



## A Look Inside Futurist Marketing: Spike TV and Social Technologies Unearth “The Future of American Men”

By C. Rock

***Soulja Boy, Fall Out Boy, Iron Man, and a pregnant man — these are among the most popular masculine objects of fascination today — at least if you are going by their popularity among Internet search engines.. Metrosexuals, once novel, now seem as old as...Friendster...and no one pays them much heed anymore. In an age of rapidly evolving roles for men, is it desirable or even possible for one television channel to market to them all? Here's a look at how Spike TV, the network for "all things men," recently codified the changing tide of their target demographic.***



With shows like *The Ultimate Fighter*, *MANswers*, and *Pros vs. Joes*, Spike TV's programming hinges on time-honored masculine stereotypes. But Spike, in theory, wants to do more than cater to old-school beliefs as gender expectations in our society evolve. Seeking to improve their ability to market to their target demographic, Spike, a division of MTV networks, recently teamed with a futurist research and consulting firm, Social Technologies, and a market research

firm, Penn, Schoen & Berland (PSB), to test several hypotheses about the modern guy, aged 18 to 49. "We wanted to check the pulse of American guys to be better able to understand their lifestyles, their daily habits, and values," said Kimberly Maxwell, senior director of brand and consumer research for Spike TV.

And Spike TV wanted to look at more than what we can expect in the immediate future. They chose Social Technologies, a futurist firm, for its long-range outlook. Social Technologies' senior analyst, Chris Carbone, explained: "[Social Technologies] is like a market research firm, but with a much larger time horizon. Market research firms will want to look at what's happening now in the market or what happens next year. [Social Technologies] thrives at helping companies think about longer-term trends. Most companies will ask us to look at a five- to 15-year time window rather than just ask, 'How do we turn around profits next quarter?'"

Carbone headed up the study for Spike, which aimed to look at nearly every aspect of men's lives: "Fatherhood and family, politics, relationships and women, role models, work and stress, technology and more," as Carbone put it. The project was ambitious, and the work spread out. "Spike took us on for the qualitative effort, and took PSB on for the quantitative. PSB did online surveys and interviews. Social Technologies did focus groups, qualitative research, literature reviews, and expert interviews with trend watchers in the automotive

industry, entertainment industry, and communications industry about what they thought were important trends. Since we're a futurist company, we keep track of hundreds and hundreds of consumer trends. Out of our research, we put together a set of hypotheses. For example, we thought that online places were a spot where guys could be a little more macho than they would be in life or face-to-face communications. What PSB did was then took these hypotheses and fielded them in a study," said Carbone.

After all was said and done, the new trend seems to be the dismantling of old notions. "Today there is no set model or path, and men's identities and experiences have become fragmented. More than ever, guys are creating their own milestones and measures for success," said Carbone.

With the research data and calculations in, men were found to be distributed into five general groups:

- Young Carefrees (23% of guys) — These guys are in the early stages of their careers and have yet to hit their stride. 70% are single, and they rarely have kids. They are less successful than they thought they would be, but are staying optimistic. They take Facebook and iPhones for granted.
- Above Average Joes (29%) — AAJs are the most likely to be married and have kids. They also have more progressive takes on their roles as husbands and fathers — only 15% think that men should be the primary breadwinner. They are also into striving for work-and-life balance and like technology, mostly because it keeps them connected to their families.
- Rugged, stoic, and pragmatic, Good Ol' Boys were 13% of men surveyed. They're both the most old-fashioned and the most low-income. Their more old-school perspective makes it hard for them to find chicks, but



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excessive sex and violence on TV still keeps them warm, at least more so than the other groups. They worry the most about economic downturns.

- Mac Daddies (20%) represent the toned and buff, high-powered sorts who have professional jobs and make a ton of dough. They are confident and driven and they love technology, but they are at high-risk for burnout.
- Worry Warriors were 15% of the population. This group of men feels a little at odds with the world no matter how well they are doing. They are usually well-off and well-educated, but think their life is harder than it was for their dads. Family obligations and technology are viewed as a mixed bag. They might be in store for a midlife crisis, but they still have time to change.

"In the past, a guy's life path was pretty clear. Life usually included going to school, getting a job, and starting a family, all in a fairly standard order. In many ways, the different segments correspond to age or what we call life stages. However, you could have an eternal bachelor who still exhibits the habits of a Young Carefree, but they might be 35 years

old. In today's society, that's becoming more and more common to sort of delay adulthood and to hold on to the trappings of youth longer and longer. That's a pretty well-established trend," said Carbone.

"While there are differences across the segments, some interesting overall conclusions can be drawn about guys today. For one thing, this research with Spike TV shows that guys are still deciphering what it means to be a man in the post-feminist world, and this is something we really tried to express in our personas. Life is complex and even contradictory, and — just like women — guys have more options for identity than ever before," Carbone added.

Kimberly Maxwell believes that the study will benefit Spike's future. "Spike TV's 'Future of Men' research will inform the station's programming and digital initiatives by helping Spike understand their target audience better. The study highlights how guys crave space — real and virtual — to escape everyday responsibilities, such as work and family, and connect with friends across life stages. Understanding guys' lifestyle and entertainment choices will help Spike provide content with a unique guy point of view that offers guys the freedom to escape, relax, and just be a guy."

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