

2009



# Futurology Through Semiotics

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# Business needs futurology.

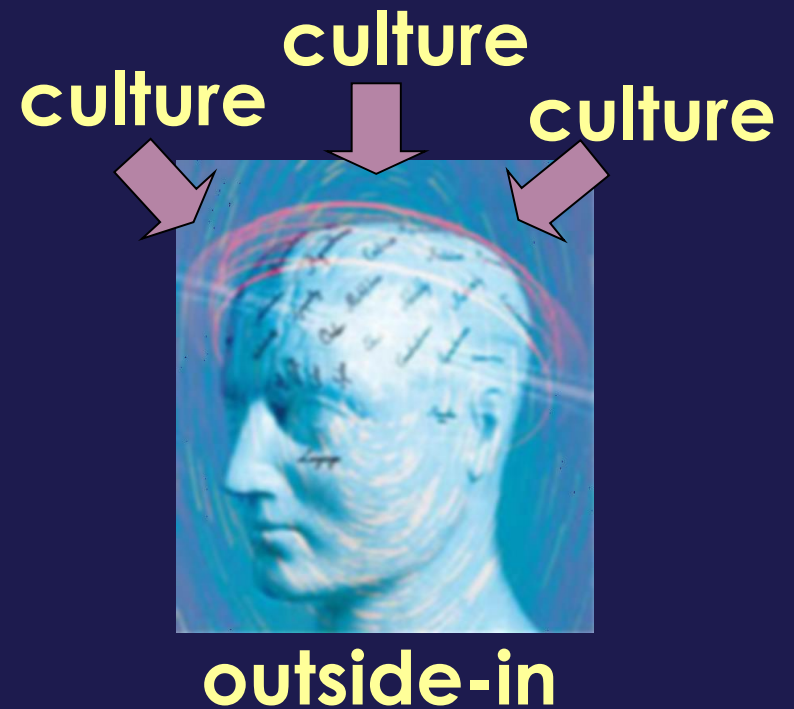
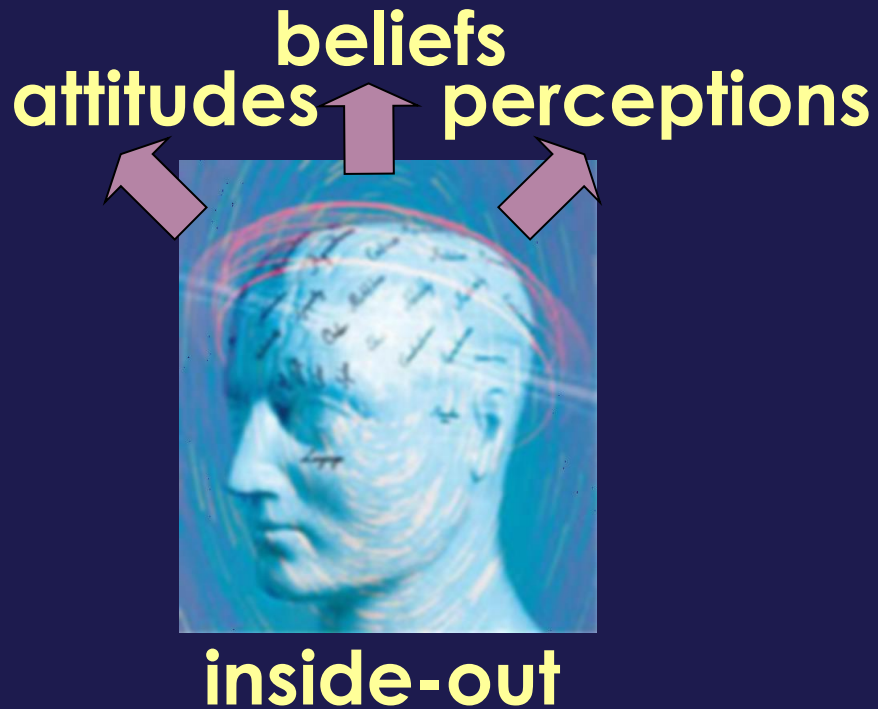


# Business needs futurology.



**We are all futurists.**

# Semiotics



# **Diachronic Analysis**

**The study of change over time.**





**working  
from home**

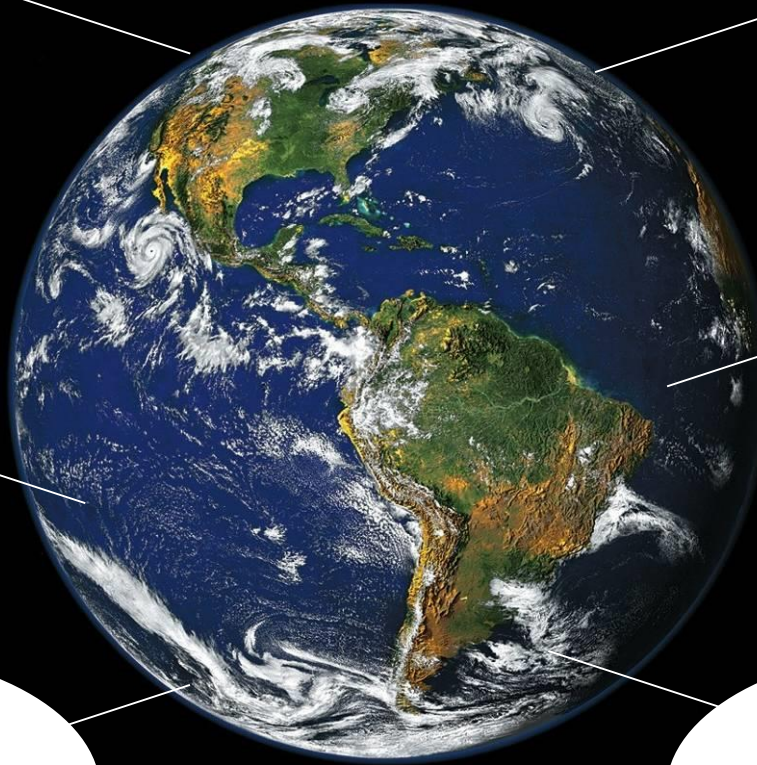
**gay marriage**

**consumer  
protest**

**P2P banking**

**organised  
atheism**


**cyber sex**





## Ways to spot interesting findings

Academic Research



# **Fictional country is world's 77th richest**

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Economist says Norrath richer  
than Bulgaria, as rich as Russia



**rzeznikuk:** Mum doing **shopping** list in restaurant!!

<http://twitpic.com/43hjc>

*less than a minute ago from Tweetie*



**davedevereux:** Who authorised this bloody weather? I have to go **shopping**, and this sort of nonsense just isn't on!

*1 minute ago from TweetDeck*



**maryaezell:** 8:30 Mass, 9:30 prayer group, 11:30 aerobics, 1:00 allergy shots and then grocery **shopping**.

*1 minute ago from web*



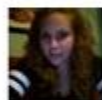
**zerophyte:** Weather doesn't look good outside. What a day - i'll finish the report eventually and have to go grocery **shopping** in the rain :/

*1 minute ago from Tweetie*



**kopite:** RT @shaunlawler: getting ready to venture back to the homeland to Meadowhall - just to do a spot of birthday **shopping** :) :)

*2 minutes ago from TwitterFon*



**ray\_chellie:** Going to English for an hour then off **shopping**

*2 minutes ago from TwitterFon*



**ninakatz:** As always, I did my grocery **shopping** using a set of these: <http://tinyurl.com/c2uqgl> (people always ask me where I got them...)

*3 minutes ago from web*



**FallingBullets:** @carocat there ya go, all finished bar the pictures that I cant invert due to lack of '**shopping** abillity / software (mispaint sux ass)

*3 minutes ago from web*



**balellica:** goes to **shopping**...

*3 minutes ago from web*

shopping



## Trending Topics

Swine Flu

#swineflu

#smcsyd

#musicmonday

Mexico

#ndi09

#rafw

Wesabe Meets Mint In

iPhone

Susan Boyle

## Following



i feel the comfort within your arms our hands made me feel that i m  
never alone so many words go unspoken but all the words seem to slip  
away as you tenderly wrap me in your embrace

7 hours ago / from someone

Madness  
Murmurs  
Montage  
Mobs  
Metrics  
Mounds

WE  
FEEL  
FINE





**branches are  
macro-trends**

**twigs are  
micro-trends**

# The Twig-To-Branch Formula



visual  
culture







**branches are  
macro-trends**

**twigs are  
micro-trends**



**The future of sex  
and gender.**



**GAY  
LIBERATION  
NOW!**



LESBIAN&GAY  
Switchboard  
WestMidlands



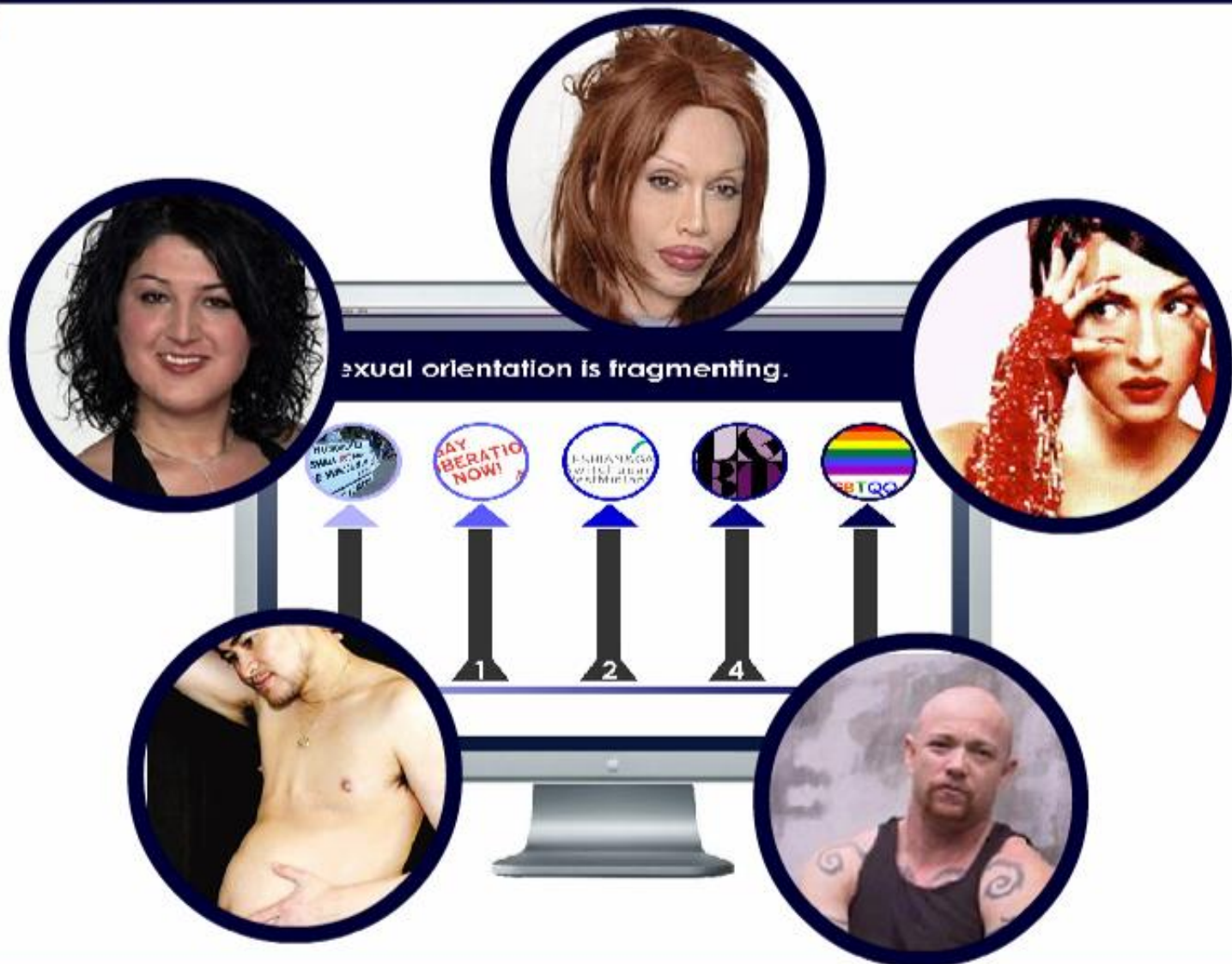
**LGBTQQA**

**1973**

**2009**



**Prediction:**  
Gender categories are going to fragment too, like sexual orientation.



# What business needs to do.

Freshen up brand communications.

Show awareness of social change.

Recognise that new markets are appearing.



**The future of leisure.**



Because of the knowledge economy, work is becoming more like play.







## Prediction: Play is becoming more like work.



Pic from flickr.com, titled 'Dad playing World of Warcraft'.

Academic Research



### **Fictional country is world's 77th richest**

Economist says Norrath richer  
than Bulgaria, as rich as Russia

## What is Dad doing?

He is:

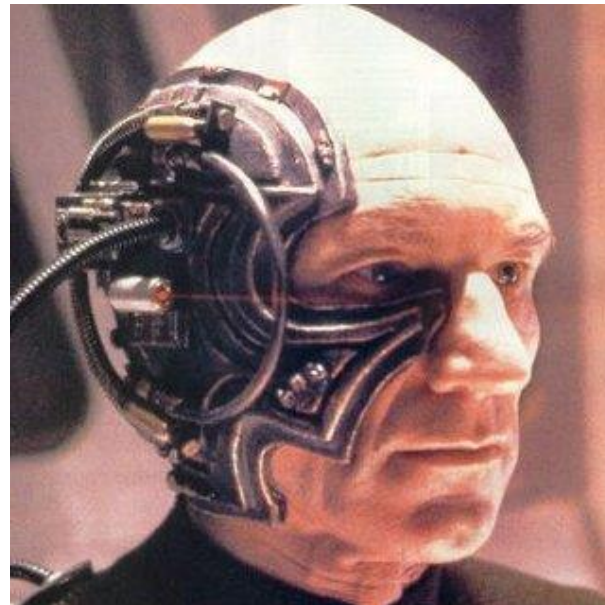
- Generating wealth
- Trading in commodities
- Farming & grinding

# What business needs to do.

Recognise that consumers want to be in control.

Develop new brands that put them in the driving seat.

Find new metaphors for marketing leisure.



# Discussion

Some macro-trends that power changes in consumer behaviour.





# Visual Culture and Accelerated Culture

Consumers today want everything fast. Faster! And they want it attractively presented in a full-colour, graphic format.

Flickr.com: probably the first to use the phrase 'long photo'. Longer than a photo, shorter than a video.



flickr

Why is there a time limit of 90 seconds?

Video on Flickr grew out of the idea of "long photos"

# Individualism and Relativism

Consumers believe they are masters of their own destiny.

They are more resistant than ever to being told what do by authorities.

Post-1960, a layer of Relativism is added, on top of already rampant Individualism.



# Individualism and Relativism

To many consumers, relativism simply means an opinion free-for-all.

They are very sure that they are entitled to know what's best for them.

Brands can capitalise by confirming their self-belief.



# Return of the Real

Relativism makes consumers feel insecure.

It brings with it a loss of certainty.

Consumers comfort themselves with The Real.



# Death of the Author

Consumers value their own interpretations.

They think it's their right to decide what your brand means, hence Culture Jamming.



# Macro Trends

**Visual Culture**

**Accelerated  
Culture**

**Return of  
the Real**

**Individualism**

**Relativism**

**Death of  
the Author**



# Conclusions



## Personal Finance Brands

The credit crunch has damaged confidence.

The bigger challenge is unmet consumer need.

Consumers are hungry for co-creation.

Peer-to-peer banking services like Zopa.com.



# Cosmetics

Clinique: institutional, a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century aesthetic. Return of the Real.

The Clinique skincare regime: easy to love, hard to follow.

Contrast: Benefit's promise of 'instant princess'.





## Snack Foods

Women used to follow bossy 'diet sheets'.

They still want to be slim, but the rules have changed about how you get there.

Individualism & Relativism: only you can decide what's right for you.

Consumers issue their own licence to indulge.



# Success Through Futurology

Every consumer facing brand can benefit from learning about the macro trends that drive consumers.

Semiotics documents and predicts those trends.

**Fin**