

# Demographics are dead...



**long live brain preferences**

“ I can't remember the last time I had to sell the benefits of content marketing. The conversation has moved way beyond that now; it's about creating content that cuts through the noise, which is only getting louder.

Naturally, brands want to maximise the return on their investment, seeking engagement and loyalty in exchange for high-quality, relevant content. But to get that they also need to ensure their content comes across as authentic, and holds genuine value for the unique audience they're targeting. ”

**Ben Hollom, Managing Director**



## Hyper-personalisation hasn't happened overnight

It all starts with audience segmentation – the process of breaking larger audiences into smaller, more homogenous groups based on known attributes, suspected traits, and similar demographics or interests – which has been a key part of marketing strategy for decades.

But where in the past marketers would have to use fairly broad strokes when creating content for those segments, they now have more tools and information at their disposal to deliver highly-targeted marketing.

We've been working our way to this point for a while – although there's still a way to go before we can say we're in the hyper-personalised era – with personas attempting to put marketers in their audience's shoes; assigning them a lifestyle, specific traits and even a name.

However, the traditional marketing persona has little of the detail we need for hyper-personalisation, which is why big data has been such a game-changer.

**To deliver hyper-personalised content, brands are using data in an advanced way to ensure the right customer gets the right message at the right time. Or at least, some are.**

## The trouble with over-generalisation

Your average couple is a good illustration of over-generalisation in practice. Mr and Mrs Smith both fit the same demographic type. They're roughly the same age, have a similar income, status etc. – as you would expect, they're a married couple.

The couple have decided to buy a new car. Except their brains work in different ways. Mr Smith has decided that Audi aren't worth a test drive because he can't find enough data sheets on their website. Mrs Smith couldn't give two hoots about the data – she loves the sexy photos of the cars on the website.

OK, that might be a sweeping, and probably sexist, generalisation in itself. In reality, it could just as easily be Mrs Smith who loves the data. Let's not get hung up on it. The point is that if Audi want to sell a car to these two people who are technically from the same demographic, they will have to communicate with them in two entirely different ways to make a sale.

*Note: this is a fictitious example and no reflection on Audi's marketing!*

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**Our best guesses about what our audience looks and behaves like are no longer enough. It can lead to over-generalisation, which leads to serving two different people – who sit within the same demographic, but don't necessarily always think alike – with one-size-fits-all content.**





## Different content for different brains

It's crucial, then, that we create content for the different thinking and behavioural patterns people use regularly. That's the terminology used by Emergenetics, a cutting-edge global profiling tool and cultural solution, which uses brain-based research to maximise performance by understanding how folk prefer to think and behave.

I recently took the Emergenetics Profile test and it got me thinking. Can we begin to use Emergenetics in content marketing? Following discussions with Liza Hughes, founder of Whynot? Coaching and Advanced Emergenetics Associate, I'm convinced we can.

Emergenetics might even be able to solve the problem of extracting value from customer data. Because for all the talk of data enabling hyper-personalisation, how many brands can say they're using it in an advanced and accurate way?

In summary, brands are using some of the customer data that they're generating – but probably not enough to be able to call their content hyper-personalised. By combining the insights they *do* have available with Emergenetics theory, marketers can develop their personas a step further and begin to work towards hyper-personalisation.

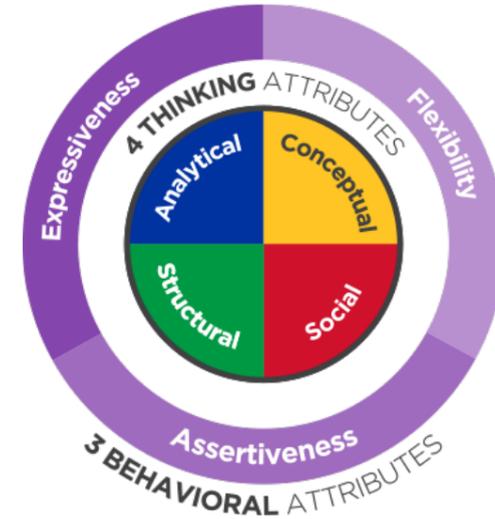
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# Emergenetics explained

Emergenetics is rooted in the concept that who you are today is the emergence of your genetic makeup and life experiences.

**It works on the principle that there are four different 'Thinking Attributes' that people possess:**



## Analytical

An expressed interest in logic, data, and understanding the reasoning behind things and learns through mental analysis.

## Structural

An expressed interest in practical thinking, process, enjoys rules and guidelines and learns through doing.

## Social

An expressed interest in people and relationships and learns from others.

## Conceptual

An expressed interest in the big-picture visioning, new ideas and learns through experimentation.

**It also suggests there are three ways of behaving, which should be viewed as a sliding scale:**

## Expressiveness

Ranging from quiet and reserved to outgoing and gregarious.

## Assertiveness

Ranging from peacekeeping and accepting to competitive and driven.

## Flexibility

Ranging from focused and firm to accommodating and easy-going.

Traditionally, Emergenetics has been used to help businesses build exceptional organisational culture. By heightening awareness and understanding of one another's natural preferences for thought and behaviour, through the Emergenetics profile, it naturally improves communication, engagement, productivity and efficiency.

The cutting-edge technology behind the Emergenetics app also means that it's easy to cut through any cultural barriers with colleagues around the globe, by speaking directly to their natural thinking and behavioural preferences by connecting with them first on Emergenetics.

**But, now we're looking to extend its use into content marketing.**

## Emergenetics in practice

**Audience:** holidaymakers **Aim:** to book a holiday

### Different types of Thinking Attributes and their instinctive behaviours:

#### Analytical

Research the destination, best time of year to go  
Check reviews  
Find the best price

#### Structural

What did I enjoy last time?  
Same airport, destination, accommodation, etc. If it's worked before, it will work again  
Book day trips in advance  
Arrive early to airport

#### Social

Who's coming?  
Set up WhatsApp group/social gatherings to plan holiday  
Gain consensus on destination  
Have a communal kitty/share responsibility

#### Conceptual

What's the desired experience?  
Very little planning, may book accommodation on arrival  
Book it whatever the cost  
See what takes your fancy when you get there

## How could this apply to content?

Applying the principles of Emergenetics to content would ensure that we create content for the four different natural preferences.

Going back to the (fictitious) car-buying example from earlier. If Audi had applied Emergenetics, they would've ensured that Mr Smith was supplied with all the data that he needed to see.

You could make a strong argument that all four thinking preferences are present in every audience. Some Thinking Attributes might make up a stronger proportion of certain audiences, but you can't say that if your audience are all accountants, that means they are all Analytical. People just don't work like that. Therefore, nor can your content – not if you want to appeal to everybody in your audience.

Just because you have clear demographics, doesn't mean that everyone in a demographic will have the same natural way of thinking.

**Don't underestimate the scope of your audience.**

## Conclusion

Now, with those different behaviours and thinking patterns in front of you, it's immediately easier to think about the content (and its tone) that would appeal to each of the different groups.

It's not absolutely essential that you create four versions of the same content – but what is crucial is that you don't ignore any part of your audience. Unless, of course, you are going after any particular type of thinker specifically. I'm thinking about Jaguar and recent campaigns which have been aimed specifically at the Conceptual thinkers.

If you have to put out one big hitting piece of content that will cover all audiences, at least try to include information and communication styles that will appeal to all four groups. For example, provide downloadable data sheets for the Analytical thinkers; detail any processes in a numbered way for Structural people; offer real-world examples for the Socials; and include summary boxes at the end of each section for Conceptual thinkers.

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This approach is for marketers who have outgrown their traditional, limiting customer personas, and want to take a sizeable step in the direction of hyper-personalised content.

By applying Emergenetics, you're taking away some of the reliance on data, and ensuring that your content is speaking to all the different thinkers that make up your audience.

However far you go, if you understand the different brain preferences that make up your audience, and benchmark your content against that information, it can't do any harm.

Emergenetics can be a guide when you're planning content, and used again as a sanity check before it gets sent out.

Sources for stats:

<http://the-cma.com/news/hyper-personalisation-laser-focus-content/>

<https://www.clickz.com/actionable-insights-from-data-is-still-marketings-biggest-challenge/221098/>

<https://econsultancy.com/many-b2b-marketers-are-still-relying-on-intuition-more-than-data-survey/>

<https://www.convinceandconvert.com/research/hyper-personalization/>

**Should you create individual content for each of the Thinking Attributes? In an ideal world, yes. But, naturally, it depends on your budget and the value you can drive from each piece of content.**





**If you'd like to understand how you can fully embrace cognitive diversity in your Content Marketing, or discuss how you can harness the full potential of your workforce using Emergenetics, please get in touch:**

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