

Jeff reviews the suggestions he gets back from his followers and compares them to an app on his phone that rates local restaurants. The app also has the ability to make bookings, and Jeff does so after finding a suitable restaurant. Now all he has to do is turn up on time with Tina to have a nice dinner.

Meanwhile, at the restaurant, the staff have received Jeff's booking, and, by looking at his social media profiles, they realise that he's a first-time customer to the restaurant and is in town with his wife for their anniversary. They go to work setting up a highly personalised experience to make sure that Jeff and Tina have a night to remember, and perhaps rave about it to all their friends and family back home.

As Jeff and Tina make their way to the restaurant, they pass a series of digital advertising boards. The sensors in the boards extract Jeff's digital footprint from the sensors in his phone and begin to display a series of highly relevant ads to the couple as they walk past. The ads welcome them to town and let them know of potential events and attractions they might like to check out based on what they seem to like within their digital footprints. All of the suggestions sound perfect, so Jeff scans the QR codes on the screens and books all of their activities for the rest of the trip then and there.

Upon arriving at the restaurant, the couple are warmly greeted by the staff, congratulated on their anniversary, and are ushered to a special, exclusive table usually reserved for VIPs. Jeff and Tina start to feel like celebrities and begin sharing their experience so far with their family through social media. At the end of the dinner, the staff surprise them with a special anniversary cake and pose for photos with the couple, which are instantly uploaded to the restaurant's website and social media profiles. Jeff and Tina feel like royalty, and make sure all of

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their friends and family know how amazing their experience was. This is the power of contextual consumerism.

Consumers are already contextual

While the example above is fictional, there is nothing stopping businesses today from utilising the available technology to create similar contextual experiences for customers.

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As more of these integrated technologies are rolled out, we will start to see a massive shift in consumer expectations where businesses and organisations that don't actively create a contextual experience for their customers will very quickly become irrelevant.

Trust is the new currency

Given that a large amount of personal data is critical to a contextual experience, the question of data privacy and security soon comes into play.

Some consumers will consider such an experience an invasion of privacy and refuse to participate. That's okay, because they will not have access to the same level of experiences available to those who do participate and volunteer their personal data.

This issue was raised during Telstra Digital Summit, and both Scoble and Israel offered another possibility. They suggested society will begin to blur the boundaries on what is considered taboo. Both believe putting more personal information online will become less of a privacy issue as we

continue to embrace our digital citizenship and the relevant contextual benefits it offers.

The one critical factor in determining participation is going to be trust. Consumers will soon start to wonder who is collecting their data, what it is being used for, and, if they choose to participate, will they have the ability to control what data is being stored?

The answers to these key questions will soon become critical in determining who consumers decide to do business with. Organisations wishing to create a contextual experience in the future must invest in embracing transparency today by embedding 'know', 'like', and 'trust' factors throughout their internal culture and external messaging.

Trust begins with ownership

Sure, you can hire as many brand ambassadors as you like and borrow their trust factors, but, at the end of the day, as CEO you are the face of your company to your customers, board members, and shareholders. It's up to you to be in charge of these factors and dictate how trustworthy you want your organisation to be perceived in your marketplace.

Contextual consumerism gives organisations an incredible opportunity to thrive in the new social economy, provided they are willing to understand their customers on a deeper level and build up trust within their markets. The cost of not doing so is irrelevance. Do you really want to pay that price? •

About AJ Kulatunga
AJ Kulatunga is an award-winning keynote speaker and consultant who helps companies, executives, and organisations stay relevant in the new social economy. For more information, visit ajkulatunga.com.