

# Qurve®

Big Leaps Forward

According to Time Magazine Banksy posted a drawing online of an iPhone "growing roots that strangle and sink into the wrist of the hand holding it."



Qurve is produced quarterly by QZONE to debate big issues & ideas for marketing & research. It's a chance to think differently & deeper about brands & business. Let us know what you think & how we can improve it....

Jesvier Kaur

## We're An Ecosystem

There's lots of talk about trends right now. As I've read through forecasts I'm left wondering what it all means. Here's my take on it. There's a growing realisation that everything is interconnected. It's leading to interesting innovations yet is also changing behaviours and lifestyles. Nothing works in isolation – it's all connected and those connections have multiplying effects. I suggest 'We're An Ecosystem'. And we're increasingly expecting brands (and the companies behind them) to act like an ecosystem.

Here's a snapshot illustrating **3** ways in which 'We're An Ecosystem'.

### We're An Ecosystem

1. Deep Technology
2. Joining The Dots
3. Brand Potential

# 1. Deep Technology

Technology is starting to integrate into our lives via sensing devices – is it the beginning of the end of screen? Accenture Interactive has released their *Fjord Trends 2106* report. They say technology is helping people to take "things off their thinking list" to simplify choices and decision-making. Amazon has been developing artificial intelligence (AI). Their Dash device is WiFi connected allowing people to reorder household items with the press of a button. And their Echo voice command device controls several smart devices allowing users to play music, do to-do lists, access real-time weather and traffic information, and so on. The next leap in AI devices is shifting from listening, responding and reordering to learning and anticipating what people need and want. The Fjord report says the future is "interactions instead of transactions".

The big players like Google, Apple, Amazon and Facebook are developing augmented (AR) and virtual reality (VR) devices. It's all

about enhancing reality and augmenting entertainment. There's a lot online about this. The challenge will be delivering an authentic experience. What I find interesting is; does this make technology more human or less human? Lev Grossman and Matt Vella in *Time Magazine* say the Apple Watch is "...technology attempting to colonize our bodies." They go on to say that living with any smart device "... makes reality feel just that little bit less real." As we embrace Wearables the next obvious leap is integrating technology inside our bodies? Think implants or Internables. That takes 'We're An Ecosystem' to a whole new level. The late Mark Weiser Chief Technologist from Xerox said **"The most profound technologies are those that disappear. They weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it."** Anyone watch *Humans* on TV3?

The divide between nature and technology is rapidly blurring. Technology is learning from



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Amazon's Dash devices.



INTRODUCING  
**amazon echo**

Always ready, connected,  
and fast. Just ask.

Amazon's Echo voice command device.



Image from the Natural History Museum of David Attenborough testing a Samsung VR headset for his First Life film. Visitors can experience going back in time to the beginnings of life.

nature and is it possible that nature may be adapting to technology? Biomimicry a concept developed by the late Janine Benyus draws on "...nature's time-tested patterns and strategies..." to develop technologies to help resolve sustainability issues. It's been the springboard for incredible innovations. Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands has developed concrete that repairs itself utilising embedded bacteria. Biotechnologists have pushed things further in developing innovations. EpiBone is a biomedical company that engineers tissue utilising stem cells to grow artificial hearts and bones for patients. They say it "...functionally and immunologically integrates into the body."

We're quickly learning that better solutions are needed to resolve difficult issues like

water shortages, drought events, excessive waste, and so on. The realisation that both the planet and humans are an ecosystem is leading to a new level of innovation and responsibility. A *Mintel Consumer Trends 2016* report shows 'consumers' are willing to change. One study shows 86 percent of middle-class Chinese feel it's their responsibility to use products that help protect the environment. Brands are making changes. In Spain Er Boqueron beer is brewed with seawater. In Finland Elovena oak flakes uses no irrigation and is processed with steam. Singapore's water supply is NEWater; made from reclaimed water from drains and sewers. We're adapting to resource scarcity and the future is already heading towards more waterless products.

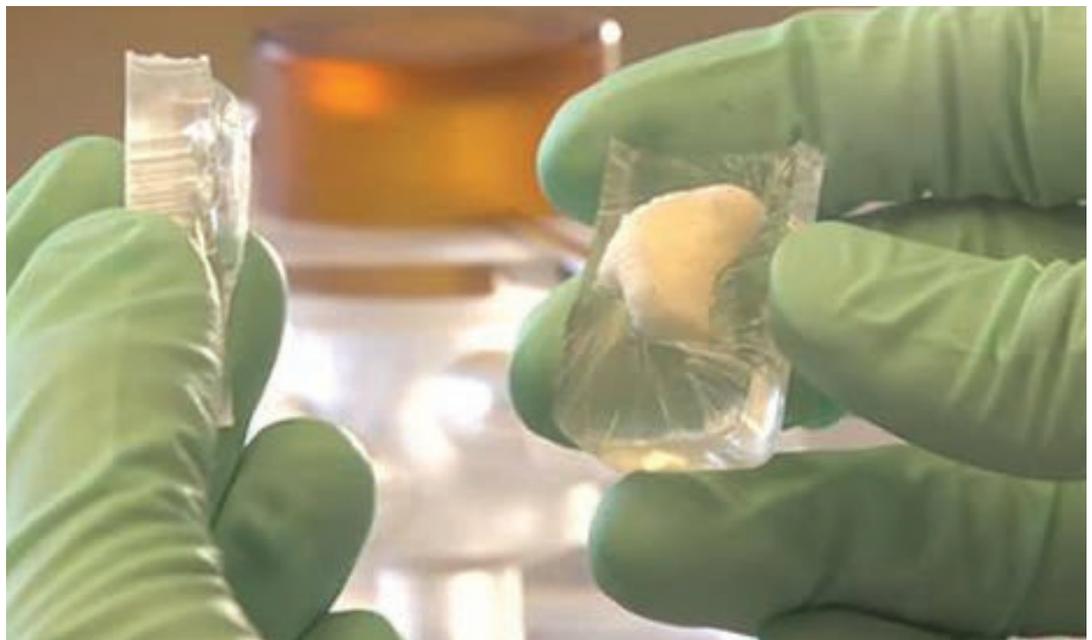


Image from EpiBone of tissue engineered bone.



# 2. Joining The Dots

We're joining the dots between our outer and inner lives. We're realising our consumption and lifestyle is closely connected to our health and wellbeing. As our world becomes more digitally wired people find they're tired and stressed from the constant pressure of rushing to stay on top of things. We over-eat processed and packaged foods. We're plugged into inactive and sedentary lifestyles through technology. So products and services that understand and embrace this dilemma are thriving. Food and beauty and medicine converge in functional beauty products made with organic natural ingredients. Fitness and technology and medicine converge with wearable fitness monitors that track, train and motivate.

As we learn more about how our bodies and brains work, along with what ingredients are in our food, **we're turning away from conventional brands.** People are starting to make behavioural changes sparking a rise in integrative healthcare. Health and wellness specialists (Dr Libby Weaver, Dr Kathleen Wills, Dr Frances Pitsilis and many more) have merged their medical, nutritional and motivational expertise to encourage us to eat naturally and mindfully, sleep better and longer, reduce stress and slow down – to spend quality time through disconnecting (from busyness) and reconnecting (through slowness). These specialists are offering solutions based on insights into the interconnections between our physical and emotional health and our biochemistry, beliefs and lifestyle.

A JWT report *The Future 100 – Trends and change to watch in 2016* is worth a read. It

says we're future-proofing ourselves through wellness and mindfulness. And points out we're "...joining the dots in multiple areas of...consumption...(Food) is assessed for its environmental impact, health benefits, the purity of its ingredients, and the creator brands treatment of livestock and employees. **Health isn't viewed in a silo (anymore).**" Strong interest in Probiotics (live bacteria and yeasts restore the balance of gut bacteria) and the resurgence in Yoga (exercising in a holistic way) are examples. As we increasingly tune our awareness to the bigger picture – we're starting to see interconnections between the physical, mental, functional, social and emotional. This reinforces 'We're An Ecosystem'.

De-consumption suggests we're also thinking differently about stuff in our lives. People are experiencing what James Wallman calls 'stuffocation' and are opting to "live more with less". He says too much stuff is making us anxious, stressed and depressed. What really matters is the experiences we have not the stuff we collect. On top of this add the pressure of urban density and the rise of single-person households. Futurist Thomas Frey suggests it's all pushing younger people to re-think and opt for simpler, smaller, modulated housing. He says "A small house means less room for clutter, less energy costs, less (mortgage and rates), and a smaller ecological footprint." Plus there's the bonus of economic freedom to pursue the things we're passionate about. The culture being created around living more with less again suggests 'We're An Ecosystem'.

*A range of Probiotic beverages.*

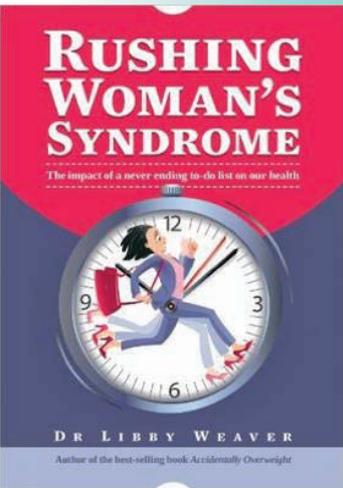




Image from Patagonia of Worn Wear wagon touring the country fixing gear regardless of age or brand.



Images from Patagonia.

# 3. Brand Potential

Brands are under greater scrutiny than ever before. Technology gives people the power to demand more. An Ericsson ConsumerLab report *10 Hot Consumer Trends 2016* points out as people share more they also hold companies and brands to account more. "34 percent of smartphone owners who have had a bad experience with a company due to a faulty product or service share that experience...and 27 percent share or repost complaints about companies or authorities that others have posted."

This seems to signal a step-change from honesty and authenticity to accountability and higher purpose. At a product level, to recycle is no longer enough – it's shifted to reuse. Examples are: utilising food waste for by-products, turning recycled plastics into clothing, and clothing embedded with multiple functionality. Mimi Turner, Marketing Director for *The Lad Bible* says in *The Guardian* "Messages around product are a turn-off. Messages around values, generosity and attitudes are far better ways of achieving engagement. Brands will have to prove themselves – and show that they have a purpose which goes well beyond self-interest."

It's evident in brands like Patagonia which has gone out of its way to be sustainable. Specialising in outdoor clothing, Patagonia launched the "Don't Buy This Jacket" campaign in 2011 and said in a *Fast Company* interview "We design and sell things made to last and be useful. But we ask our customers not to buy from us what you don't need or can't really use. Everything we make – everything anyone makes – costs the planet

more than it gives back." And in 2015 they launched the "Repair Is a Radical Act" campaign encouraging people to repair and reuse Patagonia gear. They provide repair guides so people can fix their own stuff. They're a hugely profitable company on a mission to "Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis."

Millennials are more likely to assess brands and companies on their beliefs, values and their commitment to changing the way the world works. They're looking for greater brand meaning. The JWT report says "...86 percent of US and UK millennials believe that brands are more important to society today and that they should be accountable for public services and education." And "75 percent believe brands should act as cultural benefactors." This goes much further than brands simply doing social good.

Umair Haque an *HBR* blogger says in *Fast Company* that business needs to be "...a system that creates real, positive human outcomes...customers, are beginning to take a quantum leap into what I call a human age, an era where a life meaningfully well lived is what really counts." He says "...it means investing in marketing which doesn't merely promise shinier stuff to people – but ignites higher levels of human potential in them." This suggests people will increasingly expect brands (and the companies) behind them to act like 'We're An Ecosystem'. **Q**