



[Interbrand](#), which puts together the list of the 100 Best Global Brands, believes that we're entering a new age of branding, the Age of You. It's an interesting idea. After all, everything else is becoming personalised, so why would branding not move in that direction?

Four Ages of Branding

Rather like Shakespeare's seven ages of man, Interbrand reckons it can distinguish four ages of branding. The first, which is probably the longest, is the Age of Identity. The original purpose of branding was to identify products that could be trusted: Kellogg's Cornflakes, for example, which did not contain sawdust, or any other possible contaminants that rival manufacturers were rumoured to include.

The sophistication evolved over time, especially in the last fifty to sixty years, as brands have proliferated and needed to distinguish themselves from others. From slogans, mascots and television advertising, companies realised that people formed a relationship with brands. This meant that brand owners could broaden their appeal by linking them with particular unique attributes that made them instantly identifiable. Who of a certain age can forget Tony the Tiger telling us that Frosties were 'g-r-r-r-eat'?

But in 1988, Interbrand carried out its first Brand Valuation, and companies started to formalise the valuation of brands. The Age of Value was born. Brands were seen as valuable business assets that could generate money for their owners. Instead of marketing spend being considered a 'cost', it was now considered an 'investment'. Alongside this, companies realised that brands were not just about communication, but a more complex product of their environment, products, services, culture and communications, which together created a 'brand perception' in consumers. Brand management became more sophisticated: a key part of the implementation of business strategy.

Then, once again, in the early Noughties, the world started to shift again. From brands as creators of value, the thinking shifted to brands as deliverers of experience, and we entered the Age of Experience. The drivers of this were the category-defying brands Google, Facebook, Apple and Amazon, because of their ability to tailor customer experience. Yes, of course they've benefited from the rise of powerful computing and the ability to access and use Big Data. Like them or not, almost everyone has to admit that these brands have redefined the way that we think, shop and behave.

And it's these brands who are driving us into the next age, the Age of You, with their personalisation of experience. The data about each of us that is available is growing each day: through our e-commerce history, our social media sharing and, increasingly, through



wearables and devices via the Internet of Things. Computing is increasingly ubiquitous, and companies that want to thrive will have to 'find the human' through the data and appeal to each of us personally. As we've said before, [human to human contact remains fundamental](#). Interbrand suggests that one way to think about this is that the ecosystem will become the 'Mecosystem' as it forms around each one of us.

Thinking about the 'Mecosystem'

An ecosystem is a complex web of interconnected elements. Originally a natural system, the term is increasingly used for technology components and devices that interact. The 'Mecosystem', then, in a logical extension, is your own personal tech ecosystem, reconfigured to place you at the centre. Using your data, the Mecosystem considers the context surrounding you, and seeks out more relevant services and products to enhance your experience. They may be more relevant geographically, because of your location, or socially because of your past experience. Companies are already starting to try to do this, and create seamless experiences, for example through services like Amazon's Recommendations. But in comparison with what's likely to come, this is going to look pretty amateur. Whether it's through connecting us to new people or leveraging our networks, using location and history to help us find what we want, or new ways to connect to our health, the potential is massive.

And what's more, as we all recognise the importance of our own data, and reclaim it, it seems likely that personal data stores could provide the key to a genuine Age of You.

The Internet of People

The world of technology is moving massively fast, with development of sensors, wearables, and connections changing every day. As more and more devices connect, it is clear that we are seeing not so much the Internet of Things, as the Internet of People. And each one of those people is creating their very own Mecosystem, and personalised 'Age of You'.

Image credit: [GillK2012](#)