Gerald Celente's

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TRENDS JOURNAL

HISTORY BEFORE IT HAPPENS®

Economic 9/11 Terror Strike

First shots have been fired.

➤ Cryptocurrencies' big 2018 dive. What's next?

IN THIS ISSUE

HISTORY BEFORE IT HAPPENS®

TRENDS JOURNAL®

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The Trends Journal (ISSN 1065-2094) is published monthly by The Trends Research Institute.

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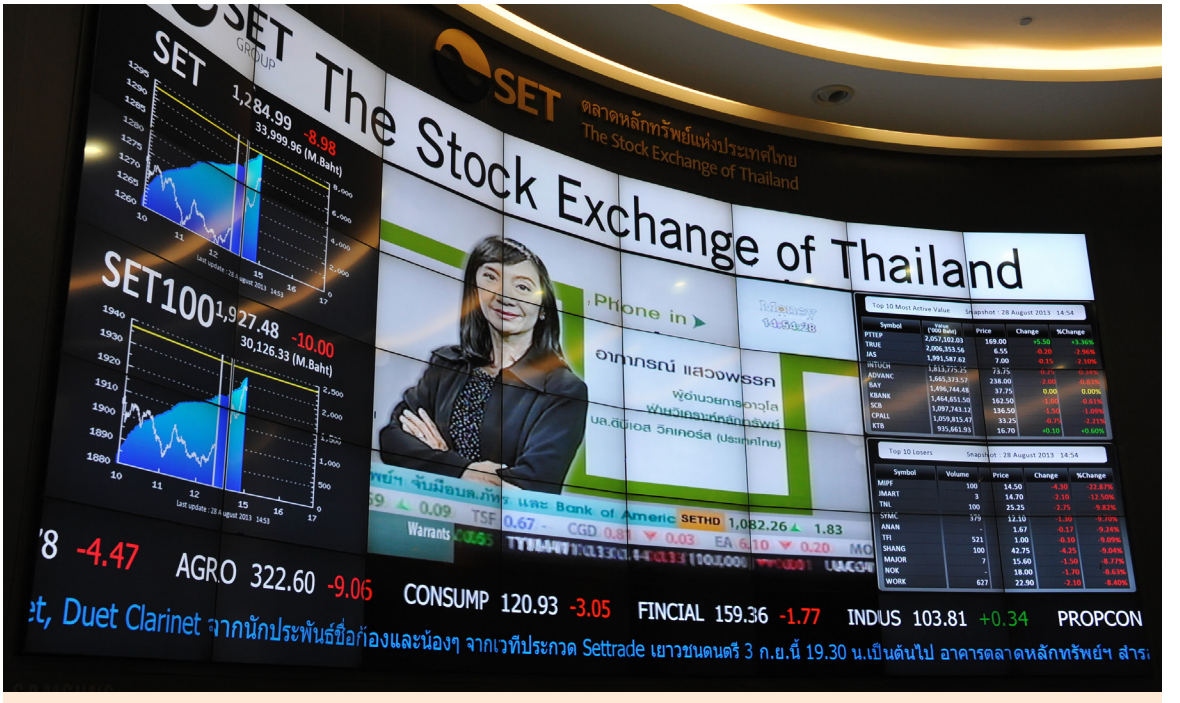

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Monitors at The Stock Exchange of Thailand

COVER STORY

FEATURES

TRENDING 27

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOING ON?

Each new day seems to bring with it a new geopolitical crisis, one more political debacle, more dire economic warnings, increasing social disturbance or another environmental threat. What does it all mean? What can be done? How will it end?

Gerald Celente's **Trends Journal**® is the only magazine in the world that pinpoints how today's current events form future trends and how they will affect your business, career, family and future... your life.

Founded by a political atheist, agenda- and advertising-free, and beholden to no one, the *Trends Journal* provides unbiased insights, analysis and forecasts of critical socioeconomic, financial, political, economic, business, consumer/retail, entertainment, technology, science and other trends that are fact-based, data-driven and on the cutting edge.

Gerald Celente's track record speaks for itself. He's been forecasting worldwide since 1980. **No one** has been so right, on so many issues, so often! If you want to anticipate change, take proactive measures to seize opportunities and develop profit strategies, subscribe to **Trends Journal**. Read about "History Before It Happens" from the world leader in trend forecasting.

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There are a dizzying array of crypto currencies all promising to solve any number of issues with conventional fiat currencies.

Crypto's big 2018 dive...

What to expect next **17**

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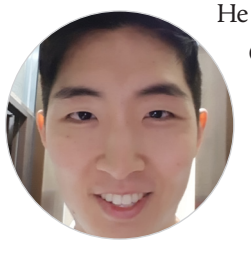

KEYNOTE

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As we have forecast repeatedly, it is not tariff and trade wars with China that will sink markets and economies, but rising interest rates.

"Economic 9/11"

Here's when it hits and how to prepare

Gerald Celente

Rising U.S. interest rates, higher oil prices, lower earnings and geo-political unrest are merging to form an economic tsunami.

When the Dow dropped 830 points on 10 October, and fell 1,300 points for the week, $1.7 trillion was wiped off the S&P 500 and nearly $3 trillion off global stocks. Since that turning point moment worldwide equities have been sinking deeper into bear and/or correction territory.

After several months of the mainstream business media, central bankers, high powered financiers, and establishment politicians warning the world that tariffs and trade wars would bring down equity markets, they suddenly changed their tune. A collective bell rang across the financial world and in unison they began attributing much of the declines to the fear of rising interest rates.

They finally acknowledged what we have long forecast. One of our Top Trends for 2018, "Market Shock," which we sent to Trends Journal subscribers last December, clearly identified the risk:

"As U.S. interest rates rise and the dollar strengthens, the cost burden to Emerging Markets, whose debt, much of it dollar based, has soared, will be difficult to service."

With some $250 trillion in global debt, much of it dollar based, nations whose economies, markets and currencies are declining, cannot bear the debt burden of progressively rising U.S. interest rates.

Spiking rates, which have increased three times this year, with one more expected and three or more in 2019, signal the end of the cheap money, negative/zero/low interest rate policies by world banks that have artificially propped up markets worldwide.

We concluded in December 2017, that "...global economies, particularly in China, India, Europe and EMs will shift significantly downward to bear terri-

Oil prices will likely spike as the U. S. imposes an embargo on Iran this November.
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tory and some will sink into recession."

That's precisely what happened. The stunning and sustained collapse of many equity markets in countries worldwide, especially China's, which is deep into bear territory, are among several signs lighting up and flashing "Economic 9/11."

China's Shanghai Index is down over 30 percent this year, while its Gross Domestic Product growth is at its weakest point since 2009. And China, the world's second largest economy, is drowning in debt. In fact, S&P Global Ratings reports that borrowing by the country's local governments is likely as high as 40 trillion yuan ($7.95 trillion).

IT'S INTEREST RATES, STUPID

While the mainstream business media have falsely attributed economic and market slowdowns, particularly in China, to trade wars, it had been and remains rising U.S. interest rates alongside mounting historic debt that will sink markets.

In fact, despite President Trump's $200 billion in tariffs imposed on China, America's trade deficit with China reached $34 billion in September, a 13 percent increase over last year and a new record.

TREND FORECAST

From the United States to China, from Australia to Argentina, from Saudi Arabia to Turkey, the socioeconomic and geopolitical turmoil will accelerate in the Fourth Quarter of 2018 and extreme market volatility will push markets deeper into bear territory while sinking current equity markets

While Asian markets have been hardest hit with losses – the Shanghai and Tawain indexes have experienced single-day, double digit percent declines – the MSCI Emerging Market stock index has now tumbled 26 percent from its January peak.

The pan-European Stoxx 600 sunk to its lowest close of the year, and nations across the globe were sinking deeper into bear market territory: Turkey, South Africa, Brazil, Venezuela, India, Hong Kong, Australia, Argentina, Italy, Indonesia, Singapore among others are in bear territory.

BUBBLE, BUBBLE, OIL AND TROUBLE

Beyond the interest rate factor, rising oil prices are putting more downward pressure on already deeply indebted, overleveraged economies.

Escalating geo-political tensions and economic warfare in the Middle-East, especially as the U.S. imposes its crippling oil embargo on Iran that will take effect on 5 November, have pushed oil prices up steadily.

With Brent Crude hovering around $78 per barrel, as the cost of oil, which is dollar denominated, climbs higher as many developed and Emerging Market currencies and economies are falling lower, a perfect storm is forming. The higher oil prices rise and the lower their currencies fall, the cost burden adds more downward pressure to their economies.

And since the last five market crashes were preceded by sharply rising oil prices, we forecast a global market meltdown should oil prices spike above $100 a barrel and interest rates continue to rise. TJ

President Trump made news by criticizing the Federal Reserve for raising interest rates.
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What could stave off a crash — for now?

While technically, President Donald Trump has no day-to-day management authority over the Federal Reserve, he can with "cause" fire Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, who he appointed, and the U.S. Senate would have sign off on any replacements he recommends.

The Federal Reserve and its board of five governors, also appointed by the president, serve as an independent body to the executive branch of government.

The question of what control President Trump has over the Federal Reserve is top of mind since he began a very direct public campaign lambasting Powell and the Fed for raising rates too aggressively.

With rising rates finally attributed in the media to equity market declines, President Trump called the Fed his "biggest threat," further stating, "the Fed has gone crazy… they're going loco."

He also said: "The U.S. is raising rates while the dollars (sic) gets stronger and stronger with each passing day, taking away our big competitive edge."

A DIFFERENT OPINION AS CANDIDATE TRUMP

But his current stance is a 180-degree turn from what he has said before:

Candidate Trump in September 2016: "They're keeping the rates down so that everything else doesn't go down…We have a very false economy."

In 2015, Trump stated: "Janet Yellen (the Federal Reserve Chair) is highly political and she's not raising rates for a very specific reason: Obama told her not to because he wants to be out playing golf in a year from now and he wants to be doing other things and he doesn't want to see a big bubble burst during his administration."

In 2012, Trump told CNBC: "They're creating phony numbers and they're doing it through stimulus and the stimulus, many people would say, is the worst thing that can happen."

He added: "The numbers are false; they're being created and people like me may benefit, but it's ultimately not good for the economy,"

Even as far back as 2011, Trump is on the record: "The Fed's reckless interest rate policies will cause problems in the years to come. The Fed has to be reigned in or we will become Greece."

But what we have been forecasting for over a year is now making its way into the mainstream business media narrative: "It's Interest Rates, Stupid." As the era of cheap money policies ends, the state of most world economies simply cannot tolerate any further rate hikes. The debt can't be managed and markets and economies will suffer.

Trump knows that. And that's why he's changed his tune… he doesn't want a massive recession under his watch. TJ

TREND FORECAST

While Powell has said he's undeterred by the president's remarks, it is certainly possible the Fed could be pressured by President Trump or other factors to delay interest rate hikes, but all that will do is delay the inevitable. Already, even modest increases have deepened downward pressures on real estate markets in many nations and economies worldwide and showing the early signs of affecting consumers in in the U.S.

New vehicle sales are falling, keeping lots full.

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Higher interest rates, lower consumer spending

With 30-year residential fixed mortgage rates now at 5 percent in the U.S., higher interest rates are hitting the real estate market.

On the heels of the September 0.25 percent rate hike, mortgage applications fell 32 percent lower than last year, when rates were a full percent lower. And new home sales plunged 5.5 percent in September.

Applications to refinance existing mortgages, which are a strong indicator of how the market responds to rate increases, sunk 9 percent, a more than 33 percent drop over last year.

And trending toward its worst year since the financial crisis, the S&P Supercomposite Homebuilding Index is down 36 percent this year.

Beyond real estate, on auto sales fronts in the U.S., new vehicle loans also are tanking. While mainstream business media will blame some of the declines on looming tariffs, the more direct tie is rate increases that make already strapped consumers unable to manage the debt.

The auto industry is expecting a 7 percent decline in new vehicle sales in September. And the higher interest rates imposed on new vehicles is sending consumers to used car lots at a record pace. Used vehicle sales, according to several sources, are soaring, up between 4 and 10 percent.

What is noteworthy with these trend lines is the direct effect even modest increases are having on large consumer bases who are essentially living paycheck to paycheck.

Indeed, the Fed has made eight modest rate increases in two years, pushing baseline rates closely tied to consumer debt only to about 2 to 2.25. But the last increase is ticking up credit card, mortgage, auto and other lines of credit to ranges that stifle consumer spending.

Further, student loans, which ballooned during the last decade, increasing 157 percent and saddling graduates with $1.5 trillion in debt, will also directly impact recent graduates whose wages can't keep up with rate increases of privately-held student bank loans.

And the rate hikes are coming at a time when U.S. household debt is at an all-time high, hit an astounding $13.3 trillion at the end of the second quarter 2018. And household debt is rising at a rate 60 percent higher than the increase in wages.

Further, Americans today owe 26 percent of their income to revolving credit debt, they have less and less cash to spend. Especially if gas prices increase sharply, money spent on retail or entertainment and leisure, will go into the gas tank.

Today, four in every ten adults are not able to cover a $400 emergency expense. And more than 50 percent of all consumers are struggling to cover such basic expenses as rent and food. TJ

TREND FORECAST

While the U.S. can boast a 50-year low unemployment rate and healthy Gross Domestic Product growth, a simple fact of the decade-old "recovery" fueled by cheap money schemes is that wages for working class households remained flat. Most jobs don't support a middle-class life after accounting for cost of living increases, according to a new study by Third Way.

Thus, even modest rising interest rates will intensify the debt load on consumers, and significantly cool spending in several sectors, including retail, travel, restaurant and leisure.

Wages for middle class workers have barely budged in a generation.

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It's no mystery why wages and inflation are low… it's Celente's Five-O Formula

Over the past decade, while wages have shown modest spikes, mostly benefitting higher-pay categories, the increases have barely kept pace with inflation, essentially wiping out any net gains in workers' take-home pay.

In fact, when factoring inflation, real average wages have about the same purchasing power today as they did 40 years ago,

The numbers don't lie. While wage growth in the U.S. recently increased 3.5 percent, against an inflation rate of 2 percent, the positive trending reflects a select rise in minimum wage baselines across several states and some growth in management pay.

Across Asia economies are slowing and missing expectations month after month.

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To be clear, the increase was not reflective of an endemic, labor-force-wide spike in earnings that marks a new trend toward sustained higher earnings.

And, at the same time, inflation rates decreased from a sustained 2.8 or so percent range to 2.2 percent as spending was held back by a slower increase in the cost of rent and falling energy prices, factors that are far more temporary than endemic determinants of future inflation rates.

LOW WAGES NOT JUST A U.S PROBLEM

And weak wage growth isn't just a problem in America.

Workers in Japan, the U.K., Germany, Australia, Italy, Spain and other countries are experiencing similar trend lines.

Among economists and financial analysts, it's a great mystery. Why is it that wages and inflation have barely risen since the Panic of '08, while economies keep growing?

And just recently, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said that the acceleration of "wage growth need not trigger too much inflation," since the link between labor markets and inflation "has been greatly reduced."

Yes, they have been "greatly reduced." And trend forecaster Gerald Celente, who devised his "Five-0" Formula in 1999, predicted precisely why the 21st century economy would operate off a new set of equations and why wage growth would be dampened.

Celente defined those factors as:

• **Overproduction**—there are more products and services than can be consumed.

"Why is it that wages and inflation have barely risen since the Panic of '08, while economies keep growing?"

• **Overcapacity**—there is a glut of advanced facilities and excess service capabilities to supply the world market place with more than can be consumed.

• **Open Markets**—a borderless new millennial marketplace provides products and services free from traditional economic channels.

• **Overpopulation**—companies are now positioned to exploit a 6-billion-plus labor pool without geographic constraints.

• **Online**—a planet full of browsers will enable and drive a universal economic culture of cheap product and service production supported by cheap labor expenses.

Remember, this was forecast two decades ago, long before the days of massive online shopping and Amazon's monopolization of the Internet retail sector.

It was before China was initiated into the World Trade Organization that opened up the global cheap labor stream.

In that short time, another 1.6 billion people were added to the planet … and ultimately the workforce.

Now, in 2018, we observe the state of the economy with an eye on the emerging economic trends that demonstrate how the "Five-Os" will continue to transform how we live and work. TJ

TREND FORECAST

Beyond the gig economy that provides jobs with no benefits and security, and continuing wage uncertainty, high-tech will also play a significant role in driving wages lower. In the new world of technological innovations such as robotics, Artificial Intelligence, online retail and services, etc., from top to bottom, jobs will be replaced and the pay scale will continue to be lowered.

We cannot emphasize enough that this Five-O Formula is revolutionary and data proven … but not recognized by traditional economists and financial experts who are still operating under 20th century economic precepts.

Gold, the ultimate safe-haven asset, is on the rise.

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The golden indicator: Gold

Watch it closely as the tide toward "Economic 9/11" grows stronger

As we have long forecast, the higher U.S. interest rates rise, the lower gold goes. The stronger the dollar becomes, the lower gold goes.

It's a simple equation. The higher rates increase, they boost the dollar and push up U.S. Treasury yields, making gold a less attractive investment since it does not bear interest.

And with the expectations that the U.S. Federal Reserve will increase rates again in December, the fourth increase this year, and three or more next year, investors fearful that gold prices will continue to fall as rates rise higher.

But we have also forecast that a confluence of geopolitical and economic factors could set the stage for significant increases in the per-ounce value of gold, which remains the ultimate safe-haven asset.

THE GOLD TREND LINE: WHAT TO WATCH FOR

We have consistently forecast the downside of gold was in the $1,200 per ounce range, give or take moderate swings. And, indeed, gold has hovered slightly below and above that range for a sustained period – until U.S. equity markets sunk on recognition that rising interest rates pose fundamental, unavoidable negative consequences to economies and markets worldwide.

Now, two weeks or so after some $1.7 trillion was wiped off the S&P 500, in a three-day period, gold has edged up to the $1,230 range.

As gold moves up from the bottom-side risk we accurately identified, we are focused on a series of socioeconomic and geopolitical factors that will not only push prices higher, but also bring them to our critical $1,450 per ounce breakout point.

Among them are rising oil prices. Brent crude is hovering at $78 per barrel, a peak not seen since 2014, and oil prices will be further influenced by fears of military and economic warfare escalation in the Middle East as Washington readies a new round of crippling oil embargoes against Iran taking effect on November 5th.

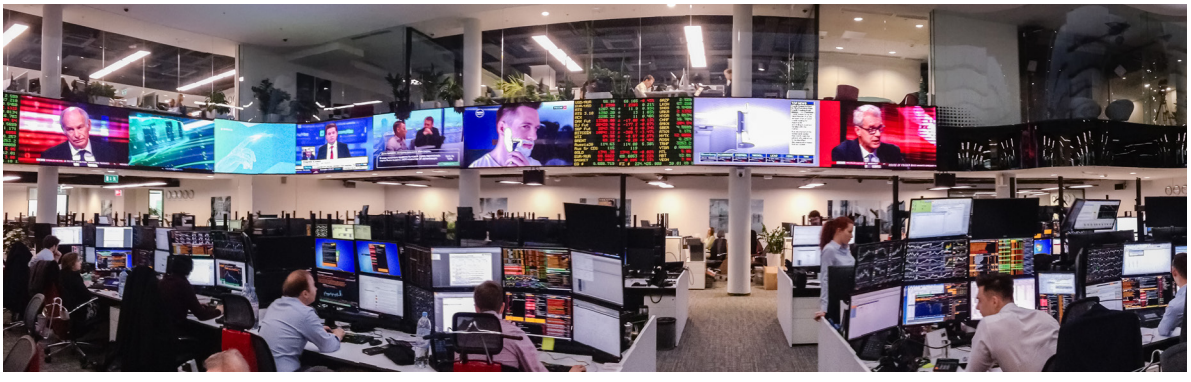
Should military tensions increase in Syria, Yemen, Iran, Israel, Bahrain and other volatile Middle East nations, we forecast an oil spike to $100-plus a barrel will also trigger a sharp spike in the ultimate safe-haven asset, gold. TJ

TRENDPOST

As economies and equities begin to melt down, gold prices will heat up. With oil prices rising, which are dollar based, while currencies, particularly in Emerging Markets have fallen sharply against the dollar, the higher oil prices rise and the lower their currencies fall, the greater the downward pressure on their economies.

Under these conditions, gold's status as a safe-haven asset is greatly enhanced.

Plunge Protection Team, National Team... the markets are rigged



Equity markets are manipulated. The facts show, when they get out of control, governments and central banksters rush in and rescue them.

The United States has its Plunge Protection Team. By executive order by President Ronald Reagan in 1988, the PPT "Working Group" was formed to keep Congress and the White House informed of critical financial and economic trends and, more succinctly, to identify an oncoming catastrophic market downturn, like the one experienced in 1987, and recommend and take action to avert it.

And back in February of this year, when the Dow tumbled some 1,700 points during a two-day period, as the slide accelerated, the losses were staved off by late stock-buying frenzy. A number of financial analysts speculated it was the PPT that intervened and staved off an even worse decline.

And it's not just Wall Street.

China, the world's second largest economy, whose SHANGHAI Index is down more than 30 percent this year, has a National Team that intervenes when its markets sharply declined.

Last month, China's Central Bank intervened for five days running, injecting $77 billion to prop up the slumping market. Back in 2015, the National Team owned over 6 percent of the mainland stock market in a massive state-sponsored rescue effort to prop up stock prices. TJ

TREND FORECAST

As we go to press, global equity market instability continues to accelerate. The Shanghai Composite Index, down more than 30 percent this year, continues to plunge and in the U.S., markets are wildly swinging from multi-hundred-point highs to multi-hundred point losses.

While we know the Chinese National Team has intervened, has the Plunge Protection Team in the U.S. propped up diving markets? Who knows? "We the Little People, perched far beneath the White Shoe Boys Wall Street Gang, are not of a high enough social order to be informed by the powers that be.

And now, with the mid-term elections just a week away in the U.S., the diving Dow, slumping S&P and correction territory Nasdaq are adding more downward pressure on the Republican Party which is expected to lose its House and possibly the Senate majority ... as well as state houses across the nation.

Therefore, should selling panic hit the Street between now and Election Day, will the Plunge Protection Team step in to prop up the failing U.S. markets? Will it work? Only time will tell.

Indeed, regardless of the country, the governments will do all they can to artificially pump up failing equities. Moreover, should the market declines intensify, The Plunge Protection Team, The National Teams and other world "Teams," plus the central banksters, will coordinate market manipulation strategies in attempts or reverse and/or minimize the selloffs.

White House

The Presidential reality show and all its pomp has been extended to any event the president is involved with. Trump speaking at the International Association of Chiefs of Police and Law Enforcement Convention in Orlando, Fla.

ENOUGH!

Presidential Reality Show: Thriving as elections near

Fear is in the air. It's a freak show, and everyone with a half a brain and an open heart knows it.

And in the U.S., where they're continually bragging about being number 1, "The Presidential Reality Show®," starring Reality Show Champion, Donald Trump, is the greatest show on earth and indeed number 1 in the ratings.

And what a fabulous cast… the D.C. clowns of all races, creeds, genders and colors.

While "The Donald" is the U.S. Circus Ringleader, he's proudly supported by a global cast of clowns. Name the country, name the freak. Yes, there are some good ones who truly care and have the best interests of the people they serve.

Only in the Presidential Reality Show®, which we forecast two years ago would become the political theater it is today, would the confirmation of a Supreme Court Justice consume the nation and much of the world in debate over whether he drank too much beer in high school and college, whether he passed out after drinking, or morphed into an angry preppie when he had one too many and threw ice in the face of a fellow pink-shirted, elitist Yalean.

And, of course, is he guilty of sexual assault?

By some measures, when Justice Brett Kavanaugh and Dr. Christine Blasey Ford appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee in late September, more people watched on TV or followed the drama on digital media than watched or followed the last Super Bowl.

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In fact, even the networks cut into their regular programming to replace game shows and soap operas with the game show and soap opera playing out on Capitol Hill.

Workplaces across the country froze in unison, mesmerized by the soap opera drama playing out, pitting two teens from decades ago against a back-

Christine Blasey Ford giving an oath before testifying against Brett Kavanagh.

Wikipedia

drop of teenage drinking, sex games and other windows into the dark side of privileged preppy life.

The twittersphere exploded with opinions, nuanced commentary, conspiracy theories, confessions of "victims," foggy remembrances of the asshole thugs we grew up with and more sleaze that would have remained the dirty laundry of our own private thoughts and circle of friends and family before the days of social media.

For days, the country debated whether the Devil's Triangle reference in Kavanaugh's calendar was a sex act or a drinking game. We slaved over the urban meaning of "boofing," or what in the hell does "FFFFFFourth of July mean, as if we were translating the Dead Sea Scrolls or some other ancient text.

Oh, the high-priced reporting power that went into covering this droll and coming at a time when reporting power is at an all-time low following a decade of massive layoffs in media and the corporatization of once proud and independent media institutions.

As the worst humanitarian crisis in the world intensifies in Yemen, with Saudi Arabia, along with its allies, including the U. S., continuing to bomb Syria back into the dark ages; with currencies and economies sinking worldwide; with record-breaking bankruptcy filings among seniors; skyrocketing health care costs as America becomes fatter, poorer and sicker and rates of depression and suicide rise... to name a few, the media and its willing audience instead spent weeks debating scribbles in a yearbook while they blacked out this news.

While the matter of a sexual assault and other claims against Kavanaugh's suitability to the court must be debated, the Presidential Reality Show® world we live in, elevated the proceedings to intolerable, ultimately meaningless levels, while the real news forming future trends is increasingly ignored.

THE PRESIDENTIAL REALITY SHOW®

The Kavanaugh Classic is just the most recent glaring example of America's Reality Show mentality.

Indeed, in 2016 they elected "The Apprentice" Reality Show star, Donald Trump as President of the United States of America. And, keeping true to his original character, "The Donald," with his tweets, deeds and actions is the undisputed Commander-in-Chief Reality Show Champion ratings king.

But long before Trump, America's political system had degraded into Reality Show status. Indeed, it was Barack Obama who inspired Gerald Celente to coin the term and register it as a trademark.

Losing to Hillary Clinton in the fight for the Democrat Party presidential nomination in 2008, candidate Barack Obama, after being taken under the wing of Oprah Winfrey, changed his act, perfectly playing his "Hope and Change You Can Believe In" performance that captured America's audience and catapulted him into the White House.

DUMBING DOWN AMERICA

While it is easy and simplistic to identify the Reality Show champions as the causes of a dumbed down and declining America, it was, and is, the mainstream media that has, and continues to lower the mental bar with its bias, simplistic, and generally moronic news coverage.

With just five major corporations owning over 90 percent of the broadcast media, they control the news content to drive their agenda.

For example, as we noted in the September 2018 Trends Journal, with fact-based analyses, we demonstrated how they sold, and keep promoting war agendas while they black out those who are opposed to it.

And on a daily basis, across the media landscape they continue to promote inconsequential junk news while ignoring critical geopolitical, socioeconomic, environmental and cultural issues that are reshaping the world. TJ

Slaughter a journalist, big deal. Slaughter tens of thousands in Yemen, media blackout

The day-by-day, hour-by-hour, minute-by-minute, blow-by-blow mainstream media obsessive coverage of the apparent murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi is, from our trend-tracking perspective, a despicable example of media' self-driven priorities at the expense of covering real, lasting examples of innocents being slaughtered, murdered, maimed and starved to death.

Saudi Arabian officials are being accused of the torture, murder, dismemberment and cover up of a now heralded journalist that hardly anyone heard of before the outrage sweeping the media landscape erupted.

The cries over the inhumanity of this horrid act and demands for justice are pouring out from both sides of the political aisle, all spectrums of the divided, corporatized Presstitute media and a shocked public following the 24/7 barrage of coverage that has depicted Khashoggi's apparent death as a brutal act of violence no civilized society should tolerate.

But while much of the Western World was fed the shock and terror of Khashoggi, news quietly and unassumingly broke that the United Nations is warning that 13 million people in Yemen are facing starvation and Yemen's cholera breakout is the worst in the world with 10,000 new cases a week adding to the 185,000 already confirmed.

Youtube

Man holding a sign protesting the disappearance of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

YES, 13 MILLION!

The U.N. called on Saudi Arabia to cease its bombing campaign in Yemen, which is massacring thousands of civilians and causing what the U.N calls "the worst famine in the world in 100 years."

The three-year-old civil war against Houthi rebels in Yemen is being carried out by Saudi Arabia, and its coalition of the killing, including the U. S., the United Arab Emirates, the U.K., Canada, France and other nations that supply Saudi Arabia with the weapons of mass destruction they use in Yemen.

According to independent research, at least 56,000 innocent civilians have been killed by direct bombing and more than 50,000 from famine resulting from the war.

Until the Khashoggi story broke, 32-year-old Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, serving as Saudi Arabia's de facto leader, was a beloved ally of the U.S. and elevated in the media as a champion of reform.

Indeed, when he toured the U.S. this past April, from Silicon Valley leaders, media and business bigshots, Hollywood stars and moguls he was given the red carpet treatment of the highest princely order.

The U.N. called on Saudi Arabia to cease its bombing campaign in Yemen, which is massacring thousands of civilians and causing what the U.N. calls "the worst famine in the world in 100 years."

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Young Yemeni students survey the bombed out wreckage of their school.

Khashoggi, tragic as his story is, pales in comparison to the inhumane lack of coverage and outrage expressed over the crisis in Yemen

But now the political and media narrative no longer glorifies the Prince following allegations of him being complicit in the brutal death of Khashoggi. But they still give a free ride for his role in launching the Yemen war that has murdered thousands, destroyed the nation and is starving millions.

In March 2015, it was the prince who launched the war against Yemen. He claimed Iran was supporting Houthi rebels, who had overthrown the leader the Saudis and U.S. supported.

What was reported in the media is that the Houthis are Shiite rebels supported by Iran. Iran denies that, and no hard evidence has been provided to substantiate the Saudi and American claims.

The presstitutes never report who the Houthis are. And Saudi Arabia is rarely denounced for attacking the poorest nation in the Middle East that had neither posed a threat or took any aggressive action against the Saudi kingdom.

In fact, they were ruling large sections of Yemen for over 1,000 years. The kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in its current form, was founded 23 September 1932… an oppressive, backward, authoritarian dictatorship that prohibits political parties, national elections and where women have virtually no rights.

KILL ONE OF MY OWN? 24/7 COVERAGE

As the Khashoggi outrage mounted, political leaders demanded President Trump halt a pending multi-billion dollar arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

Among the many asking for a stop to the deal, Rhode Island Senator Jack Reed, referring to Khashoggi's apparent death, said: "It appears this was a grotesque and obscene act committed by elements within Saudi Arabia… We cannot move forward with the arms deal as business as usual."

Obscene act? Grotesque?

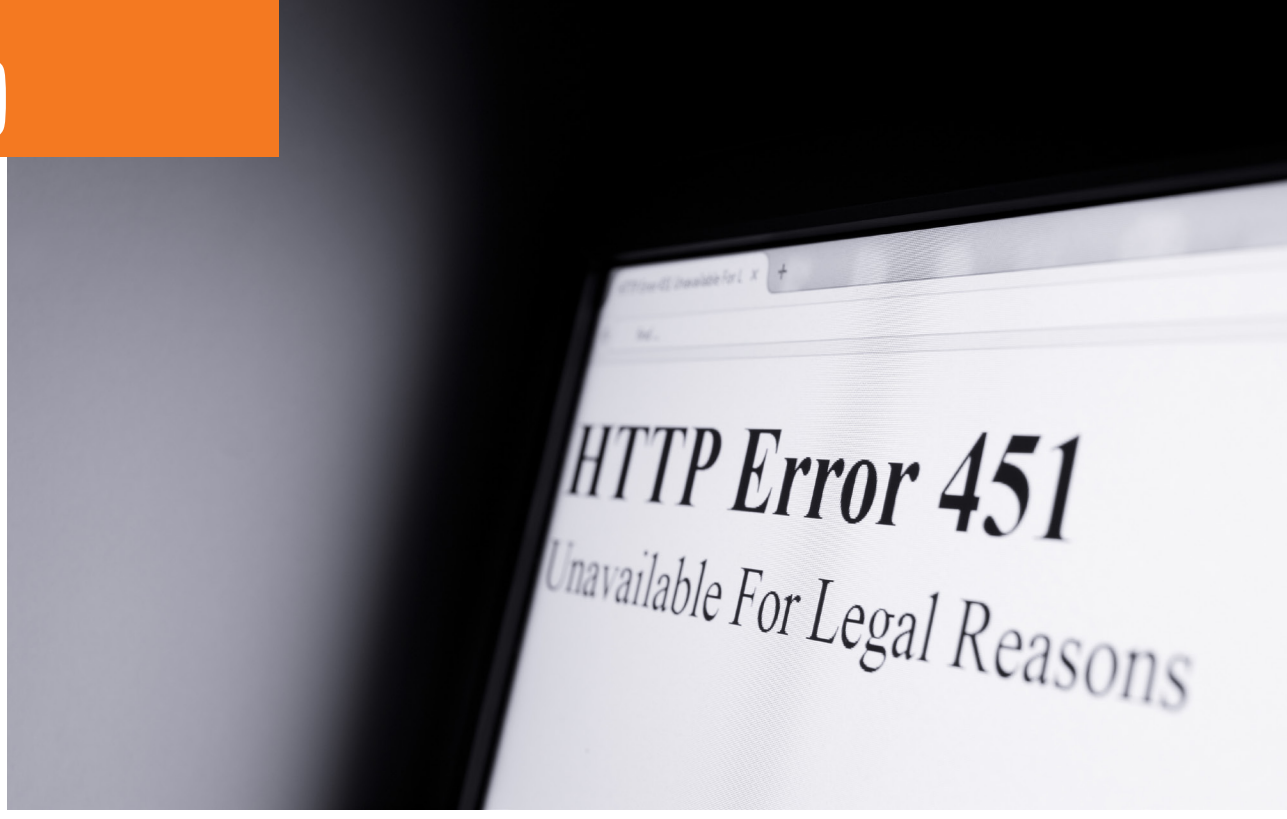
Starving children, economic depression, families suffering cholera and other diseases, thousands killed, famine spreading, a nation destroyed... that isn't obscene? That isn't grotesque?

America, thus far, is sticking with the deal, further cementing, at least for now, the Saudi/U.S./Israel alliance. TJ

TREND FORECAST

The under covered, misunderstood and devastating war in Yemen, which President Barack Obama and his party supported, has passed another Presstitute test of its corporate-driven, blind-sided coverage of the true tragedies unfolding around the world.

Khashoggi, tragic as his story is, pales in comparison to the inhumane lack of coverage and outrage expressed over the crisis in Yemen. But a muted media on the tragedy means the world knows the name of a previously unknown reporter, but doesn't hear the cries of millions of innocent victims.



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Media censorship: A vicious trend to gag independent media

The media censorship trend that accelerated with the multi-platform shutdown of Alex Jones in the summer of 2018 and his media operation INFOWARS has erupted into an unprecedented, full scale assault on First Amendment rights on the internet.

Barely getting attention, and certainly not stirring the outrage it deserves, Facebook has undertaken a massive purge of political, opinion-driven and alternative media accounts for "inauthentic behavior."

Without warning, and scarcely any explanation, 800 pages were closed October 11 by Facebook for "working to mislead others about who they are, and what they are doing."

Most of the pages "purged" by Facebook were independent media outlets that advocated for, among other things, different perspectives on the news of the day, pushed for marijuana legalization, chronicled cases of police brutality, advocated for independent political candidates, promoted a variety of social causes, railed against government spending and scores of similar accounts.

Facebook even went so far as to shutter 68 pages and 43 accounts linked to a marketing group promoting the presidential ambitions of Brazilian far right-wing presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro, who eventually won.

The social media giant issued a statement saying it had acted against the pages and accounts linked to Raposos Fernandes Associates (RFA) "for violating our misrepresentation and spam policies."

But Facebook shows no particular political leanings in its ongoing purge. Lean left or right, if you express unconventional viewpoints or contradict, challenge or circumvent the establishment, the plug could be pulled.

Facebook accounts such as Anti-Media, Reverb Press, reporters from RT, the Free Thought Project, Reasonable People Unite, Police the Police and similar pages, drawing hundreds of thousands of followers, are being shut down.

In explaining its actions, Facebook described the pages, with names like "Nation in Distress" and "Reverb Press," as largely U.S.-based publishers who used

clickbait headlines and other spam tactics to drive traffic to websites where they can tag users with targeted ads.

How that's any different than major, established corporate media outlets worldwide is a mystery.

CORPORATE ABUSES ARE OK

In the United States, which promotes the free speech myth while stifling real free speech (as evidenced by the recent overt censorship trends by the tech giants), just five mega-corporations monopolize over 90 percent of the broadcast media. They control the message and champion their own messengers.

Coming under fire earlier this year and in prior years for sharing user personal data to mega marketing firms, Facebook vowed to be more accountable and aggressive in weeding out "fake news" accounts, protecting personal data and ensuring users are adhering to Facebook's vague, largely subjective rules for using the platform.

For example, Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg and Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey appeared before the Senate Intelligence Committee recently, determined, they said, to relentlessly smoke out the "bad actors" and "block them" from sharing any "undesired" content.

As Sandberg put it: "When we find content that violates our policies, we will take it down… This is an arms race, and that means we need to be ever more vigilant."

What policies? Who makes these decisions? What about Freedom of Speech, the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution?

And those "Intelligence" Committee Senators did not question or challenge the dictates of the Silicon Valley Lords.

They'll leave it up to the senior-level geeks to arbitrarily, subjectively, and without any accountability decide what constitutes "good speech" and what is "bad speech."

These senate hearings clearly demonstrated how these monopolistic tech giants are working hand-in-glove with government to restrict free speech, and censor anti-establishment voices.

And this isn't an American issue, it is global.

The European Union, for example, is developing legislation that will force tech companies to censor "extremist" content. The law will require companies such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter to swiftly remove any content they consider inappropriate from their platforms. TJ

Censorship of independent media outlets is a dangerous, rapidly accelerating trend.

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TREND FORECAST

Censorship of independent media outlets is a dangerous, rapidly accelerating trend. With little explanation and no warning, sites that work to keep the establishment accountable, are themselves thwarted with no accountability at all.

We forecast that censorship of media will escalate throughout the "free" world. In many countries, especially in the Divided States of America, people tune into their favored sources that support their narrow agendas and fixed belief systems, ignoring alternative or multiple sources of information.

And while Google, Facebook and Twitter will dominate market share for the foreseeable future, market gaps are widening. There is a David vs. Goliath opportunity for creative, First Amendment-driven OnTrendpreneurs to create a populist revolution online that expands, doesn't contract, free speech.

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Cryptos' big 2018 dive...

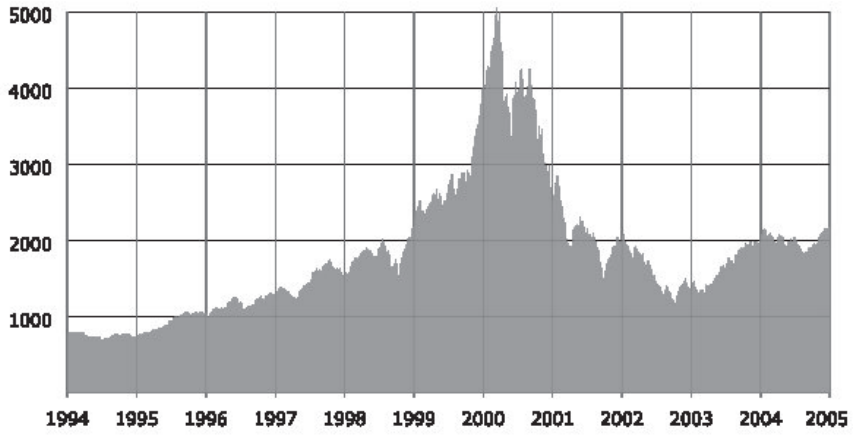
Subscribers want to know what to expect next. Here are the trend lines to follow.

Whether to invest, or not. Sell or hold. Trends Journal subscribers are asking a lot of questions about the future of cryptocurrencies.

For many, this turbulent year signaled the wild ride is over. For others, this has been a transitional year, a year in which government interventions, new regulations and heightened scrutiny, as well as basic market demands shaking out the true value of cryptos, are sorting out the playing field for the market-driven trading ahead.

According to the Trends Research Institute's crypto analyst, Jonathan Cho, the severity of the downswings in 2018 is the flip side of the severity of the upswings throughout 2017, particularly in that year's second half, when retail money en masse began to pour into the sector.

While we do not offer financial advice, in this question-and-answer trend forecast analysis, Cho answers subscriber questions to help put this tumultuous year into perspective and prepare for the year ahead.



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Nasdaq composite showing the progression and subsequent crash of the Dot Com Bubble.

What drove crypto markets way up, and then way down?

The kind of money that fueled explosive growth in 2017 was marked heavily by buyers' fears of missing out, and the belief they were buying near sure-thing lottery tickets, without a great deal of knowledge as to what they were buying into beyond superficial talking points.

With the public rushing into what they believed was a gold rush, at the tail end of a near decade-long bull market (it is generally too late when the public gets in), and prior investors dedicated to a HODL philosophy of never selling, you had a market structure in which everyone was long, and almost no one was short.

All market tops are marked in this way, and all bottoms are marked with usually record numbers of shorts for that market. It's the long liquidations that create the crash-like moves, and the short-covering that creates the reversal up from bottoms.

The retail money that came in was immense. More money came into the sector in the last quarter of 2017 than all money that had come in before then combined, and that kind of money will scare out as quickly as it jumps in.

Once minor selling started in late December and early January, that selling begot more selling, as a market no longer composed primarily of technologists and true believers but of uninformed and more emotional buyers (and thus those less capable of HODLing when push came to shove) panicked out. Fairly quickly, a market that showed only green turned into a sea of red, and the reality of facing real losses began to hit those who once thought the crypto gains of the past could simply be extrapolated forward from their very late points of entry.

This type of market behavior is not unique to the crypto market but characterizes the reaction after every bubble pop. The main difference is just the severity of the percentage decline. But, it's not actually different when considering that the magnitude of the downswings has been proportional to the magnitude of the upswings leading up to the top.

TRENDPOST

As much as cryptos are likely to drop significantly even from here, this process will take some time. There are multiple levels of price suppport from which Bitcoin may find temporary lows on the way down to the $1,000s, where an actual long-term low is likely to occur.

However, it's unlikely that potential low will create any kind of real reversal that puts into question the on-going bear market.

The world is going cashless, so why wouldn't digital currencies soar?

Q&A with Jonathan Cho continued

It's important to distinguish digital currencies in their current form from digital currencies as an overall phenomenon. The overall phenomenon is going to trend up, but the current incarnation is unlikely to.

The first cellphones were large, clunky, and could only do a fraction of what cellphones can do today. Bitcoin, Ethereum, and more or less all other digital currencies have serious problems with regard to scalability, energy consumption, and inflation (endless alternative digital currency creation and forking), and none of these issues have yet been resolved.

Fundamentally, cryptocurrencies have hit a wall. Unless these problems are solved in a sustainable way, it's more likely this first generation of digital currencies will become precursors to future ones, created with the lessons learned from the problems plaguing the ones that exist today.

Apart from these problems, however, digital cur-

digital currencies have another serious problem that's less often discussed, in that they're backed by nothing other than the confidence of the people who hold them

rencies have another serious problem that's less often discussed, in that they're backed by nothing other than the confidence of the people who hold them, no different really than fiat currencies backed by confidence in governments.

Crypto supporters often point to existing networks of holders, built out over time (years in Bitcoin, and often just months in others) as the main reason their favored cryptos can sustain themselves.

But the problem is two-fold: one, any network is flimsy and replaceable if another can be created based on the same technology, particularly one predicated on an evolving technology. MySpace's network once dominated, before Facebook's superseded it.

And two, the existing networks of crypto holders are problematic because they're mostly just that: holders. The majority of people who own digital currencies don't actually use them for their intended purpose, regular transactions, but instead as speculative assets. These aren't dedicated networks of actual users, but networks of people who care less about the technology (and often understand it even less) than they do about making easy money off it. Their loyalties to those networks are flimsy at best.

The more immediate reason digital currencies should continue to decline, however, is that prices have likely already peaked for this market cycle. Regardless of asset class, all markets cycle from bull to bear markets, in regular time intervals, reflecting less the conditions or technology of the period than historically consistent patterns of human market behavior.

These swerve from early adopter buying, to public hysteria, to mass liquidations, and the cycle is unlikely to renew until we see liquidations result in the kinds of price declines commensurate with a bull market that multiplied prices by the thousands or more.

TRENDPOST

The size of bear markets always correlates directly with the size of the bull markets that precede them, and this should be no exception.

Is the Dot.com bubble of the late 1990s comparable to current crypto trending?

Q&A with Jonathan Cho continued

All markets are the same, in that they move in similar ways. They only really differ in the magnitude of the peaks and valleys that form, and in minor differences in the time durations of their respective bull and bear market cycles.

The comparison I made in prior articles could have been made with any other asset bubble, but I used the Dot.com bubble mainly for ease of comparison. Both the 90's bubble and the current one are driven by emerging technologies, the internet and distributed ledger technology (DLT), that have fundamentally changed and are changing the world.

And, just as the 90's bubble crashed without harming the future of the internet, the crypto crash occurring now shouldn't compel people to think it shouldn't be happening, just because they believe and understand that DLT has a bright future.

The direction of prices at any given moment do not necessarily point to the long-term sustainability of the technology underpinning that market.

TRENDPOST

Anything with a price attached to it will be subject to, and controlled by, the whims of human market behavior, from traditional assets like stocks and bonds, to non-traditional ones like cryptos and tulips.

This is not to say that cryptos will be as fleeting as tulips, but that those who proclaim that the crypto market is just "different" because it's a "new" asset class forget that tulips were new as well, and you could chart its rise and fall just as you could any other asset, because again, it doesn't matter what the asset is. People follow predictable patterns of buying and selling that repeat over time, with no exception.

Blockchain in the boardroom.
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If cryptos are crashing, why is investment in Blockchain soaring?

Q&A with Jonathan Cho continued

Investment in any industry increases when prices in it soar. Investment in the mining industry, for example, typically reaches its highest mark at the top of each bull market, and into the first part of the bear markets that follow.

That said, the reasons for investment in this case vary a bit. Hedge funds are moving into the space to chase returns. Banks are opening digital currency trading desks not, as is commonly assumed, to buy cryptos en masse but simply to trade them, both short and long, just as they would any other asset they believe they can make money in, and because they can generate commissions by satisfying client demands for crypto trading. TJ

TRENDPOST

Banks and institutions in other industries that by and large act as ledger-keepers are increasing investment into the space because they must. Blockchain and DLT threaten their very existence, as DLT makes centralized ledgers obsolete.

This kind of "obsolescence-prevention" investment should not be confused with investment in Bitcoin or cryptos in general, because these institutions are primarily interested in DLT itself, not in the cryptocurrencies built on DLT nor the ICO companies that use DLT to raise money for DLT-based businesses.

Jonathan Cho is a proprietary trader at a crypto hedge fund. His expertise lies in chart and sentiment analysis, which he used to forecast the start of the crypto bear market in Dec. 2017. He is a published author in holistic health and graduated from Harvard College in 2008. You can follow him on Twitter for crypto-related tweets @jcho710.

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Beyond cryptos

Blockchain technology is about to rule the world. Are you ready?

When 72-year-old, family-controlled Fidelity, known for its disciplined and traditional management of retirement plans and mutual funds announced it was spending billions of dollars to ensure its competitive stance in a Blockchain world, it was apparent that the ledger technology that brought the world Bitcoin would have a future well beyond its digital currency roots.

Fidelity wants to stay competitive with Charles Schwab, Well Fargo, JPMorgan and Chase, and many other financial giants who have already invested in the technology.

Whether you like it, understand it, or trust it, Blockchain technology already has laid the blueprint for a new economy, a new business and industry landscape, a new world for how you monitor your healthcare. It's a transformational technology that will follow you from your home to work, to the grocery store, to your next vacation and beyond.

IT'S HERE. ARE YOU PREPARED?

And, as we forecast two years ago in Trends Journal, by the end of this decade, Blockchain technology will alter how you protect personal data, make healthcare decisions, manage investments, make purchases large and small, operate your business, vote and even help decide if food is fresh and where it comes from.

Trends are born, they grow, mature, reach old age and die. The Blockchain trend has just been born, and throughout society, from young to old, many are still unfamiliar with this trend, what it means and where it's going.

Blockchain technology over just the next few years will replace and dominate a number of current transactional systems used in just about every industry.

Trust in the technology is growing across myriad fields because Blockchain encrypts data, thus pre-

venting the record of transactions from being hacked or altered.

Indeed, the same technology behind cryptocurrency is being embraced by the biggest banks and financial institutions, insurance giants, new technology companies, major industries and an increasing number of governments worldwide.

In fact, Japan recently became the first major economy to launch a domestic payment transfer system dependent on Blockchain technology. Three major Japanese banks will start offering customers free money transfers via a new mobile Blockchain-based app in what the government says will constitute a major step to reduce the use of cash.

Here are some other examples of how Blockchain is transforming a variety of industries:

• Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg is investing millions in exploring how Blockchain technology can benefit the social media giant, whose two billion worldwide users personify a centralized, and not a decentralized, model of data collection like Blockchain. Facebook has been under fire for not protecting its users' data. Blockchain, built on the foundation of encrypted, protected data, provides an unprecedented framework to preserve privacy.

• Healthcare companies across the globe are looking at Blockchains to ensure the security of personal information. Across Europe, Canada and the United States, where regionalized healthcare groups are rapidly expanding, the ability to securely share sensitive health information across networks is crucial.

TRENDPOST

Blockchain technology is being aggressively embraced by the biggest banks, financial institutions, insurance giants, major industries and an increasing number of governments worldwide. And more and more social, business, academic and industrial sectors are realizing how secure and adaptable the technology is, and will be.

In fact, worldwide investment by venture capitalists, who poured $964 million into Blockchain or cryptocurrency-related startups in 2017, are expected to exceed $1.7 billion into crypto development by the end of 2018.

• Amazon's Web Services program for the Cloud, Microsoft's Azure for the Cloud, and young companies such as Factom and Bitfury offer Blockchains to ensure the integrity of everything from loan documentation to your vote.

• Wien Energie, an Austrian energy provider, uses the technology to trade electricity among utilities. In fact, in a trend we alerted our subscribers to three years ago, a growing number of solar and new-energy power companies use the technology to buy energy.

• Foxconn, the Chinese giant that assembles Apple's and other companies' electronic items, has been testing a family of blockchains to manage the flow of materials, products and payments along its supply and delivery paths. It's not just about security, but also about speeding payments and avoiding middlemen and their fees.

Blockchains have moved well beyond registering and trading digital coins. The technology eliminates the need for third-party guarantors, such as banks or auditors, to ensure the integrity of transaction records. And that means virtually any type of transaction requiring a record, from filing a loan application to casting a vote, can be secured in a Blockchain. TJ

Blockchain Democracy on the move

In 2017, we identified Blockchain Democracy as a Top Trend for 2018, forecasting that this technology, exploding across a range of different fields, would ultimately prove a secure, accurate system for digital voting, erasing the longstanding belief that online voting isn't secure.

Indeed, Blockchain, the technology behind cryptocurrencies, is being embraced by the biggest banks and financial institutions, insurance giants, new technology companies, major industries and an increasing number of governments worldwide that value their security, so why wouldn't it be used to advance democracy?

While online voting has yet to build momentum worldwide, it is taking significant steps that can soon evolve, as we forecast, into a fully developed trend.

We bank online. We conduct sensitive, highly personal health care transactions online. We apply for mortgages, jobs and auto loans online.

So why can't we vote online?

The longstanding mindset has been that electronic voting systems are unsafe and can be easily hacked, ignoring the fact that current voting systems are antiquated, unreliable, inconvenient and "hanging chad" hackable.

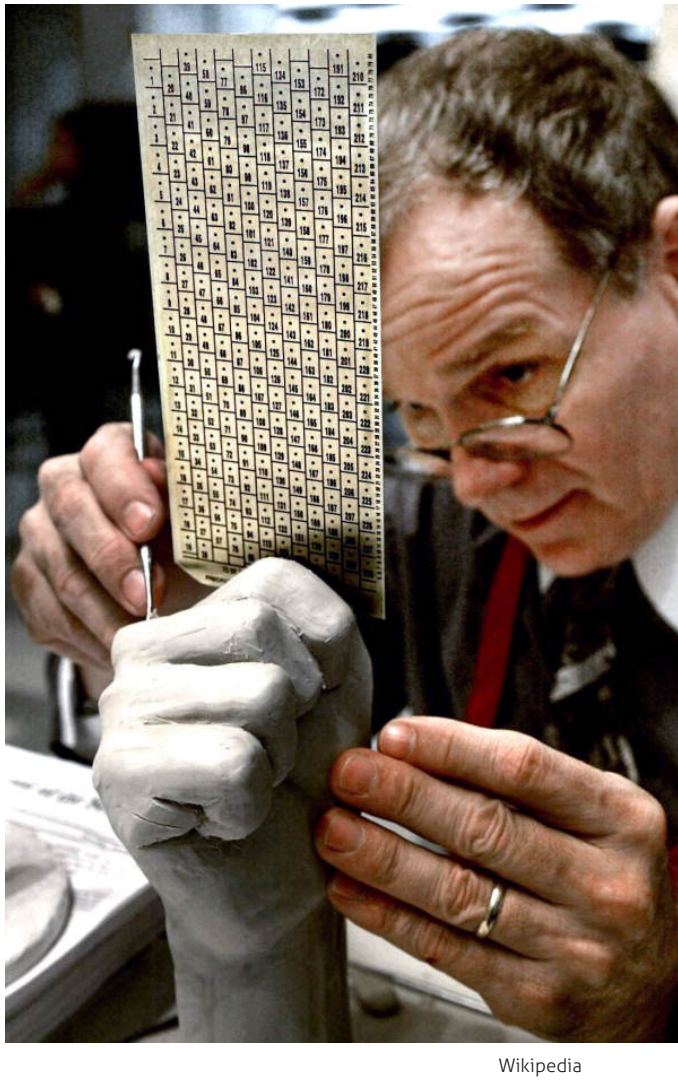
Despite global demands to make it happen, what is fundamentally slowing the growth of online voting is that politicians and vested interests control an election process that is inefficient and entrenched.

But 2018, so far, is seeing some breakthrough moments.

Most notably, for the first time in American history, voters in West Virginia will be able to vote using their mobile phones, supported by Blockchain technology.

What about those longstanding security concerns?

"The software company, Voatz, has developed a secure mobile voting application that allows voters to receive, vote, and return their ballots electronically. The application also utilizes Blockchain technology to store electronically submitted ballots until election night and requires a heightened standard of identity verification for users than traditional absentee ballot processes," an official statement from the government of West Virginia read.



Wikipedia

Hanging chads would be not be a possibility with a blockchain voting system..

This is a major step in demonstrating the effectiveness of Blockchain technology in the direct democracy arena, even though the expected, knee-jerk

"What Blockchain Democracy will do is make politicians and the current election process obsolete by cutting out the middlemen... politicians... and putting the power in the hands of the people."

2018 Top Trends

criticism that the system isn't safe persists. Critics, from the Heritage Foundation to MIT still say it's too risky.

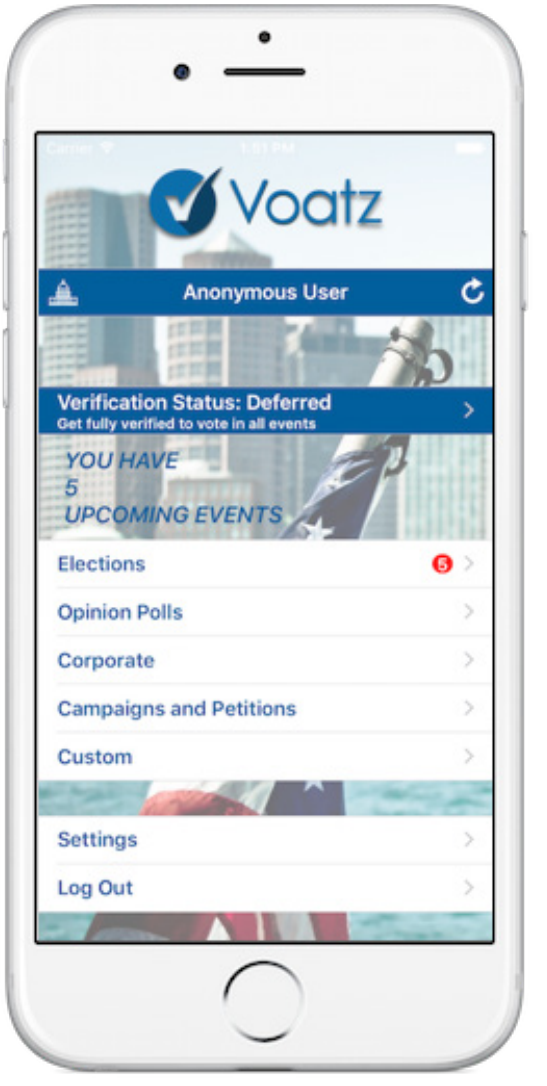
But as we forecast: "Ripe for destruction, what Blockchain Democracy will do is make politicians and the current election process obsolete by cutting out the middlemen... politicians... and putting the power in the hands of the people."

West Virginia is not the only example.

Given the ability to vote online, not only for candidates but on major issues affecting citizens, ranging from municipal budgets to referenda, countries worldwide can follow the Switzerland model. There, the most advanced model of Direct Democracy is practiced, giving citizens a direct say in how their public servants carry out the will of the voters.

Global IT service provider Luxoft Holding, Inc., for example, partnered with the City of Zug and Lucerne University of Applied Sciences in Switzerland, to test the world's first Blockchain-based e-voting system to be used in a major city.

The "experiment" this past July was a success. There were no significant security or data breaches. TJ



Voatz provides a simple and secure digital voting platform built on a blockchain foundation.

Voatz

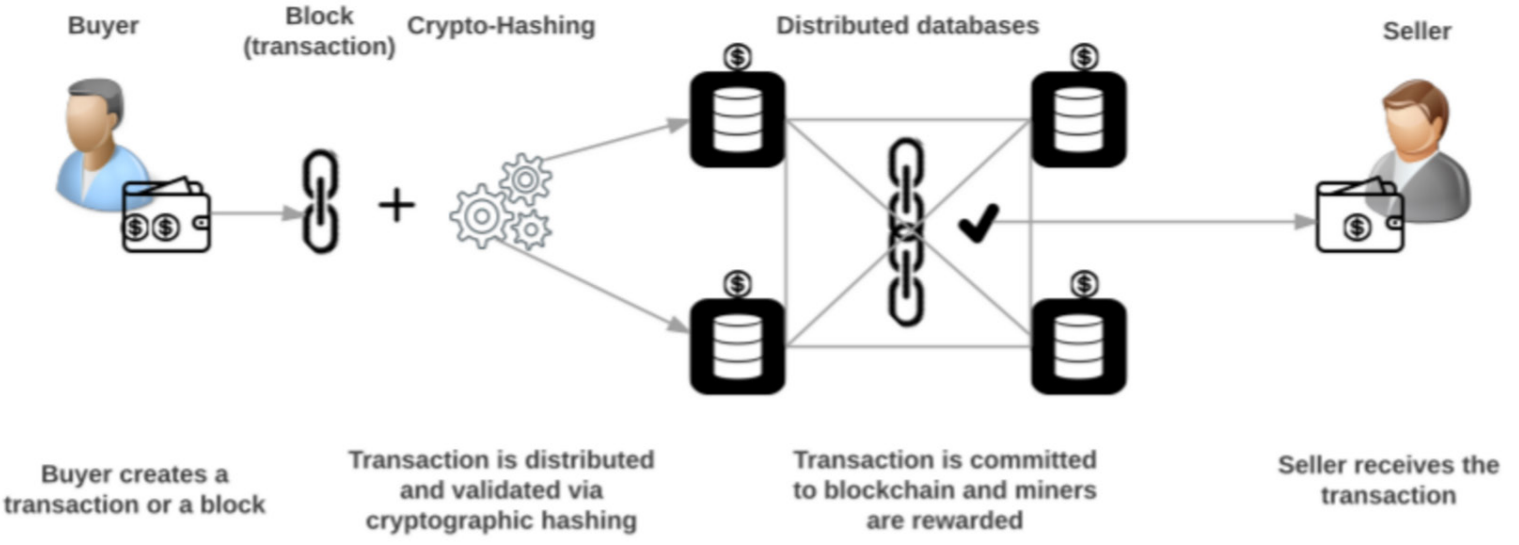
TRENDPOST

Why a low cost, secure, fully reliable online voting system driven by Blockchain technology, that is sweeping across industries worldwide, would be a hard sell to advance Direct Democracy causes is indeed a mystery.

But the reality that We The People want a direct say in not only the candidates we vote into office, but on issues ranging from war to school budgets, is increasingly being supported by a technology that can make it happen.

As dissatisfaction with political institutions accelerates globally, Direct Democracy will gain momentum. The populist movements spreading across the globe are demonstrating that the citizens of the world are disgusted with ingrained political systems, in which elected officials carry out the will of special interests, enriching themselves with bribes and payoffs (deceptively labeled as campaign contributions), rather than serving the public's interest.

Again, in reaffirming our forecast, the only obstacle to online voting is the people's will to make it happen.



Wikipedia

How it works: Understanding Blockchain technology

In essence, a Blockchain is a ledger of accounts. Every transaction, the sale of a house, or a manufacturer delivering a shipment of tires to a distributor is recorded as a "block." Each new block is added to the "chain" that serves as a permanent record of transactions pertaining to an item. Each block, or transaction record, is digitally woven into the chain, making it difficult (or impossible, according to Blockchain advocates) to extract or alter that block.

A Blockchain is vastly different from conventional bookkeeping, because the chain is held by every entity that's had anything to do with the item being tracked.

To take part in a Blockchain transaction, a person or business must be admitted to the Blockchain's group of users. Each user is assigned a numerical key that signifies his/her digital address in the chain. Each also is assigned a second key that gives access to the chain.

When a transaction "block" is posted to the chain, the chain's software validates the user and the transaction. Then, the new block is welded into every copy of the chain, whether a few or thousands, spread across the Internet. TJ

A Blockchain is vastly different from conventional bookkeeping, because the chain is held by every entity that's had anything to do with the item being tracked.

The death of Sears

And the long demise of dying brands

When iconic Sears filed for bankruptcy in October, it ended another chapter in the slow, drawn out demise of once iconic American brands now fading from the retail landscape, along with the shopping malls they once proudly anchored.

Sears is planning to close at least 142 stores by year's end, if not more.

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Richard Sears and Alvah Roebuck founded the company in 1893 to sell watches by mail. As recently as the 1960s, 2 of every 3 Americans shopped at Sears in any three-month period, and more than half of households had a Sears credit card.

Currently, the company operates 687 Sears and Kmart stores and employs about 68,000 people. By the end of the year it is expected to close 142 stores with liquidation sales expected to begin shortly. The closings are in addition to 46 stores Sears previously said it would close by November.

While we have been forecasting the slow, agonizing shrinking of once formidable department stores for decades, the fall of Sears is particularly reflective of the trend line global forecaster Gerald Celente identified in his book, "Trends 2000" in 1995 and numerous times since.

For decades, Celente predicted and wrote about his "Pall on the Malls" trend, noting there was a gross overdevelopment of malls and shopping centers, while America's once thriving middle class was shrinking. Thus, there was a declining population of enough people with enough money to "shop until we drop."

And the bigs, who grew bigger through mergers and acquisitions, failed to identify that trend, and the new products and service lines that meet new customer needs and interests.

Today, they're paying the price. Burdened with massive debt and focused only on building their bottom line, they built a homogenous retail landscape based on sterile data-driven corporate models of shopping patterns and buying habits that replaced original, unique product development.

In 2017, more than 5000 stores of major retailers closed due to declining sales and competition from online retailers.

This high rate of closures is continuing in 2018 with close to 4,000 expected from Walgreens, Toys R Us and The Gap. Many have already closed or will be shut down by the end of the year.

Other retailer closings are planned to continue into 2019 and beyond. Ann Taylor is closing 500 stores, Teavana 380, Best Buy 250, Sears/Kmart 142 and Mattress Firm 200. The children's clothing retailer Gymboree announced in July that it would close 350 stores. The Children's Place is planning to close 144 stores by 2020.

While the dramatic decline of big chain stores and shopping malls is often blamed on the rise of online shopping, Celente has long identified other more powerful underlying trends that fueled their demise: "Their lack of future vision that blinds them to new possibilities…rather than providing consumers with diverse and original products, and they focused on a one-size-fits-all corporate strategy." TJ

TREND FORECAST

Dying brands will be a trend that accelerates in 2019. The Bigs have taken the joy out of shopping, and inventive, creative Brick and Mortar OnTrendpreneurs® now have a wide open field of opportunity to fill the product, service, customer experience shopping gaps they've left behind.

New global trend: The Death of Sex?

A growing number of young adults are foregoing sex and, in many cases, intimate relationships entirely.

An August 2018 survey discovered that 64 percent of Japan's 18-to-34-year-olds are virgins and the same proportion has never had a romantic relationship. Another study that month reported that 30 percent of Japanese men under age 30 have never dated. Also in August, the Japan Family Planning Association found that 45 percent of women and 26 percent of men ages 16 to 24 had no interest in, or even "despised" the idea of a sexual relationship.

As a result, fewer Japanese are coming into the world – so much so that adult diapers outsell children's. From 2016 to 2017, Japan's population fell by 300,000. The trend line shows the number plummeting by 900,000 a year by 2045.

Japan isn't alone. Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Switzerland have birth rates roughly equal to Japan's. Russia's population is on trend to fall by almost a quarter by 2050.

The US birth rate fell to a record low in 2017, the second consecutive year that happened; 500,000 fewer babies were born, year on year. Birth control and women's interest in their careers play a part but people also are having sex less often: adults told surveys they were having sex an average of five times a month in 1990, four in 2000, and three in 2010. Adults in Australia and Great Britain report similar declines.

In Japan, adult diapers outsell children's.

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Studies in Japan and countries around the world are increasingly showing that young couples are having less sex.

TRENDPOST

This so-called "celibacy syndrome" has many causes: overwork, late-night television, peoples' addiction to surfing the web in bed with their smartphones instead of turning to their partners. Studies in France and the UK correlate mens' overindulgence in Internet pornography to a diminished interest in having actual sex; one investigation found that 50 percent of men addicted to on-line porn are impotent when it's time to perform with a human.

Japan has nudged it birth rate up a little by guaranteeing free childcare and kindergarten to all families. But such small, though significant, measures are unlikely to reverse the trend in the near term in the developed world.

A blood test predicts depression

Major depression may be diagnosed with a simple blood test, perhaps treated with a common nutritional supplement, according to research conducted by a team of bioscientists from five US research centers and one in Sweden.

New research has revealed a correlation between serious depression and a lack of a biochemical called acetyl-L-carnitine or ALC. It regulates certain chemicals the brain uses as signals between cells. Without enough ALC, the signaling chemicals can run wild, creating a neural toxicity that leads to a lack of resilience under stress, causing depression and other ailments.

Previously, depression had to be diagnosed through personality questionnaires and interviews with health care professionals.

The research also found that the less ALC in a person, the earlier in life depression could set in, and the more the ailment resisted conventional drug treatments. The good news: while drug companies' current anti-depressants can take weeks to work, the ALC treatment showed positive effects in mice within days.

Researchers are planning to test for optimum dosage levels next. Human trials could be underway by 2020.

Could testing for clinical depression be as simple as a routine blood test?
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TRENDPOST

According to data from Blue Cross Blue Shield, the incidence of depression is on the rise. It already afflicts one in every ten US residents and about 300 million people worldwide. In the US alone, the illness takes more than $200 billion out of the economy each year in lost productivity, medical costs, and related expenses. A simple, safe, and natural treatment could greatly reduce the cost of this scourge in money, productivity, and quality of life.

Five-day work week has no future

Most employees don't need to work five days a week to do their jobs, according to a survey just published jointly by the Workforce Institute at Kronos and Future Workplace, prominent HR think tanks.

In the survey, 45 percent of the people who responded said that they can get their daily work done in less than five hours if they're not interrupted. Almost three-quarters said they would do their jobs in four days a week or fewer if their pay remained the same.

Of the 3,000 workers surveyed across eight countries, 40 percent said they lose at least an hour a day to administrative drudgery and 86 percent said they're roped into tasks unrelated to their core jobs. Meetings, dealing with e-mails, and resolving customer issues also are significant time-eaters, the survey reported.

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TRENDPOST

Telecommuting and hiring freelance specialists from the gig economy are ways to make better use of workers' time and company resources. As companies struggle to survive in a turbulent, competitive, and ever-changing economy, conventions such as the five-day work week are fading, being replaced by more fluid, flexible arrangements.

A Russian Tesla?

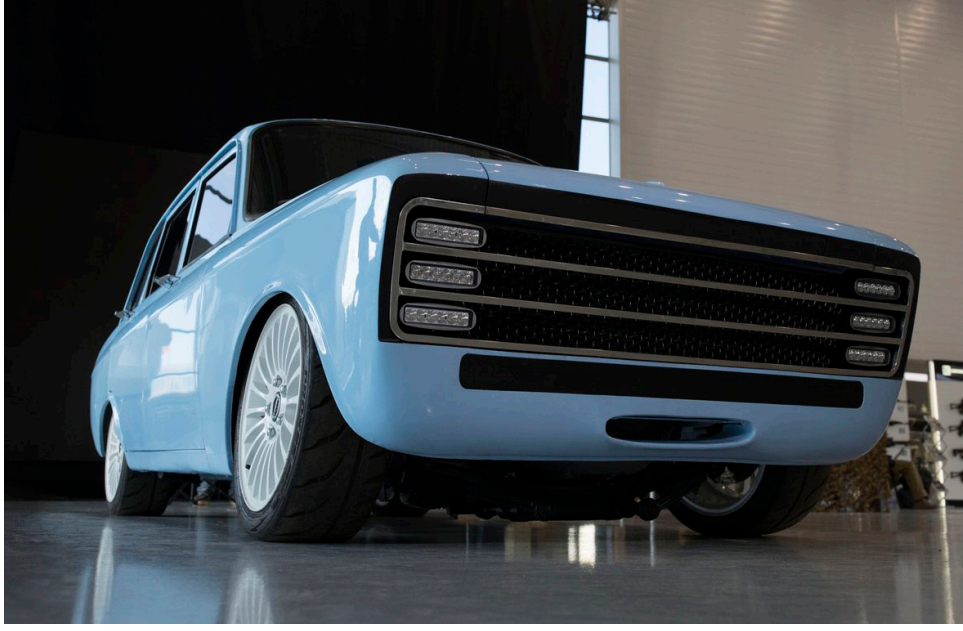
Kalashnikov, a name synonymous with the AK-47 machine gun, is branching out. The Russian firm makes everything from clothes to umbrellas, including "Little Igor", a 13-foot-tall manned military robot. Now, it's adding an electric car to its vast product line.

Dubbed the CV-1, the car can travel 350 km, or a little more than 200 miles, on one charge and includes what the company calls "revolutionary" technology that will enable it to go toe-to-toe with Tesla.

But Kalashnikov's self-described "electric supercar" looks more like the American Motors' Rambler from the 1950's than a Tesla. The body design is based on the shape of a 1970's Soviet liftback called the Izh-Kombi. (Izh was the name of the manufacturer; kombi is an Eastern European word for station wagon.)

The company hasn't released information about price or availability.

Kalashnikov's announcement drew quick scorn and ridicule on Russian social media.



Twitter

Kalashnikov's entry into the world of electric cars.

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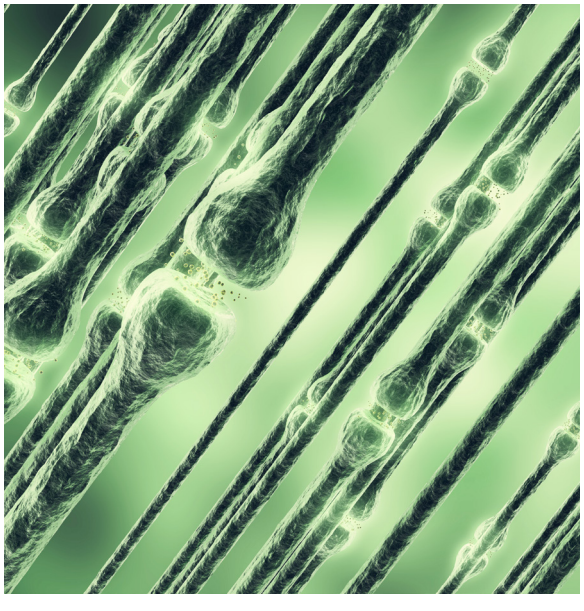
Kalashnikov's signature weapon is renowned for being inexpensive, hardy, and reliable. Russia's cars are renowned for being the opposite. With the US, China and Europe already heavily invested in making state-of-the-art EVs, the CV-1 is unlikely to gain market share outside its home country.

The future of workouts: In a bottle

Studies have linked aerobic exercise to a "young" brain, one that resists degeneration as we age, even slowing the progression of Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia. Now, research by a consortium of scientists from ten US medical institutions have found that upping the brain's supply of certain neurochemicals may produce the same result as pounding out the miles on a treadmill.

Studies have linked exercise to "neurogenesis", the creation of new brains cells, especially in the hippocampus, the brain's center of learning and memory. Using mice afflicted with an Alzheimer's-like condition, researchers gave them a drug that would stimulate the creation of new brain cells. The drug, combined with exercise, helped improve the mice's mental functions.

A second study repeated the treatment but, instead of exercise, added something called "brain-derived neurotrophic factor", a protein known to stimulate nerve growth. With the two compounds together, mice with dementia improved as much as mice receiving the one drug while doing time on a running wheel.



Increasing the brain's supply of certain neurochemicals may be as effective as working out.

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The most promising treatments for Alzheimer's, which some estimate may affect 14 million Americans by 2050, are those that use the body's own chemicals to dissolve the disease's signature protein tangles, restoring brain function. Research in Alzheimer's Disease will shift more strongly in favor of this approach, de-emphasizing the search for safe synthetic drugs.

Changing tastes reshape major food and beverage makers

As consumers, and Millennials especially, opt for trendier, healthier food and drink, manufacturers are transforming themselves to meet those new tastes.

PepsiCo has created a new, entrepreneurial corporate division called The Hive, to focus on emerging brands and capitalize on the trend toward healthier, exotic fare. It already has gobbled up smaller ventures, including Naked Juice, Kevita kombucha, and Sabra, which makes Mediterranean foods. PepsiCo expects sales of healthy snacks to outpace those of traditional fat-and-salt choices by 2025.

Not to be outdone, Coca-Cola has bought a slice of Body Armor, a sports drink being marketed as a healthier alternative to PowerAde and PepsiCo's Gatorade, which owns 75% of that market. Tyson Foods, synonymous with chicken, owns pieces of three companies making "cultured meat" from cells in tanks. Such "meat" doesn't depend on the growing and slaughtering of animals.

But health isn't the only trend that's causing a ground shift in the industry. Companies are responding to consumer expectations that businesses should also be environmental stewards. Kraft Heinz has pledged to make all its packaging recyclable, reusable, or compostable by 2025.

Anheuser-Busch is investing as much as $100,000 in start-ups, helping it reach its goal of solving 100 environmental challenges by 2025, such as water scarcity, and use of more sustainable raw materials.

Major food producers are swinging toward trendier and healthier products as demand rises.

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Issues of health, human and environmental, have now been baked into consumer tastes. Companies that market regionally and nationally will seek to ally their names and images with those causes. Locally-owned businesses will be late to the trend, but more and more of them will eventually find it necessary to adopt a genuine green strategy.