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5 trends to watch... or else!

By [Michael Tchong](#)

Which current consumer habits will impact digital marketing most profoundly? Ubercool Trend Analyst Michael Tchong lends his insight.

Voyeurgasm

I'm writing this while America is embroiled in one of the most gut-wrenching debates in its 231-year history. No, it's not the war. And it certainly isn't the 2008 presidential race. It's the early release of Paris Hilton from jail and her subsequent return. Huh? What's going on here?

The answer lies in an ubertrend I've insightfully dubbed "voyeurgasm." It's rooted in an age-old consumer desire: we like to watch. But the trend has taken off in the past 20 years or so, propelled by the proliferation of digital technologies and jump-started by the Rodney King beating in 1991.

Since then, we've seen an explosion in high-profile events captured on video, including Central Park's notorious "wilding" incident, the Concorde crash, September 11, the Mt. Hood rescue helicopter crash and Madelyne Toogood's child beating, plus a never-ending string of police-car chases and other fabulous foibles.

Our national obsession with celebrities led New Scientist magazine to conclude in 2003 that one-third of Americans were suffering from something it called "celebrity-worship syndrome" (it's probably around 50 percent by now, judging by the massive amounts of publicity that blogs like Perez Hilton and TMZ have attracted with celebrity-peeking adventures).

Voyeurgasm is an appropriate trend to lead off a marketing story with because it's already having a major impact on media consumption. Reality shows have become a standard staple among TV viewers. Our look-at-me culture has fueled a dizzying array of TV shows, ranging from the bizarre to the outrageous. My decadent favorite? VH1's "Flavor of Love," starring Public Enemy's Flavor Flav. Anyone who caught last season's "spitting" incident will agree that "voyeurgasmic" has become a bon mot.

Expect this trend to completely remake media, as the YouTubes, MySpaces and Flickrers of the future conspire with billions of camera phones, digital cameras, camcorders and surveillance cameras to create a world where just about everything is recorded digitally.

Another change precipitated by voyeurgasm is the growing importance of transparency in everything we do. From growing public disclosure to glass-walled bathrooms to see-through restaurant kitchens, the world is rapidly vaulting towards a future where being able to see one's innermost processes will be de rigueur. Marketers need to take note of this, and should aspire to inject the as much transparency as possible in their campaigns and communication initiatives.