



# 10 TRENDS

---

# HOW TO

---

COMMUNICATE WITH THE  
**DIGITAL GENERATION**

**Kelton**

March 2017

# The art of **connection**

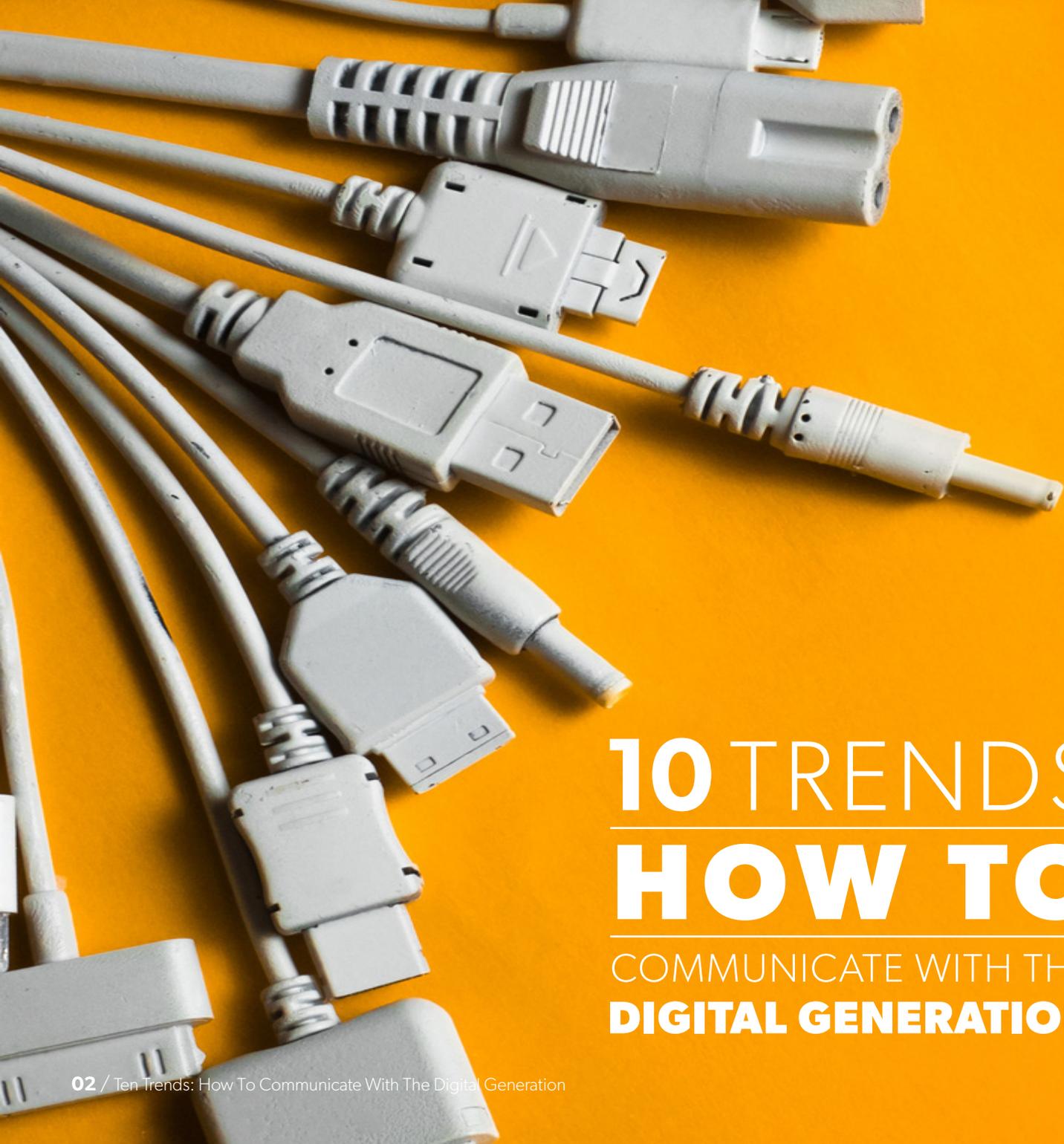


## **BETTER, FASTER, AND MORE HUMAN**

As marketers, we know that communication goes well beyond simply informing, it's about connecting – bridging gaps in time, language, and generational values that separate us. Today, technology continues to make communication faster, cheaper, and easier. We share intimate moments with large groups simultaneously; we can tweet and text every spontaneous thought. **But now we see the pendulum swinging in the other direction: the human side of communication is re-emerging.** Digital Natives are moving back towards a more personalized, media-rich, and empathy-friendly world of tech-enabled communication and connection.

With shifting generational attitudes and a flood of new technologies, brands are faced with reshaping communication strategies and placing bets on new platforms. With an eye on emergent trends, brands can do more than just adapt to these new values, behaviors and technologies, they can transcend them, finding powerful opportunity along the way.

In the following pages, we've recapped some of the shifts we've seen around the ways technology is impacting communication with Digital Natives.



# 10 TRENDS

---

# HOW TO

---

COMMUNICATE WITH THE  
**DIGITAL GENERATION**

- 01 **SYNTHESIZED** SHOPPING
- 02 **BEYOND THE** ALGORITHM BUBBLE
- 03 **HYPER-TARGETED** SOCIAL MEDIA
- 04 **LIVE CHILLIN'**
- 05 **PERSONABLE** AI
- 06 **QUICK** WIT
- 07 **CONNECTED** CARS
- 08 **CURATED** NARRATIVES
- 09 **LOCAL** LEXICONS
- 10 **ACTIONABLE** EMPATHY

## IKEA

IKEA had their customer in mind when creating their first augmented reality mobile app, enabling users to physically place furniture from the IKEA catalogue in their own homes to “try on” color, scale and aesthetic.



01.

## SYNTHESIZED SHOPPING

Most brands work hard to stay present in their customers’ lives - the more places consumers can experience the product and the entire brand experience, the better.

Enter: shopping through virtual and augmented reality, essentially tech-enabled retail tourism. As gaming pushes augmented reality to the mainstream, brands will be asking consumers to take the next (virtual) step and engage with products from the comfort of their own homes. It’s an opportunity to transform trial, convenience, and the retail experience as a whole.



### CHALLENGE

- Identify which of your products consumers might want to “try on” before buying.

02.

# BEYOND THE ALGORITHM BUBBLE

In a world where algorithms abound, consumers are looking to break out of the 'filter bubble,' seeking ideas and influences outside of their technologically-constructed comfort zones. They are looking for greater insight, new ideas and fresh perspectives.

Brands can help burst the bubble by giving consumers a wider range of choices or ways to opt into a longer tail of content or products. Online marketers can give consumers even more control over the algorithms that surface options.



I think it could change my life and the world for the better if people with conflicting opinions talked more. It would replace complacency with conflict – but I think that's a good thing."

**Lauren F.**

## Unfiltered.news

In an effort to mitigate the effects of the social media filter bubble, Unfiltered.news took on the challenge of presenting global news in an algorithm-less, unbiased environment. The website includes multiple headlines from around the world with crisp data visualization.

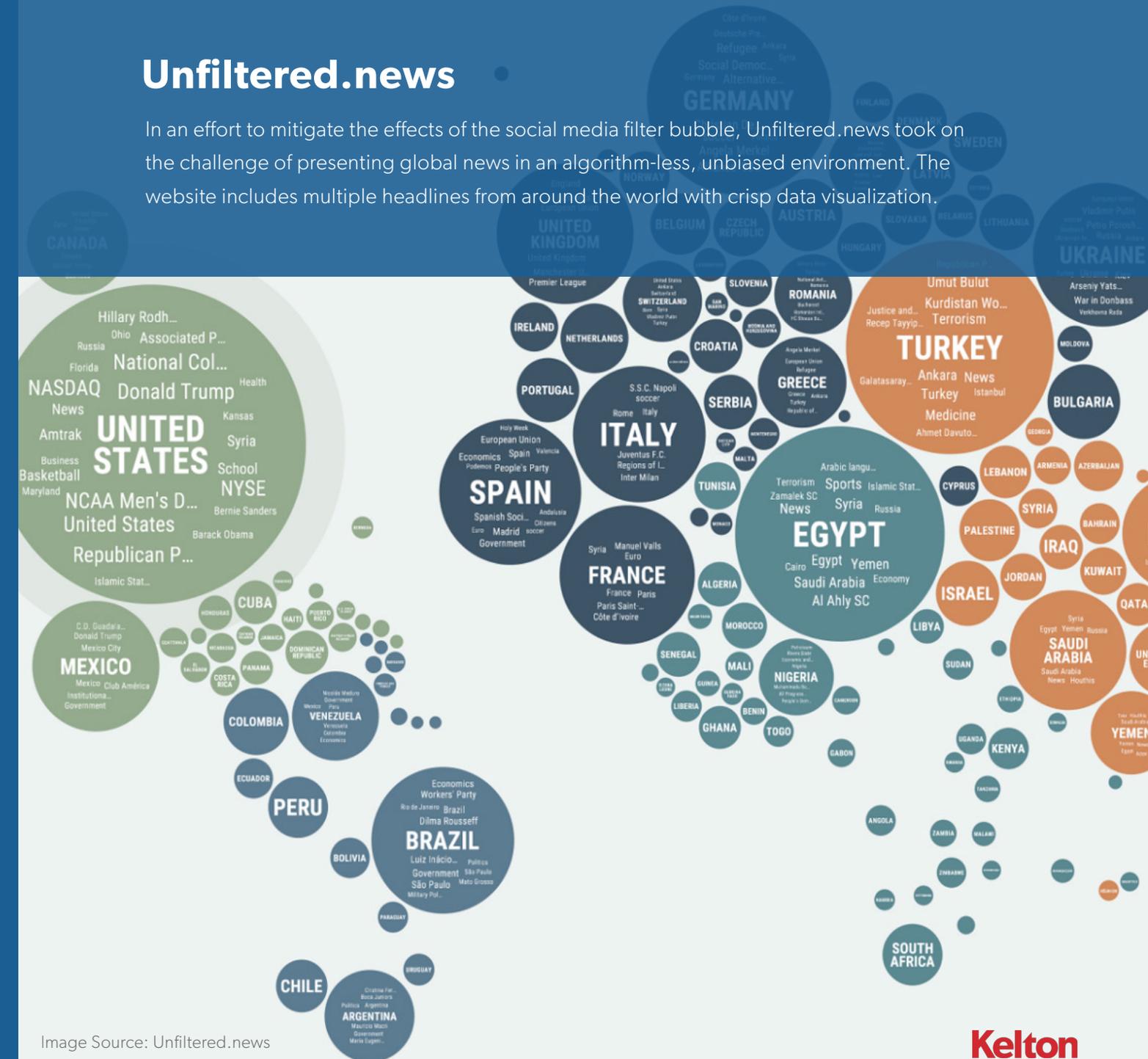


Image Source: Unfiltered.news

## Untappd

Catering to beer enthusiasts around the world, this app lets users discover the most popular breweries and events in the area, rate and recommend beers, and connect with other beer lovers along the way.



03.

## HYPER-TARGETED SOCIAL MEDIA

For consumers and brands who are looking to break from overcrowded platforms like Facebook, a range of smaller networks have emerged to serve professional and personal needs ranging from craft beer fandom to budget travel blogging.

These niche networks provide a way to connect with a smaller set of consumers around a deeper set of values and needs, and use this direct contact to build substantial and long-lasting relationships.



### CHALLENGE

-  Fame no longer equals influence. Dig to find the true influencers and leverage the niche networks that can kickstart your brand.

04.

## LIVE CHILLIN'

It's safe to say that spending time with friends remains an integral part of the average teenage experience – but Gen Z teens are taking the term “hanging out” to another level. Today's teens are often opting out of in-person meetings and IM in favor of video-enabled, real-time socializing through their beloved devices.

Dubbed ‘the future of friendship,’ they are using a range of apps like Houseparty, Fam, and Kik to simulate the feeling of togetherness at all times – no matter where they physically sit. Brands interested in catering to Gen Z take note: real-time, immediate and visual is the emerging expectation.



Video platforms have changed my life for the better, especially after high school and college, helping me to stay in contact with friends as far away as Berlin and Tokyo.”

**Toko N.**

## Vertigo

This smartphone app gives listening to music a social twist, letting users share their playlists with friends in real time and allowing them to add in audio commentary, share live photos and videos, and chat with other users around the globe.



## SEPHORA

One of the first beauty brands to incorporate AI into their customer service systems, Sephora's chat bot not only answers product questions and schedules appointments, but allows customers to virtually test makeup, just as they would in the store.



05.

## PERSONABLE AI

Need help finding the perfect jacket, recipe, or podcast? Artificial intelligence can help. What was once the stuff of Sci-Fi will soon be commonplace, as brands increasingly communicate with consumers directly through helpful bots and customer-service automation.

But machines aren't for everyone – and brands are starting to recognize this, infusing AI agents with personality and ensuring that a human element is maintained throughout every interaction. Real consumer trust demands both the responsiveness of AI and a human touch. Brand personality is now extending into AI persona.



### CHALLENGE

- 🛠️ Do the legwork to understand which interactions truly demand human touch and spend capital there, moving other interactions to AI.

06.

## QUICK WIT

From Seinfeld to Geico, humor has always been associated with a deeper truth about the world we live in, creating common ground to connect people and brands. Today, humor has become an important tool for standing out from the digital noise. Twitter and other real-time social networks are raising the bar for quick-witted brands. Digital Natives want their humor to be immediate, relevant and sharp. Will the next generation of social media managers be stand up comedians?



Humor is such a part of how we communicate that it makes sense for brands to leverage that technique – it allows brands to present more of a personality than ever before.”

**Mark M.**

## Denny's

On Twitter, Denny's is king. Using well-timed humor and consistent brand-forward messaging, Denny's now boasts one of the most engaged brand communities on the platform.



## MirrorLink

What started out as a research project turned into MirrorLink – a device that integrates smartphones with a vehicle's operational system, giving users access to all smartphone services and apps while on the move.



Image Source: MirrorLink.com

07.

## CONNECTED CARS

From automatic Wi-Fi in cars to next-gen integrated entertainment systems, consumers have come to expect that the Internet of Automobiles comes with any new base model.

But the Internet of Things isn't just for appliances. Connected cars serve a range of communication needs, from apps that analyze driving for fuel efficiency to software that alerts you to nearby parking. In this new design paradigm, brands will have ample opportunity to communicate with drivers and add indispensable services for commuters.



### CHALLENGE

 Translate your advertising strategy into a dashboard-friendly set of experiences.

08.

## THE PERFECT PICTURE

We're already obsessed with documenting the everyday, from the coffee drink we gorged on last week, to insta-ready moments from world travel, and live streaming. But it's gotten to be a bit much. Under the heading of "less is more," social media is helping users curate their stories by capturing the best moments and creating an aesthetic that ties them together.

Using image-forward platforms such as Instagram and Pinterest, companies have also begun to create purposeful aesthetics to invoke the feel of the brand through imagery – and consumers are loving it.



I love following Instagrammers that are good storytellers. They're curating their story and sharing it in a meaningful way that can also add meaning to my own life where we overlap."

**Leah M.**

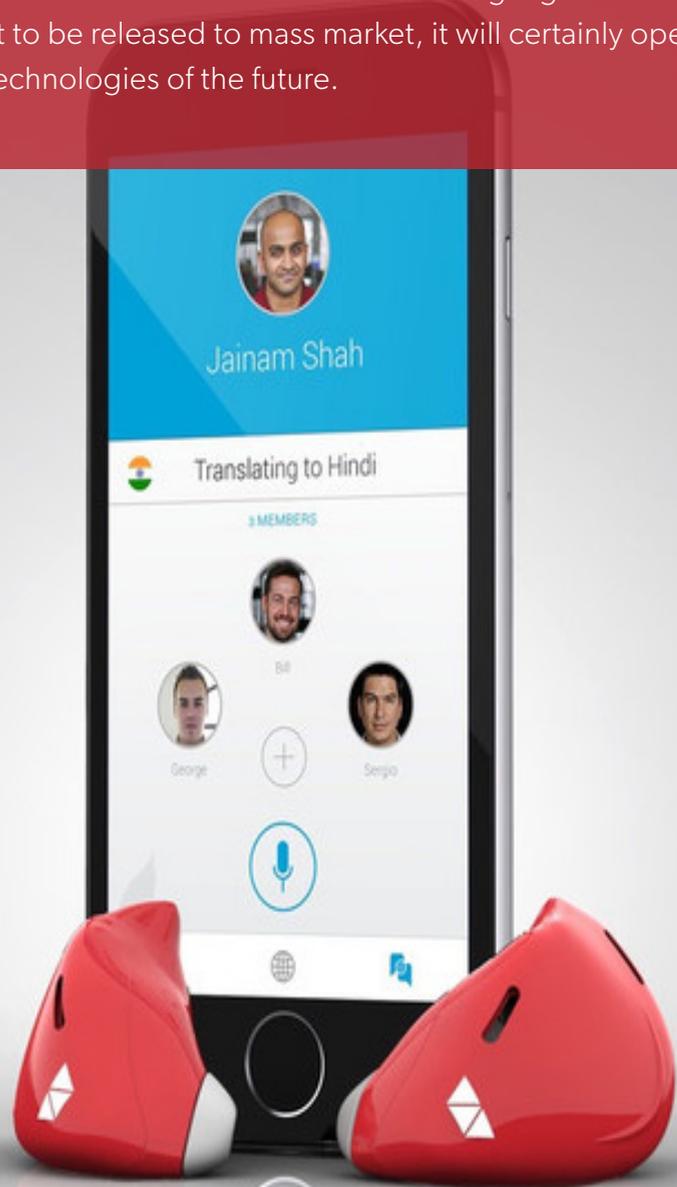
## The Saguaro Palm Springs

Hotels aren't known for being the most social media-savvy brands – until now. This boutique outfit weaves a bright, colorful, and highly-recognizable aesthetic throughout its social media posts, sourcing photography from Instagram users and ensuring that every image speaks to the brand's personality.



## Pilot

This “smart” earpiece offers real-time language translation – when someone speaks in one language, the user will hear their words translated into the language of their choosing. While the product has yet to be released to mass market, it will certainly open doors for global communications technologies of the future.



09.

## LOCAL LEXICONS

One of the oldest and most fundamental barriers to global community-building is finally coming down, with new technologies providing ways to cross the language divide.

From Google Translate’s interpretations at the click of a button to Duolingo’s gamified approach to language learning, inventive new services are connecting people from disparate cultures around the world through a common tongue.



When I’ve been traveling in countries whose language is totally unknown to me, this type of technology would have made a lot of small transactions easier and smoother – and would probably open up new interactions to me as well.”

**Margaret S.**

10.

## ACTIONABLE EMPATHY

In today's world, it pays for brands to be hyperaware of trending social issues. Where engaging in political and social issues was once considered risky business, consumers now expect social action from beloved brands. Shoppers are calling on brands to use their influence - and wallets - to make political waves, even when the company isn't directly affected by the issue at hand.

When communicated correctly, this kind of commitment to social action allows brands to open a dialogue about certain issues with consumers, forging an empathetic link between brand and shopper. The trick is to not only take action, but to find the right way to talk about it.



### CHALLENGE

- Find a trending social cause that's aligned with your brand's expertise and mission – and don't just give money away, but instead lead the charge.

## Conflict Kitchen

This food stall located in Pittsburgh takes brand-initiated social action to the next level, only serving foods from countries the United States is currently in conflict with. But their commitment to actionable empathy goes beyond the kitchen, offering events and discussion groups to engage consumers in the larger conversation.



Image Source: [ConflictKitchen.com](http://ConflictKitchen.com)

# About **Kelton**

**Kelton Global is an insights and strategy consultancy with deep experience in research.** We blend a broad range of approaches to generate smart, actionable solutions that help brands move confidently into the future.

Kelton Cultural Insights uses Semiotics and Trend Monitoring to identify subtle themes and cultural shifts early. We see them come to life in social media through Digital Analytics and get a rich consumer perspective through Qualitative and Quantitative research. These trends bring foresight to our strategy work and inform branding work to give it longevity and inspire innovation.

---

Give us a ring or drop us a note.

**+1.310.479.4040 | [contact@keltonglobal.com](mailto:contact@keltonglobal.com)**

March 2017

