation of language. At the moment NLU focuses on 100 labeled examples, of approximate emoticon grade. From this starting point - since computers with their great dimensionality can handle information far faster and in much greater volume - neural networks form a pattern of recognition, simultaneously missing other worthy examples of what might be called *coded language*. The more the machines can understand, the more the demand for human input will fall. New metaphors will naturally form. One early casualty are call center workers, whose jobs have already been taken by chatbots. M&S in the UK receives around a million phone inquiries a month; they moved 100 switchboard staff to other duties and replaced them with synths. The next evolutionary leap will come with *emotion analysis systems*, which can figure out the moment when you reach the breaking point in the phone tree and you want to kill someone, anyone. Chalk it up to the commodification of

emotion, subjective territory where machine learning doesn't fear to tread. Argumentation is a uniquely human attribute. IBM Project Debater squared off against a carbon-based entity, told pre-programmed jokes, had the temerity to suggest its opponent was lying, and used classic rhetorical technique to disprove a rival argument before it was made. IBM insisted the software could be applied as a weapon against fake news, but the computer lost the debate.

An **AI-generated digital print portrait** on canvas developed by the French art collective Obvious (Not to be confused with *Obviously*, an influencer agency) was offered by Christie's at auction, estimated to sell at \$7k-10k. Created using a model called Generative Adversarial Network, the work was based on 15,000 scanned likenesses done between the 14th and 20th centuries, and intended to democratize the model and legitimize AI-produced art. The collective generated works until it was able to fool a test designed to *distinguish whether an image was human or machine made*, another example of the false objectivity biased by the prejudices of the creators. The first-to-market advantage prevailed: the piece sold at \$432,500.

"Tell me, George, if you had it to do all over, would you fall in love with yourself again?" - Oscar Levant to Gershwin

Celebrity

Apparently ghouls love clickbait stories. High Google traffic numbers and a pattern of base searches lead one to suspect that Alphabet is actually a zombie company, since it was so fixated on the **suicides** of Anthony Bourdain and Kate Spade. It is a truth universally acknowledged that the undead hunger for headlines designed to feed search engine demand. This validates rumors of an unseemly and vaguely cannibalistic desire to read about the intimate last moments of a life. Search optimized headlines, once more moderate in tone, now reach for traffic at the expense of editorial morality. Zombies never give up potential revenue in exchange for professional ethics. They have a narcotic, amoral dependency which nudges users toward bloodthirsty extremism.

"Oh, the room didn't used to be as nice as this until I removed that hill over there. I just hated the way it reflected light."- Bunny Mellon

Epiphanies

Is it true that **Amazon** has an inherent advantage that undermines fair competition? Bezos Inc. now employs more than half a million people worldwide and powers much of the internet through its cloud computing division. It dominates the product and food supply chains and has more revenue than FB, Google and Twitter combined. People like its speedy delivery and low prices. None dare whisper the word monopoly. In a new partnership with Marriott, Alexa voice-powered devices will soon share your junior suite, deputized to order room service, book spa treatments, play music, adjust lighting and temperature and listen in on your intimate conversations. Amazon already controls $\frac{2}{3}$ of the consumer smart speaker market. Next up: wanton data collection in cars and offices. Amazon was urged to halt sales of its facial recognition software, but not before the product sold to a number of police forces. There's a new program which aims at helping people start their own businesses delivering Amazon packages. You get access to branded data products, vehicles and uniforms. The kicker: *exclusivity*, meaning you're not an employee, but you can't work for anyone else.

Chinese artist **Cao Fei** created a video work at MoMA PS1 about a quasi-fictional high-tech warehouse near Shanghai staffed by only 2 workers. Addressing the trend toward fewer and fewer people doing the work of manufacturing or distribution, the artist confronted issues of massive dislocation, technological control, mass surveillance, a future where everything is constantly scanned and scored, the coming challenges of isolation, loneliness and joblessness. Ironically, the final steps of this conceptual logistic chain are still more reliant on humans.

For decades **Coca-Cola** flourished without direct contact with customers. Now the paradigm changes with its \$3.9bn purchase of Costa from Whitbread. Coke is disposing of its bottling operations to independents. Coffee houses ground communities and provide places where people can meet. As the pleasures of the city have been largely reduced to consumerism, the beverage giant is taking a clue from Apple's retail stores, the most influential channels for brand building and humanising its image. Costa also has over 8000 vending machines selling branded coffee, a channel Coke already understands well.

"If everything is under control you are just not driving fast enough." - Sir Stirling Moss

In its strategy to court millennials **Dolce & Gabbana** typically uses IG stars for its runway shows, especially in China. A series of unusually swift IG reposts, with charges of racism flooded China before an upcoming show. There had been fallout over an earlier controversial ad campaign, where Chinese models struggled with cannoli and chopsticks, and the brand endured accusations of offensive language. Yet IG is banned in China, as well as is FB, YouTube, Google and Twitter. Stefano Gabbana insisted his account had been hacked, then cancelled the fashion show. D&G is so frequently the subject of boycotts in China that its website sells \$295 t-shirts with a red heart inviting people to #boycottdolcegabanna. Online outrage is suspected to be stoked by state-controlled media.

An olfactory brand extension took a seasonal front seat when **KFC** released a limited-edition Yule log fragranced like the chain's famous fried chicken. Flavored with 11 proprietary herbs and spices, it perfumed your holiday home for an appetizing \$18.99.

Management consultants continue to transform their reputations. Over the objections of three influential partners, **McKinsey** violated South African contracting law with Midas-sized payments channeled to the Indian Gupta family. The lavishness of the payouts and lack of public accountability altered perception of the firm as a hidden power with a prestigious face. This was the biggest government procurement in South African history, 1064 locomotives. The government hired McKinsey not knowing what the final bill would be. On another front, **Accenture** agreed to buy Droga5, the independent ad agency based in New York, responsible for the much-derided ad campaign that not-so-subtly equated Coke Zero with *erythroxylon coca*. Marketing is no longer simply about coming up with attention-grabbing ads. Suddenly the aim is to create an Uber-like, Amazon-like experience in retail stores or online.

In its first 3 days of release, **Red Dead Redemption 2** earned \$725m, the highest grossing opening weekend of any entertainment product ever. To place that in some kind of context, the *Aquaman* movie had a worldwide gross of \$332m in its first week of release. Despite its reputation as a psychologically destructive hobby, gaming's no longer a second-class cultural medium. Gamers typically devote 60 hours or more to these products. Rockstar, the game's

creator, would like you to believe they are *existential journeys* built on the rhythms of survival, and not a way to avoid responsibility.

What's left to nosh? Not to spoil your appetite, but the culprit turned out to be anything containing whey powder provided by Associated Milk Producers Inc., a Minnesota company. After a salmonella risk was identified, Mendelez, the snack food producer recalled **Ritz Crackers, Ritz Bits Cheese, Ritz cheese cracker sandwiches and Ritz bacon cracker sandwiches**. Other brands implicated: Flowers Foods, Hungry Man, Kellogg's Honey Smacks cereal (100 people sickened), Pepperidge Farms. And *monsieur* is advised not to order the Caesar Salad in selected territories: E. coli was found lurking in Romaine lettuce.

Facing accusations of commodification of local neighborhood culture **Target** in NYC's East Village exhibited signs of bald-faced brand hijacking. A brand activation recreated the iconic CBGB facade and fake storefronts intended to look like the mom-and-pops that were once a staple of the neighborhoods, on the street level of snazzy new condos. Target even distributed replicas of co-opted vintage newspaper designs. Upstairs the smallest new studio rents for \$3681/month. There's a flourishing Newark Airport franchise: CBGB Lounge and Bar, dishing up all-American fare, who also licensed the iconic signature from the estate of Hilly Kristal, the punk bar's legendary owner.

The great hope of co-living, co-working spaces and millennial residences blurs the lines between home, work and play. The myth of futureproofing hasn't yet been validated. IKEA has Space10, a lab for testing prototypes and explores ideas for more sustainable ways of existing. One hopeful rethink sought a better life using *smaller* shared houses. For \$3k/month rent, a millennial could get a private studio including utilities, cleaning, laundry, shared kitchens, offices, and recreational spaces. But millennials want to own, not rent - something the sharing economy doesn't permit at the entry level. As millennials' digital connections grow, they increasingly crave human interaction, hence they're always seeking community. Co-living models are still restricted to the relatively wealthy. Imposing rules on the over-entitled is difficult. Participation is encouraged, but not enforced. Don't anybody tell **WeWork**, who just bought an office cleaning business and whose losses now are almost \$2bn a year.

"Of all ghosts the ghost of our old loves are the worst." - Arthur Conan Doyle

IP

In a dustup between outlaw bikers and IP lawyers, who do you bet will win? Trademarks, unlike copyrights and patents, have no enduring value apart from their use, a fact well-known to the **Mongols**, a bikerider club also characterized as one of the most dangerous criminal enterprises in the country. In a racketeering trial in Orange County CA, prosecutors sued to allow seizure of the group's unifying symbol, which has been occasionally licensed or hijacked. The Mongols' mark is registered with the US Patent and Trademark Office. Asset forfeiture allows the law to seize goods used in the commission of crimes. Other victims of this variety of identity theft are Hell's Angels, who have successfully defended rights to their image in infringement cases against Alexander McQueen, Amazon, Saks, ToysRUs and the Walt Disney Company. Biker dudes rule™.

"Simpler to leave stuff for when I am dead." - Ernest Hemingway

Later, 'gator.

Alan Abel, 94, tricks no more. The original proto prankster, with the help of a dozen accomplices successfully faked his own death in 1980, causing the NYTimes to publish, then retract his obit. A master psychologist, keen strategist and possessor of a bevy of aliases, the former jazz drummer, stand-up comic, writer, campus lecturer, and filmmaker left behind an opus of performance art, self-promotion, social commentary, dalliances with the press and simple mischief. His greatest triumph: the nonexistent Society for Indecency to Naked Animals. But he may have overstayed his welcome and there was no profit in duplicity. Abel made barely a living hoaxing, and perhaps yelled "Fire!" in one too many auditoriums.

And now ladies and gentlemen, **Rosa Bouglione**, 107, catches the spotlight for the last time. According to her own publicity, the undisputed queen of the circus world was born in a horse-drawn caravan in Belgium. She always understood the notion that the show must go on. She chose to be married in a lion's cage, then spent her honeymoon performing with Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show. She worked behind the scenes later in career, and moved to a house around the corner from the family business in 1984. Well into her old age she faithfully attended matinees and her funeral was held in the center ring of the Cirque d'Hiver.

Kitty O'Neill, 72, made the ultimate leap. A legendary stunt performer, she retired in 1982 at the age of 36 years old. A 5-foot-3, 100 lb. dynamo, O'Neill lost her hearing at 4 months old from measles and mumps. But her mother taught her lip reading rather than sign language and urged her to run and swim, dive and leap from high places. She broke world speed records in rocket cars, dragsters, motorcycles, dune buggies and on waterskis. In her life she drifted from place to place and lover to lover, endured an abusive husband who ripped her off, even lost two fingers in a motorcycle accident. When she moved over to the stunt world she jumped off a 10-story building for *Wonder Woman*. Mattel even fashioned an action-figure doll of her. She was set on fire, and then rolled a car three times and landed it right side up for the film *Smokey and the Bandit*. After that stunt she was heard to utter her most famous catch-phrase, "Easy. Great. Do again."

"But decay is written into the genes of cities." - Lawrence Osborne

Place branding

The city of **Acquetico, Italy** had no intention to generate cash, and simply wanted to protect people's safety on their main road. After residents complained, the town of 120 set up a trial speed camera and recorded 58,568 speeding offenses in the first two weeks. Nearly half of all cars traveling the route were speeding in the 50km/h zone - some drivers clocked at 135km/h.

Dogs trained to guard rhinoceroses in the **Eastern Cape Province, South Africa** heard a pride of lions active nearby in an area densely packed with thorn bushes. Later, Rangers came upon the remains of as many as three men, suspected members of traveling poaching gangs for whom rhino horn has huge value. Once lions have taken down a human, you cannot be on the ground with them. The lion population is stable and doesn't understand *karma*, while the poacher population is growing, and are better equipped with earthly tools than ever.

Once upon a time there was a country Trump didn't want to invade. It was a regional hub where organized crime never touched the daily lives of every citizen. State officials kept a careful watch on criminal activity, and no illegal drugs poured across its borders. Even drug production was at an all-time low. It wasn't a haven for ex-guerrillas from the Middle East, and nobody smuggled the cheapest gasoline in the world across its borders, on which they didn't make a higher markup than on a kilo of Bolivian Marching Powder. Free press and television were in place, inflation was at a manageable rate, and transparency and accountability was normal. State coffers were full, leaving little incentive to steal. There was an efficient and functioning power grid and the stores were filled with food. Medicine was freely available to all. Responsible policy protected the Amazon, and limits to illegal mining for gold, coltan and other natural resources were enforced. There had been no significant brain drain, and no refugees could be found in Colombia, Brazil and Guyana. So, what's your brilliant idea for nation-branding **Venezuela** this year?

Passengers on bus in **Paris, France** wouldn't move to allow a wheelchair-bound man with MS to get in. The driver asked all the passengers to leave the bus. Once it was empty he invited Francois Le Berre, the man in the *fauteuil roulant*, to board, then drove off. The passengers at the curb were left to wait for the next bus.

London has its Gherkin, and LA has the Blue Whale. Construction on a famed tower in Italy began in 1173, but almost immediately its foundation began to shift. The tower was completed, compensating for the change in baseline, but its shape became one which recollects a curvaceous tropical fruit. It took eight hundred years for the tilt to reach 4.5 meters from the true vertical and in 1990 the tower was closed. Over the intervening years a number of tubes were installed underground on the side the tower leans away from, a process involving the removal of soil by drilling very carefully. A half a degree of lean has been recovered. Now that the tower has regained some verticality, isn't it only appropriate that the landmark adopt the name The Leaning Banana of **Pisa**.

If you are planning on retirement in **Maricopa County CA, USA**, you may want to rethink the quality issues of elder care. A 92-year old woman shot and killed her son in order to avoid being sent into an assisted living facility there. The son, 72, had wanted her to change residences because she had become difficult to live with. She concealed two firearms in her bathrobe before confronting and blasting him, then wrestled with his girlfriend, who got away and called the cops. Police found her in a reclining chair in her bedroom, where she stated she deserved whatever happened to her next, undoubtedly a free assisted living facility behind bars.

"I do not discuss the nature of my business or personal relationships." - Gabriel Schulze

Privacy

Robin Hood hid in Sherwood Forest, and **hackers** use aliases. The latter suddenly experience remorse and regret when their real identity is drawn into the open and they come to the realization that it's a job with no future. Oversharing online is the new hazard, and everybody is vulnerable, so much that it takes more energy to remain anonymous than to stay hidden. FB expanded its existing bug bounty with a program that specifically targets data abuse, and offered high legal incentives for joining the real world. That's what happens when you eliminate the Sheriff of Nottingham and morph into cybersecurity experts.

While the US excels at data collection and the science of reselling it for profit, **China** refines the tools. The fear of being watched is the most powerful tool of all. By 2020 a national video surveillance network in the Middle Kingdom will be *omnipresent, fully networked, always working and fully controllable*. A complex prototype system already tracks pupils in one state school. Besides the usual quantification, the system monitors facial expressions to see how children engage in class to predict which pupils are likely to underperform. Out in the real world, facial recognition, and the monitoring of mobile payments is constant. At a pop concert in eastern China, facial recognition technology picked out four men accused of crimes. Keyser Söze would need to adopt yet another walk to fool new gait recognition algorithms. China also runs a Social Credit system scoring citizens on past behavior. Good scores confer benefits, while a poor social credit score could jeopardize university placement, rule out certain jobs, exile one to a debtor's list, limit travel. The system already bars 11m people from buying airline or high speed rail tickets. One region requires mandatory mobile-surveillance software installed on residents' phones. Public spending at this scale is proving a windfall for Chinese security companies. There's a whole market to be plumbed in augmented reality glasses, aimed at consumers rather than law enforcement.

In the most significant supply chain attack known, sinister forces in Chinese factories - who are estimated to make 75% of world's mobile phones - secretly nested **tiny microchips** on motherboards bound for America, compromising major banks, government contractors and the US Department of Defense. The Minister of Foreign Affairs reiterated that China is a resolute defender of cybersecurity.

Clorox paid to license thermometers that synch up with smartphone apps, which then indicate ZIP codes around the country where increases in fever are detected. The company then directs more ads to those areas. Televisions track what we are watching and allow advertisers to target *other devices*. Products are recommended based on keywords harvested from conversations. **Amazon** has submitted a patent application outlining how a company could recommend chicken soup or cough drops if an Echo device detects symptoms like coughing or sniveling. If the device senses boredom, it might suggest a visit to the movies. A digital adman protested that this is not advertising in the strict sense of advertising.

“No picture and it didn't happen.” - Millennial truism

Social Media

Natasha Aponte surreptitiously used **Tinder** to match up online with 150-200 guys. She didn't mention she intended to stage a pop-up competition, invited them all to meet her for a first date in Union Square NYC. The desperate and gullible showed up with flowers and letters, excited to hook up with her. She first disqualified men shorter than 5-foot 10, those named Jimmy, or who had been dumped in their previous relationship, then made the remainder do one-armed pushups for her. She later claimed the stunt was engineered for a purpose *other than getting a date*: making a video of the event. The dudes were not happy. One candidate who refused to compete said it was funny and obviously successful.

Marketers love **nanoinfluencers**, folks who have as few as 1000 followers, but are willing to advertise products. They're easy to deal with, say whatever the company tells them to and are

substantially cheaper than the original variety. Obviously - no relation to the art collective *Obvious* - a full-service influencer marketing agency, tracks and measures what works and doesn't. Influencers with more than a million social followers command \$60k for providing apparel companies with one IG post and three IG stories and for being photographed during fashion weeks. The little players can charge \$500 for two IG posts for a product like men's shaving cream, and must agree to keep it on their feed for a certain number of weeks and use certain keywords provided by marketing. On IG alone, the market for *celebrity endorsement* is said to be worth \$1.07bn. The top tier of influence is saturated, and losing the homespun quality. The guys at the bottom of the food chain look like the land of opportunity. Brands also double down on **twin influencers**. They're an easy hook, a basic marketing tool which can be sold as twice the visual impressions. A pair of influential replicant Canadian sisters insist a picture of two girls is going to stand out when they look more similar. Approached by a manager and a company ready to sponsor them, they discovered that thousands could be charged for an endorsement post. Matching bikinis and the same poses get the biggest response.

Big tobacco blows sophisticated smoke on advertising rules governing online platforms. A research team at USC analyzed social media in 10 countries by looking for *hashtags that connect to tobacco* brands. 123 hashtags were viewed 25bn times around the world. The FTC petitioned against four companies for deceptive social media marketing. All the companies claimed they did not market to minors, where they were prohibited from employing branded content. Social is thick with misleading practices. Followers are led to believe that social media endorsements are independent. Similar behavior has been reported on dating websites, online hotel booking, car rental intermediaries, secondary ticketing agencies.

Financial mismanagement of donations and fraud are problems for **online crowdfunding sites**. A homeless man in Philly gave a couple his last \$20 for gas. They started an on-line fundraiser to help him and in nine months they raised over \$400,000. The couple held on to the money, some of which the homeless man's lawyer claims they spent on vacations and a new BMW.

What limits to online propriety? Now **Facebook's** a bane on society. Their big *superposter* spews hate like a 'coaster, and does it with vicious variety. Forget all the do-gooder memes, this brand's about wickeder dreams. They're weak on the facts and high on attacks, encouraging rightwing extremes. The towns where the algo is used eventually find themselves bruised. Once high on engagement, it ends with derangement, then innocent people abused. Anxiety now runs amuck, all this in pursuit of a buck. No moderate voices are heard for good choices. It's lining the pockets of Zuck. And sowing the seeds of confusion. Our data we share in delusion. Split up into groups they put us through hoops. Social media's one big illusion.

FB is accustomed to playing both ends against the middle. Black Elevation was an orchestrated political influence campaign, aimed at sowing divisions among Americans ahead of the midterm elections. Can't say definitely who did it, but it mirrored previous efforts by the Internet Research Agency, a Russian organization that tried to manipulate voters in the United States ahead of the 2016 elections. The posts tapped into negative, primal emotions like anger or fear, which perform best, and showed an increased sophistication in understanding American culture and the use of technology and colloquialisms of the activist community. The fake group aimed at left-wing activists in the USA, scheduled rallies, got attendance and coverage and went so far as to advertise for an Event Coordinator.

“I like smooth shiny girls, hardboiled and loaded with sin.” - Raymond Chandler

Trends

You know that *text and voice messaging are dead* when IG squares off against YouTube with a new standalone **video** app. IGTV intends to generate revenue through advertising, which will then be split with the creators. FB announced the launch of an internal agency to connect influencers with brands who wish to sponsor their work.

In **Shanghai**, street wear has assumed the dimensions of obsession. The city's turned into a public stage for the latest fashion concepts in China. Yo'Hood, a multi-faceted branded media empire that started as a magazine, encompasses street culture, e-commerce, festivals, editorial, offline and retail. They even run a yearly event, kind of like Burning Man for Chinese millennials. Major criteria for their attention: regular posting, especially retail spaces *worth photographing*, stores designed to impress and appear on social media. The brand loves unexpected collaborations, like a delivery app which combines street wear with takeaway food. Cultural value is as important as commercial value.

“What, you gave it to that *existentialist*?” - Edith Piaf to Charles Aznavour, enraged to find he'd given a song to Juliette Gréco

Vocabulary and concepts entering the mainstream in 2019

Algorithmic governance - suspicious idea for a new way to manage the economy and society (See *also* **algorithmic transparency**)

Amenitize - real estate developer's technique to like add shit Millennials want in offices and residences

Co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour - official reason given for removal of 32 pages and accounts from FB and IG

Deepfake - a portmanteau of "deep learning" and "fake", an artificial intelligence-based human image synthesis technique. It creates fake celebrity or revenge porn by combining and superimposing source images and videos.

Foss - Zuckerberg's inner circle, allies known colloquially at FB as “Friends of Sheryl Sandberg”

Fundamental attribution error - a cognitive bias that leads us to attribute behavior we don't like to other people's characters, rather than circumstances or outside factors.

HENRYs - High Earners Not Rich Yet, new consumer category. See HNWI

Irony poisoning - that which results when heavy social media users lose sight of the line separating trolling from sincere hate

Latency - the time it takes for devices to communicate with one another

Panopticon - the idea that people will follow the rules precisely because they don't know whether they are being watched.

Procatalepsis - a rhetorical technique that involves identifying and disproving a rival argument before it has even been made.

Redpilling - The red and blue pills are cultural memes representing the choice between knowledge, freedom, uncertainty and reality (red) and its opposite, security, happiness, beauty, and blissful illusion (blue). See *The Matrix* (1999)

Smashing - a casual erotic encounter. *"Are we dating, or are we just smashing?"*

Smoking simulating products - industry euphemism for vape pens

Ultracrepidarian sciolist - accusation leveled between warring FT commenters; (*one who criticizes, judges, or gives advice outside the area of his or her expertise*) + (*one who pretends to be knowledgeable and well-informed*)

"I've been married to a communist and a fascist, and neither would take out the garbage." - Zsa Zsa Gabor

What is A Brand?

I've been thinking about quieting brands. The whole discipline has got too numerous, too crowded, too loud. Discretion has exited the dialogue. Beauty doesn't figure. Branding has come down to the commodification and commercialization of a *persona*, just to complete a transaction. It plays to our basest instincts.

A brand is a surrogate for sex.

A brand is a gross means to promote the production of pheromones, endorphins and serotonin.

We can talk about all this later. See you in the Fall!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "SMON". The letters are stylized and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

DiGanZi