HISTORY 2.0

14 minutes anxiously awaiting the imagined future.
INTRO
Our History 2.0 trend reconsiders the past and creates new products for imagined worlds and futures that may once have seemed improbable - even impossible. In our companion consumer forecast, we look at how consumers are actively pursuing the far-fetched and the unlikely.

WHAT’S DRIVING THE TREND
An understanding that conditions such as “old age/youth” and “retirement/employment” are becoming increasingly fluid and that concepts such as “reality/virtual-reality”, “truth/fiction”, “space/time” and “history/future” are no longer fixed.
HISTORY 2.0

S/S 15 CONSUMER FORECAST
Priorities

Background

The three key priorities we are exploring within the History 2.0 trend are: Living the Impossible, Culture Shift and Clockless.

1. Living the Impossible

Consumers are getting used to seeing the impossible come true. Artists’ and scientists’ themes and experiments are becoming wilder and more unthinkable, yet they are producing results. Meanwhile, brands and media are tapping into consumers’ increasing quests for the unobtainable. What once was science fiction is fast becoming science fact.

2. Culture Shift

Institutions and governments are developing new narratives to tell the cultural stories of cities and countries, as many of the customs and traditions we are familiar with now seem inadequate and out of date. Offering citizens solutions for a harmonious future with their environments, both urban and rural, is key.

3. Clockless

Consumers are redefining time as our world appears to be simultaneously speeding up and slowing down. We are already living longer, and some scientists believe that it may be possible to live forever. Meanwhile, technology is evolving at an ever-increasing pace.
EXAMPLE

The Mars One project epitomises the concept of “living the impossible”. This decade-long “interactive” endeavour aims to establish the first human settlement on the planet Mars by 2023. It has an open call for candidates, and so far 78,000 people have applied. These potential colonists will be whittled down to the final four as the enterprise turns reality TV series in 2014, wherein the public will watch the “contestants” in training and vote for who makes the cut for the one-way Red Planet trip.

The very concept invites incredulity: the reality TV aspect only adds to the disbelief. As a post on the Singularity Hub says: “Perhaps this story gets more plausible as the years go by. Perhaps the opposite happens. Either way, dreaming big is the only way we’ll make this space exploration thing happen.” Mars One is not the only trip in the pipeline. There are also plans from Inspiration Mars and Space X.
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Brands such as Husqvarna are tapping into the need to achieve the seemingly impossible with their Challenge the Impossible competition. Meanwhile, the “This Isn’t Even My Final Form” meme has been gaining in popularity and expresses the notion of continued evolution in the pursuit of the ever-more unfeasible. We’re also seeing more “summer bucket lists”. These are often simple and easy-to-achieve ideas, but also include a good amount of more far-fetched and humorous notions such as “play catch with an egg”. Other examples include Joel Runyon’s Impossible HQ blog. Runyon graduated from college into a full-blown recession. Jobless and sick of being told everything he wanted to do was “impossible”, he created an “impossible list” including “put $100,000 in the bank”, “give $100,000 away”, and “create a million-dollar company”. He is crossing each entry off as he achieves it.
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There is a growing consumer awareness that many of our cultural narratives are antiquated, even invalid and consumers are demanding new stories for the future of their communities. Geographer and blogger Jim Russell borrows the term “mesofacts” from author Samuel Arbesman to discuss the many half-truths we have accepted. He talks about the negative narratives associated with America’s Rust Belt, and says: “No one wants to move to Shittsburgh. It’s a shrinking city in the dying Rust Belt. Southwestern PA is a region of inbred hilljacks who have been unemployed for three decades. Those are the mesofacts.” New magazine The Belt, uses the concept of “Rust Belt chic” to counteract these mesofacts. Meanwhile, in Los Angeles, Urban Macro Structures proposes to rejuvenate the city centre by writing it a new narrative, thus encouraging new activities in the area.
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China’s economic success has been countered with much discussion of its failure to gain “soft power”. This concept, first developed by political scientist Joseph Nye, outlines many countries’ needs for cultural influence. The UK and the US have a lot of “soft power” - think of jeans, Coca-Cola or the 2012 London Olympic Games, for example - these things all generate cultural caché. And it’s this kind of caché that China is making efforts to improve.

Confucius Institutes - organisations at college campuses around the world teaching the Chinese language and culture - are just one example of this. More recently we have seen the launch of CCTV (China Central Television) in the US. However, commentators including Nye have noted that for China to truly succeed in this way, it needs to “unleash the full talents of civil societies”, thus allowing “soft power” to happen more organically.
Falling birth rates and increasing lifespans mean that the fastest-growing consumer group will be those over the age of 60. By 2015, there will be more Americans over the age of 60 than under the age of 15. Dr Aubrey De Grey, molecular biologist and chief science officer of the SENS Research Foundation, believes that extraordinary lifespans are possible once we can stop the physical deterioration that comes with age at molecular, cellular levels: He believes there is no reason why human beings shouldn't live to be 1,000 once science has worked out how to prevent and regenerate where there is damage: “I think we’re in striking distance of keeping people so healthy that at 90 they’ll carry on waking up in the same physical state as they were at the age of 30, and their probability of not waking up one morning will be no higher than it was at the age of 30,” he told the Guardian.
Consumers have a sense of time speeding up as the evolution of technology continues to go faster. The notion of Moore’s Law, which states that computer chips get better at an accelerating rate, is enabling companies to create useful future scenarios. “It’s like the evolution of living things. In contrast to Darwinian evolution, however, Moore’s Law changes have “teleology” towards cheaper, larger, denser and faster. Hardly anyone can see across even the next crank of the Moore’s Law clock. Those few who can see forward have made fortunes,” wrote co-founder of Pixar, Alvy Ray Smith, in Wired magazine. The other big concept that implies a step change in time is the Singularity - the moment when artificial intelligence surpasses all human intelligence. Futurists such as Ray Kurzweil predict that this will happen by 2045, and Dmitry Itskov is using the concept to fuel his Initiative 2045. He proposes that by this time we will be able to upload our brains to synthetic bodies.
KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Consumers are getting used to seeing the impossible come true.
- There is a feeling that many of our accepted notions of culture are out of date and need to be reassessed.
- People are living longer, and it has been suggested that the first person to live to 1,000 is already alive today.
- The increasing pace of technology means consumers experience seemingly impossible change very quickly.
- Companies are using the concepts of evolutionary change to fuel future scenarios.
MARS ONE
Mars One is a project to that aims to establish a human settlement on the planet Mars by 2023. There is no return journey planned for those who undertake this mission.

mars-one.com

INSPIRATION MARS
Inspiration Mars is committed to sending a two-person crew - a man and a woman - to within 100 miles around the Red Planet and return safely in 2018.

www.inspirationmars.org

SPACE X
Space X is a space transportation company in California, founded by former PayPal entrepreneur Elon Musk. It is one of the first private space travel companies and Musk recently announced plans to go to Mars.

www.spacex.com

CHALLENGE THE IMPOSSIBLE
Challenge the Impossible is a competition from lawn and garden equipment company Husqvarna. It is asking consumers to submit their stories about how they made the impossible possible for a chance to win outdoor trips.

www.husqvarna.com

SUMMER BUCKET LISTS
Summer bucket lists have been growing in popularity for the last couple of years, and the youth market have been dedicating blogs and web posts to the subject of what they want to achieve before the summer is over.

summer-bucketlist.tumblr.com
summer-bucket-list-2k13.tumblr.com

IMPOSSIBLE HQ
Impossible HQ is a project by Joel Runyon, who has created a list of things he wants to achieve and is crossing them off as he does so.

impossiblehq.com
As part of the My LA2050 initiative - an open call to imagine new ways to shape the future of Los Angeles – Narrative Replacement Therapy by Urban Macro Structures proposes to rejuvenate the city centre by writing it a new narrative, thus encouraging new activities in the area.

myla2050.maker.good.is

Confucius Institutes were started in 2004 by the Chinese Government with the aim of spreading Chinese culture around the world. Institutes are funded by the Chinese government and operate within established universities and colleges around the world.

www.confuciusinstitute.net

Rust Belt Chic is a blog, book and magazine that aims to tell it like it is for the Pittsburgh region of the United States.

rustbeltchic.com

“Soft power” was a term first coined by political scientist Joseph Nye in the late 1980s. For more, read his book of the same name, first published in 2004.

www.amazon.com

This very interesting blog from geographer Jim Russell looks at narratives about place and people and how they intersect.

burghdiaspora.blogspot.com

Tom Doctoroff is a leading expert on Chinese consumer psychology. His most recent book, What Chinese Want, looks at what kind of consumers the 21st-century China are shaping up to be.

www.amazon.com
Aubrey De Grey is a biomedical gerontologist and the Chief Science Officer of SENS Foundation. He’s one of the foremost authorities on the “living forever” movement.

www.youtube.com

The main aim of this initiative, led by Russian entrepreneur Dmitry Itskov, is to create technologies enabling the transfer of an individual’s personality to a more advanced non-biological carrier and extending life, including to the point of immortality.

2045.com

According to the Sens Research Foundation website, the organisation “emphasises the application of regenerative medicine to age-related disease, with the intent of repairing underlying damage to the body’s tissues, cells, and molecules. Our goal is to help build the industry that will cure the diseases of aging.”

www.sens.org

Simply put, the Singularity is the point where progress becomes so rapid that it will outstrip humans’ ability to comprehend it. Futurists such as Ray Kurzweil believe this will happen by 2045.

www.singularity.com

Aubrey De Grey outlines his research about breakthroughs that will “eliminate aging-derived debilitation and death entirely”.

www.amazon.com

This law, named after Intel’s co-founder Gordon E Moore, refers to the idea that the performance of the most advanced computer chips doubles approximately every two years. It now refers to the processing speed, memory capacity and more of digital devices.

www.intel.com
Each season, the consumer forecast provides an evolution of the previous season’s themes. We have seen an evolution from a more open-source, culturally diverse way of thinking, through blurred interpretations of Eastern and Western histories, religions and a growing interest in folklore to the pursuit of dreams and the seemingly impossible.

**SEASONAL EVOLUTION**

**HISTORY 2.0**
Our History 2.0 trend reconsiders the past and creates new products for imagined worlds and futures that may once have seemed improbable - even impossible.

In our companion consumer forecast, we look at how consumers are actively pursuing the far-fetched and the unlikely.

**MODERN MYTH**
Modern Myth looks at how consumers around the world are tapping into traditional folklore and stories in order to make sense of contemporary culture. This trend also highlights the blurred interpretations of Eastern and Western cultures.

**OPEN SOURCE**
Watch as the way we perceive and speak of the world becomes much more open - less focused on an east/west structure and more inclusive of a variety of cultures. Be inspired by new layers of global references - some from your own locality, some from further afield, but all precious because they have not been seen before.