

Governing Energy

Memories

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I was recently watching one of the political pundits on television comment that one candidate was likely to lose because the other candidate had launched a significant media attack. Typical of assaults that has routinely worked in past elections—the so called conventional wisdom. This despite what appears to be an increasingly tighter race between one candidate whose approach is different, at the very least and one who is following a more traditional path.

Regardless of the outcome of this particular political contest, it appears that many are missing what may be a Tsunami of social change. In both parties, a significant percentage of the US electorate voted for non-traditional candidates in the Presidential primaries.

Since 2008 the United States voter has elected those promising change. During this period, it appears that many commentators and political strategists have focused on conventional approaches. While employing new technologies and methods of getting the message to voters, i.e., social media, the stratagems are largely unchanged.

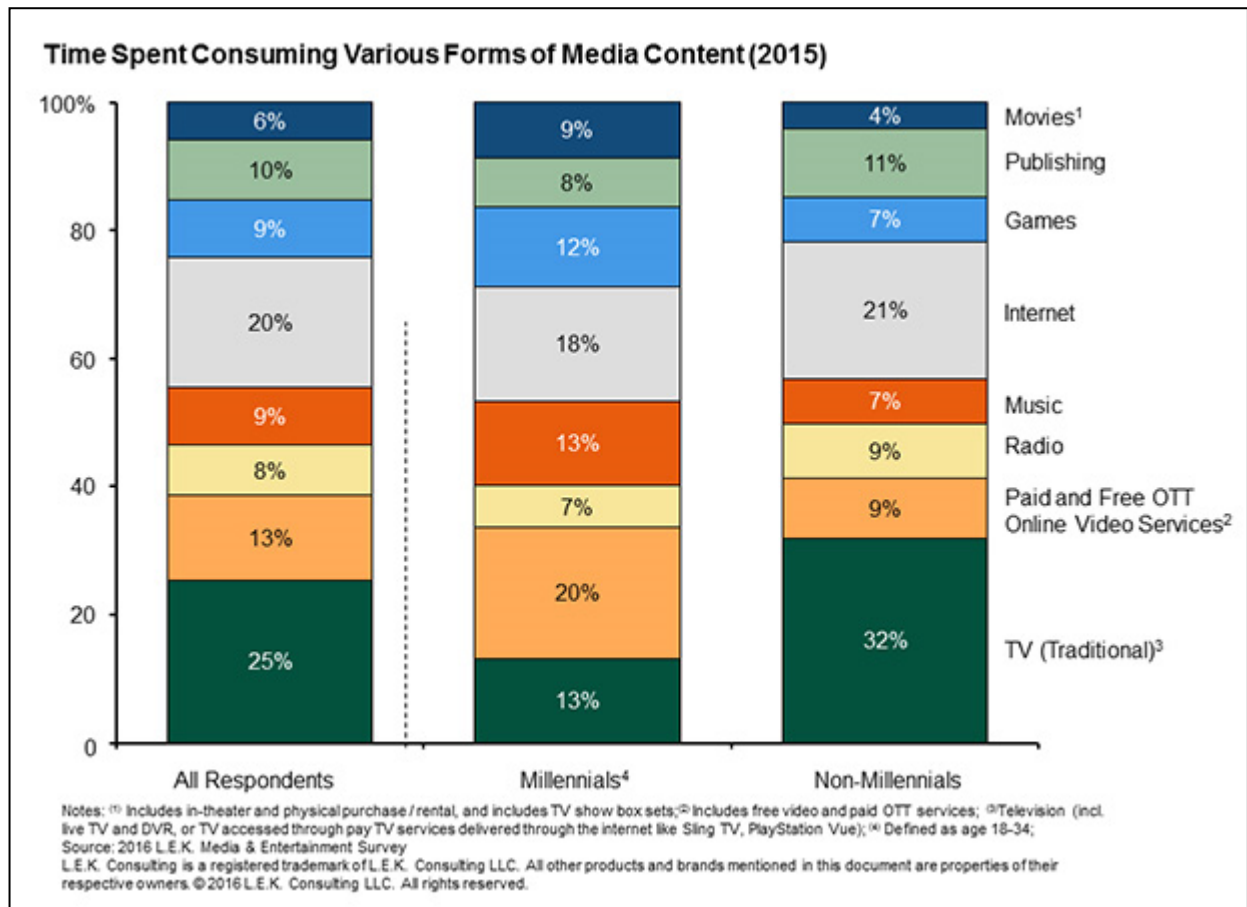
Does this suggest that human behavior is not all that different than millenniums ago? Perhaps, but another fundamental reason may be underlying societal currents.

For example, traditional voter blocks may be at risk to incumbencies.ⁱ One can see this concern/opportunity played out by the behaviors of the two major candidates, their staffs and media reporting.

Often, these individuals and groups deny what appears to be changing models, i.e., reporting that what so and so is doing has never worked. This may lead to a false sense of *situational awareness*.ⁱⁱ

As of this writing, one candidate has tweeted over 33,000 times and has over 11.1 million followers. The other has tweeted more than 7,665 times and has approximately 8.46 million followers.ⁱⁱⁱ

The candidate with the lowest use of Twitter has invested the most in television ads—the traditional media. However according to one researcher, media content consumption continues to change, as reflected in the following graphic.^{iv}



Marketers typically fashion advertising campaigns focusing on those who are the most desirable, the so called 18-34 demographic whose “buying habits” have not solidified.^v However, if the message to demographic groups does not resonate the opportunity to influence these buyers diminishes.

Our purpose is not to delve into the political arena. However, every four years, society is offered a perspective of how all levels of the political class “sells” itself to the citizenry. With seemingly unlimited financial resources, this retail marketing program dwarfs anything private industry ever musters.

There will be many lessons learned from the 2016 “silly season.” One may be that even with unlimited funds and/or unfettered use of all forms of content consumption, experts, pundits, the media and candidates will misunderstand their market.

Through this blog and other content, we have addressed latent social forces that manifest themselves long after they were at work. Establishment is often the purveyor of the status quo and individuals in these bureaucracies (public and private) have a vested interest in a continuum.

Disruptive change habitually catches these individuals by surprise and they are often economic laggards in their response.^{vi} Taking their cue from their insular colleagues, these individuals resist the new even when confronted with evidence of its value.

The so called fast follower is an acceptable business model.^{vii} In some cases, it is not. For example, firms may consider themselves fast follower but in reality may be economic laggards.^{viii}

In today's business environment, the term "we have always done it that way" should fall on deaf ears. The same individuals voting this fall work for organizations, buy from organizations, regulate organizations, and/or interact socially/politically with organizations.

Media *talking heads* remembering how elections were won in the past may not understand the current societal forces in play. Human nature is a constant and driven by individual near-term reward mechanisms—latent forces are often ephemeral.

Lessons learned from this silly season are important to businesses and not just which candidate wins. New buying patterns of the electorate are moving from latent to measureable. Take heed!

Does your organization really understand how to reach your market?

About the Author

Dr. [Scott M. Shemwell](#) has over 30 years technical and executive management experience primarily in the energy sector. He is the author of six books and has written extensively about the field of Operations Excellence. Shemwell is the Managing Director of The Rapid Response Institute, a firm that focuses on providing its customers with solutions enabling Operational Excellence and regulatory compliance management. He has studied cultural interactions for more than 30 years—his dissertation; *Cross Cultural Negotiations Between Japanese and American Businessmen: A Systems Analysis (Exploratory Study)* is an early peer reviewed manuscript addressing the systemic structure of social relationships.

End Notes

ⁱ <http://www.npr.org/2016/02/28/467961962/sick-of-political-parties-unaffiliated-voters-are-changing-politics>

ⁱⁱ Shemwell, Scott M. (2016, August 4). [Awareness 101](#). *Governing Energy*. PennEnergy.

ⁱⁱⁱ Per candidate Twitter pages.

^{iv} <http://www.thewrap.com/why-the-tv-industry-fears-a-spread-of-millennials-viewing-habits-guest-blog/>

^v <http://business.time.com/2012/03/16/the-declining-economic-might-of-the-18-to-34-demographic/>

^{vi} <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/laggards.html>

^{vii} <http://banknxt.com/55672/fast-follower-strategy/>

^{viii} <http://labs.openviewpartners.com/lessons-for-startup-cmos/#.V8Bg-LArxE>