Like, Read, Watch, Listen:
The new social semantics

Facebook is re-writing the dictionary: "Like" is now synonymous with the social media platform. What other action words can brands take advantage of to bring users closer to their products? With the launch of Custom Actions doing words like "Read", "Watch", "Listen" are now part of Facebook's lexicon, but they have left it up to brands to build followings around their own words - "to zoom zoom", "to be worth it".

In this white paper, Gi Fernando, co-founder of Techlightenment, brings to life the new social semantics and what they can mean for your brand.

Relationship on the edge

The web has always been about people connecting to other people about something, rather than publishing one document so many can view it.

The internet is a series of devices connected together but there are always humans at the endpoints. People form relationships with other people, groups of people and with objects such as videos or pictures.

In Facebook parlance the relationships that form between a person and the content or other people that they interact with are known as **edges**. Facebook have become experts in the art of allowing simple and powerful edges: think of the process of photo sharing: Rod uploads a picture and tags Jane in it. Fred comments on the photo and Bob likes it. The result is a flow of information, a 'story'.

Upload > Tag > Comment > Like

These interactions easily lead to the creation of edges and afford different strengths depending on the effort involved and the relationship that one person has with another. The four individuals in the above example are now all linked by the way they have interacted with the photo. The more frequently interactions like this happen, the more edges are created and the stronger the picture of how people know each other develops making the data both more valuable and interesting. Efficiency principles tell us that the easier it is to make an edge and the stronger that edge is the more likely it is to propagate.
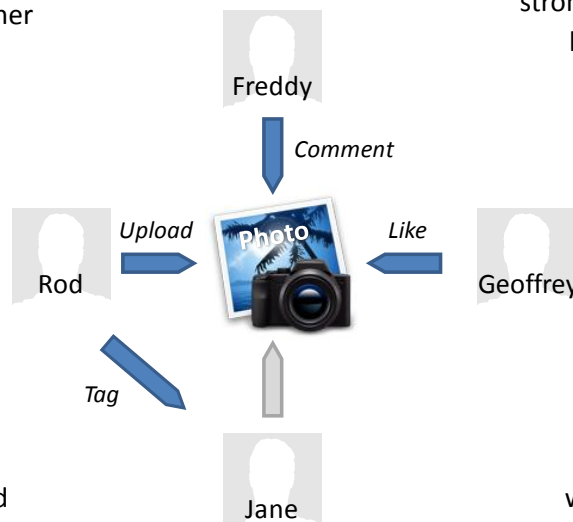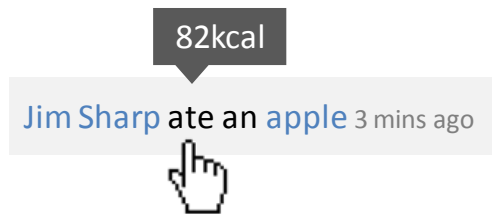

Custom edges

Interactions on the web are fluid and cannot always be categorised simply. However, in order to add structure to data and give the user a compelling experience it is important to standardise interactions where possible. Facebook's custom edges help by giving brands the ability to create their own edges with associated attributes, enabling the way people interact with content to be more descriptive whilst still allowing this information to be interpreted and categorised for consumption by others.

An example of this could be a custom edge of 'ate' with an attribute of 'calories' all connected

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to an object 'apple'. In a Facebook environment this would appear as 'Jim Sharp ate an apple' and if it was hovered over it would display the number of calories. This action has now been categorised in such a way that it could be searched on using 'apple', 'ate', and/or 'calories' and aggregated or filtered as such.

82kcal

Jim Sharp ate an apple 3 mins ago

Why is this important to a consumer?

Modern consumers are exposed to an increasing volume of digital data and the signal to noise ratio (the relevance of data) needs to be controlled. Custom edges give consumers the control they are looking for: Consumers are now able to filter the content they are interested in based on the edges that are associated with it. Say they want to only see what videos their friends have watched then they can filter by the 'watch' edge.

This simple example is just the start of what could be achieved, custom edges could allow users to add to wishlists (a 'wishlist' edge) or to review content ('rate' edges with number of stars as the attribute) or to categorise an action they just completed on an email ('read email' edge). And because Facebook allows brands to create their own edges, a brand could take ownership of an edge: imagine the 'zoom zoom' or 'just do it' edge.

The 'like' edge revolutionised how people show they have interacted with web content. This new dictionary of custom phrases gives the consumer a far more descriptive and personal way of sharing their experiences.

All about data

Why is this important for a marketer? Data. Facebook is the biggest thing to happen to marketing for many years, or rather the data and the opportunity it creates is big, very big. Never before have users given so much indication of the brands, products and objects they 'like' and neither have they given marketers access to their social circle. Facebook has changed this forever, allowing marketers to construct content that is truly personalised to an individual. Implementing this correctly means the user is more likely to interact with it and consequently amplify the reach of this content by sharing it with their friends.

Custom edges takes this one step further, it allows the marketer to understand (a) how the consumer is interacting with their content; (b) what they think of the content; and, (c) who they choose to share it with. The data returned can be used for customer segmentation, analytics, reporting and to further personalise the user experience.

'Like' was more akin to a preference on content. Custom edges are much more like real-time behavioural insight.

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Techlightenment's enterprise grade SMART platform has been designed to support custom edges. The data architecture is built to hold exactly this type of information at scale and make sense of it, reducing the signal to noise ratio and turning the mass of highly relevant information into a stream of truly useful and important data that can be used to trigger messaging, inform content, segment consumers or gain insight. Ultimately, driving the acquisition of cheaper customers, providing better knowledge about current or prospective customers and monetizing those retained customers better.

Building on the 'edge ready' platform and working closely with Facebook has allowed Techlightenment to bring tomorrow's social technology to marketers today.

Gi Fernando, co-founder, Techlightenment

To find out more about Custom Edges and how they can work for you, contact info@techlightenment.com

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