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Dave Coplin talks tech

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Tech help

Jane Bainbridge
Editor

T here has been a lot of talk in the UK recently about productivity. Apparently, we Brits aren't very productive. Not that this is how life feels as we draw to the close of one year and prepare to start another, with a range of deadlines looming and new projects beginning.

But productivity is a complicated beast. Officially measured as the rate of output per unit of input, to improve it, you either need better machinery or a new process to increase the speed, or quality, of what a worker makes. That's all well and good in a manufacturing context, but less easily measured in a creative one.

The 'productivity puzzle' is a consequence of many elements. From a post-recession economic climate in which banks have granted fewer businesses loans to invest in better processes, to stagnant wages and a country with a large proportion of smaller firms. Britain has relatively high – albeit, often low-paid – employment, and higher productivity invariably goes hand in hand with higher unemployment. Academics point to a mixed picture, meanwhile, with the story varying across different sectors.

So what's to be done? No matter what the question these days, the answer is invariably technology – sometimes the problem, other times the solution, but always a factor.

Technology and automation are generally seen as improving the speed of outputs, but – as Dave Coplin explains (profile, p20) – the question we need to ask is how can the technology really *help* us? His suggestion that work email is often a burden, rather than a benefit, will ring true with many. "Clearing the inbox has become proxy for real work," he says.

Perhaps the scourge of emails is on a par with that of meetings – so much time spent talking about things rather than doing them. It's interesting that in his UK/US workplace comparison (tech, p67), Matt Taylor mentions how quickly the Americans get down to business in meetings, compared with the chitchat that precedes British ones.

But we can't talk about productivity without thinking about how we live our lives, and the role of work within them.

Several commentators are now questioning economists' obsession with growth and asking how sustainable this is. Coplin's perspective of tech advancement is centred on how technology can make our lives better, and that the human perspective should never be forgotten. If the technology doesn't help us, turn it off.

Now there's a new year's challenge for all of us.

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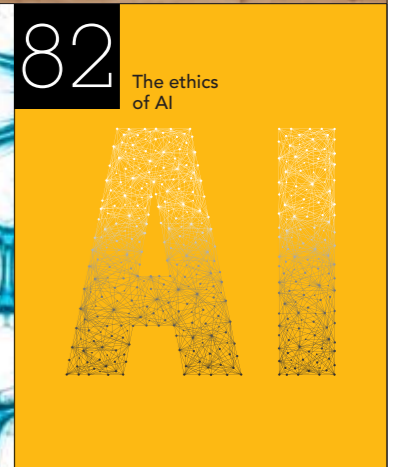
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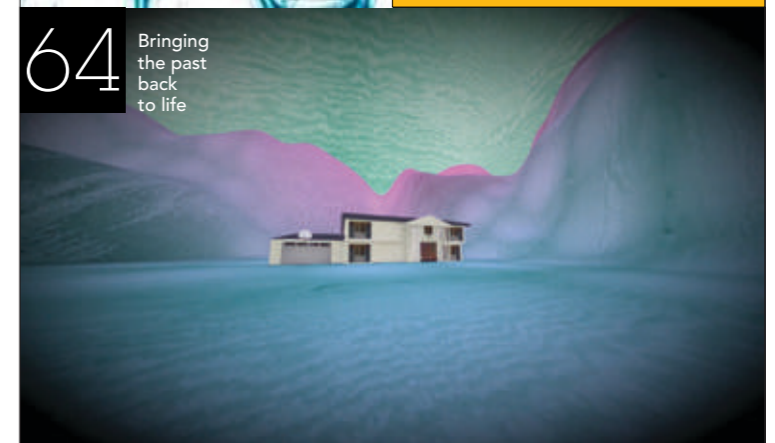
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Model behaviour

You probably don't know this, but your television is cheating you. The same applies to the computer screen on which you may be reading this article (and, in a different way, the colour pictures in magazines).

When the screen shows pure blue, green or red, it is more or less telling the truth. Blue lights produce pure blue photons, green lights produce green ones and red lights produce – yes – red photons. Each pixel on the screen contains three LCD lights – one in each of these colours. If the red lights alone are displayed, the screen is red. And it really is red.

But yellow – TV yellow is a big fat lie. It looks yellow. But it isn't really yellow. Not like a banana is yellow. It's a mixture of red and green light that hacks our optical apparatus.

The yellow is created in our brains – not on the screen.

TV screens only need to emit three colours because there are only three types of colour-sensing cones in the human retina. By perceiving the relative strength of light by these three cones, we extrapolate and interpolate the whole of the visual spectrum.

Colour mixing is a biological, not a physical, phenomenon.

By sending the brain a mixture of red and green photons in the right ratio, it is impossible for your brain to distinguish the stimulus from that of yellow photons. So, yellow is what you see.

And because it is a biological phenomenon, it does not depend on universal and unchanging physical laws, but on the species doing the perceiving.

If lemurs and lorises bought televisions, you could sell them a much cheaper dichromatic LCD TV because you could omit the third component of each pixel – the one that generates red light. They construct their colour spectrum from

"Coke from a Pepsi bottle doesn't taste like Coke"

green and blue alone. By contrast many birds, which detect ultraviolet light as well as the three RGB colours, would look at a human television and think it was broken. To a bird, your TV would look like reality seen through a very strong filter. Pigeon televisions would be hugely expensive as you would need to produce five colours per pixel.

Why does this matter to the market research industry?

In recent years, a number of scientists performed visual experiments to discover more about the vision of birds. They showed them printed pictures (which, like TV screens, are created from composite colours) and registered their reaction. Much of this was a waste of time.

Seen by a bird, a printed (or televised) picture that looks exactly like a ripe banana to a human, doesn't look remotely like a ripe banana to the bird. Many flowers that look plain to humans look amazingly decorative to an ultra-violet-sensitive bee.

What they were measuring was

the connection between the object displayed and the bird's reaction. But this approach only works if what the picture 'shows' and what the bird sees are one and the same.

If I were an alien, and showed human test subjects pictures that looked, to my alien perception, exactly like yellow bananas, and asked 'would you eat this?', people might reply yes or no. What would determine their answer would depend on whether the bananas look ripe to them. If the pictures of bananas looked green (or blue), they would answer 'no'. But from this it would be wrong to infer that 'humans do not like ripe bananas'.

This distinction applies to almost anything. There is the thing and there is the perception of the thing.

Why does this matter? Because most models of human behaviour, most big data models, most economic models are blind to this distinction. And this applies to other stimuli. Price, for instance.

To the human brain, '£9.95' is not perceived in the same way as 'Now £9.95 – Was £15.99'. On a shampoo bottle, 50% extra free does not feel the same as 33% off. A £50 T-shirt feels expensive in TopShop but cheap on Bond Street. Brands, in the same way, act as a reality-distortion field. Coke from a Pepsi bottle doesn't taste like Coke.

If your algorithms and models are comparing objective reality with human behaviour without including a decent human-specific model of perception, your conclusions may end up just as useless as that bird research. In determining human behaviour, objective reality is a surprisingly irrelevant variable.

Like televisions, research needs to be species-specific. ∎

Rory Sutherland is vice-chairman, Ogilvy & Mather, UK

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While there are some areas of common ground, the divisions in American society run deep along political fault lines, affecting consumer attitudes on everything from cause-based ads to augmented reality, according to research from Foresight Factory.

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The National Trust has undertaken a neuroscience study to prove the link between places and emotions, and found that images of a meaningful place elicit a strong emotional response in the brain.

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The self-improvement phenomenon is taking on an extreme form in California's Silicon Valley, where entrepreneurs are experimenting with fasting and cognitive drugs to enhance performance and productivity.

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There is very little willingness to adopt the cashless trend in Japan, with consumers loyal to tried-and-tested traditional payments, but Flamingo's Yuka Uchijima and Chris Illsley write about how the bonds to cash are slowly weakening.

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Global briefing

News, views and insights from around the world – from the persistent loyalty to cash in Japan to bio-hacking in California. Edited by **Katie McQuater**

JAPAN

Spending hab its

In Japan, consciousness around spending and residual fears of corruption mean consumers are hesitant to move away from physical cash. But that is slowly changing, write Flamingo's **Yuka Uchijima** and **Chris Illsley**

Begging in China has gone cashless. The growing trend for e-payments, which resulted in 58.8tn renminbi (US$8.8tn) of mobile payment transactions in 2016, has seemingly made its way to the streets.

Some of the country's most needy are now accepting donations via QR codes hung around their necks or, in a nod to more traditional methods, stuck to the side of a tin cup.

It has been claimed that this is a ruse by local businesses; beggars are paid to encourage people to scan QR codes so their user details can be harvested and sold. However, it is indicative of the rise – and widespread acceptance – of e-payments in China, where the market is dominated by Alipay and WeChat.

Similarly, in South Korea, LG CNS's mobile-payment company, Kakao Pay, recently surpassed 10m users, Samsung Pay doubled its active monthly mobile payment users to 6.44m, and the country's central bank announced it was aiming to be coinless by 2020.

In Japan, however – despite its reputation as a leader in the adoption of future-facing technologies – there remains a strong reliance on tried-and-tested methods of payment, and very little indication of a willingness to go cashless. The use of cash, and interacting with physical currency,

is still a strong part of everyday life, in and out of the home.

Figures from 2016 indicate that more than half (52%) of Japan's household wealth is invested in cash, with only 1.5% in government bonds, 5% in trusts, 8% in stocks and almost 30% in pension and insurance funds.

Several factors contribute to Japanese anxiety around moving

away from cash, most of which centre on control, personal autonomy and a fear of debt; in short, potentially losing control of spending.

Some of this can be traced back to 1923, when Tokyo was devastated by an earthquake, resulting in private insurance companies defaulting. Then came the Great Depression and the war with China. In 1945, American bombers destroyed more than 40% of Japan's urban centres, leaving three million people dead and almost nine million homeless.

Japan's answer to these recurring disasters was simple: nationalise risk in most aspects of life, with universal health insurance, great public education and the world's largest savings programme – the Japan Post Bank savings account. However holes in the safety net began to appear in 1989, when the asset-prices bubble burst; Japan's extremely high private savings led to overly confident institutions giving risky loans that eventually caused dozens of banks to default.

Three decades of recession and a number of financial crises led Japanese consumers to move away from bonds and pension funds, to cash, stocks and foreign exchange.

While Japan's safe streets mean carrying lots of cash holds little fear – many people withdraw large sums each week or month as a way of budgeting for that period – it is primarily mistrust and fear of corruption, linked to this history, that makes people cling to tangible money. The physicality of cash also makes for greater awareness of your finances; you can only spend what you physically have.

Spending in Japan is traditionally monitored using *kakeibo*, a household accounts book. A member of the household will manually record all incomings and outgoings, and allocate available cash to any financial commitments. The success of apps such as Zaim and Money Forward – digital *kakeibo* platforms with around 10m users in total – highlights the importance modern Japanese consumers place on tracking and controlling their cash.

Traditional practices and rituals surrounding cash are still prevalent today. These include obtaining clean, unused bills from the bank when gifting; wrapping cash in envelopes or pouches for special occasions such as weddings, new year and funerals; and using cash for large purchases to mark a life milestone – such as a first car, an engagement ring or a deposit on a house.

Such purchases, where using cash is by far the least convenient option, demonstrate how physical money is still seen as sacred.

Things are starting to change, however. In recent years, there have been some efforts to open the Japanese market to the cashless movement. Visa has pushed campaigns encouraging the uptake of non-cash payments, offering debit, pre-paid and credit services to ease consumers into going cashless.

When Apple Pay launched in Japan, it partnered with trusted service brands – such as Suica (a prepaid rail-travel card), credit card company JCB and e-commerce firm Rakuten – to demonstrate, through its advertising campaigns, a multitude of uses. Rakuten and chat app Line have also used their equity to launch e-payment offerings.

Meanwhile, e-money cards distributed by Japanese retailers – such as the Aeon Group's Waon, the aforementioned Suica card, and Nanaco, which can be used at Japanese 7-Eleven stores and Denny's restaurants – reflect the population's need for a sense of physicality when it comes to currency.

In some instances, retail cards alleviate people's fear of spending thoughtlessly through the use of sound and light. Lights indicate when cards should be touched on sensors, and many cards make noises – ranging from the sound of coins being jingled to a barking dog – when a payment is made.

These local players are helping to plant the seeds of cashless behaviour among consumers, by mirroring traditional Japanese rituals and respecting the importance that people attach to hard cash.

US

Disunited States

The fault line between liberals and conservatives in the US – and how people identify themselves – shapes everything from their attitude to advertising, to their propensity for technology. By **Katie McQuater**

The US presidential election of November 2016 was one of the biggest political events of the 21st century, sending shockwaves through the western world. Donald Trump's arrival in the White House has laid bare deep divisions in the United States of America, leading policy-makers and the media to question long-held assumptions and address the filter bubble of the coastal elites.

The clouds have parted to reveal clear boundaries between two groups in the country – and a new study has found that this split is not based on race, age, income or geography, but is socially attitudinal.

An online survey of 4,300 Americans, conducted by Foresight Factory, asked respondents – on a 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' scale – what they thought of the statement 'I have a liberal outlook on society'.

The data analysis focused on social liberals and conservatives, rather than Democrat and Republican voters, because having a conservative or liberal outlook is beyond party affiliation. For example, 37% of black Americans have a conservative outlook, according to the study, but only 8% voted for Trump.

The results found that conservatives are generally older, whiter, less educated and more rural, while liberals tend to be the opposite. Throughout, the study controlled for the generation and ethnicity gap, so the differences in response are purely socio-political.

A number of issues that divide conservatives and liberals were uncovered, highlighting potential implications for brands and government. It also underlines the need for greater understanding of how social attitudes can affect seemingly innocuous preferences in purchasing and behaviour.

Filter bubbles

Respondents on the left of the socio-political spectrum more closely align the news they read – and the politics they support – with their identity. Divisions appear between the two groups, with conservatives less likely to agree with the statement that the news they read is important to their identity (26%), while almost half of liberals (49%) agreed with the statement.

When it comes to personal identity and politics, liberals again feel that the two are strongly linked; 52% agreed that the politics they support is important to their identity, compared with only 32% of conservatives.

Social issues in advertising

In recent years, there has been an explosion in social-purpose advertising, but this trend provoked the single strongest difference in opinion between the left and the right. More than half (57%) of liberals say they like it when a brand addresses current social issues in its advertising, while only 30% of conservatives do.

The problem for marketers who take an issue-based approach is that they risk alienating the right if they do not segment their audience – because very few issues will appeal to all.

Nathan Stringer, chief account director for the US at Foresight Factory, says this finding leaves marketers with a stark choice when it comes to social issues: "Go hard left (as long as this is consistent with your brand values and your market), go for broadly positive and inclusive values (that is, centre-left) or ignore politics altogether and target people individually.

"This means getting inside their echo chambers, which are already curated based on political preferences and interests. It's a tricky space to navigate, and targeting should be nuanced accordingly."

Early-adopting liberals

Consumer purchasing behaviour is also distinct for liberals and conservatives, with liberals more receptive to new developments such as smart-home technologies. This is strengthened by the finding that 53% of liberals are willing to spend money to save time – a higher proportion than conservatives, at 36%.

When asked about the trend for paid subscriptions, by which consumers are sent a monthly selection of products of a similar type – for instance, coffee, food or beauty products – 49% of liberals said they were currently using, or would be interested in using, a service of this kind. Conservative interest was lower, at a third (35%).

This suggests that liberals are more open to having products curated for them, providing an element of on-demand availability and surprise. It also suggests a preference for convenience, and a willingness to outsource decision-making to algorithms and brands.

In addition, liberals tend to be more open to emerging technologies, with 59% saying they would be interested in a hypothetical service that used augmented reality to show how products could look in their home. This compares with 43% of conservatives. Despite the many divisions, however, there are some areas of consensus.

The survey found that the left and right find common ground in their attitudes to two distinct issues: the future jobs market and sustainability – specifically, the issue of food waste.

Anxiety over jobs seems to be an issue for both groups. They agree that those who are not skilled in technology will find it harder to get a job in the future (71% of respondents).

Additionally, Americans do not have much faith in the government to future-proof jobs and financial stability. Instead, people expect and trust the solution to lie with companies. The two groups found consensus in the belief that businesses have a responsibility to prioritise human jobs over automation – even if it results in higher prices.

Waste not

Sustainability is an important issue for the majority of Americans, regardless of social affiliation; the research found four in five agreed that people are too wasteful with food.

While there are some areas of common ground, divisions in American society run deep, and companies should consider segmenting their audiences to take social attitudes into account – or find the less obvious common ground between them.

Foresight Factory's Stringer says the research highlights the need for brands to divide along political lines in the US market. "This is a new way of distinguishing between consumer groups that goes beyond age, income or ethnicity," he says.

"That this has direct relevance to marketers is clear when you look at the statistics."

CAMBODIA

Research on attitudes towards the LGBT community in Cambodia is guiding strategies to shift attitudes and behaviour in a deeply conservative society. By **Dany Vinh** and **Layhour Sao**, Kantar TNS Cambodia

From opponents to allies

Cambodia is one of many Southeast Asian countries where sexual orientation and gender identity is still an issue. Being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) in Cambodia can be a depressing and frustrating experience because of persistent discrimination.

Kantar TNS Cambodia put together a report on people's opinions of – and attitudes and behaviour towards – the LGBT population, and found that almost half of respondents (49%) were opposed to that community. They asserted that homosexual people are acting against their nature, and behave against Cambodian culture and traditions.

Rainbow Community Kampuchea (RoCK) – the only LGBT, non-profit organisation in Cambodia – has used the research findings for its strategic planning and programme implementations, to help change perceptions of LGBT people. RoCK has two main

aims: to organise its members across Cambodia and empower the LGBT community to advocate for their rights, as well as support from local authorities and the public.

To help achieve these objectives, RoCK offers training to the straight community on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as LGBT human rights. It focuses on local authorities, with the aim of making the issues and people more visible and part of everyday life in Cambodia.

Post-workshop research among 149 participants found that, after training, all of them agreed same-sex love is a human right; 97% agreed there should be laws or policies supporting LGBT couples to recognise their relationship; and 97% believed people are LGBT through nature, not choice.

Based on qualitative research with workshop participants, the training was found to be powerful enough to change straight participants' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour – so they were more likely to treat everyone equally, regardless of sexual orientation or identity. They also spread the lessons they learned from the workshop to other people in their community.

However, a follow up study by Kantar in 2017 – with 1,683 straight people who had not participated in the RoCK workshop – indicates

that the environment for LGBT people in Cambodia has not improved, so further work is needed. Despite economic growth and more inclusive education, the problem cannot improve without intervention that affects the straight community.

The number of Cambodians who reject LGBT people remains at around half of the total population after two years, though the proportion of extreme opponents has decreased slightly, from 35% in 2015 to 31% in 2017.

Four in five straight people believe that being LGBT is a choice; in other words, it could be changed. Those who oppose such people, for example, would feel ashamed to have LGBT children, and seven out of 10 said they would pressurise their children to change their orientation.

The RoCK workshop to raise awareness of same-sex love and people's painful experiences – as well as LGBT rights and the Declaration of Family Relationship (a formal contract for LGBT couples, developed by the non-profit, a human rights lawyer and local authorities) – has proved to be a powerful way to shift opponents, even extreme ones, to accept and treat LGBT people in the same way as they do straight people. The workshop not only transforms opponents into allies, but also gives LGBT people the confidence to come out.

It is evident that discrimination will not improve without a programme of intervention, given that sexual orientation, identity and LGBT rights are relatively new – or still non-existent – topics in public discourse. Being at an infant stage can offer advantages, however, as it is easier to raise awareness among those who have no knowledge than to teach them to 'unlearn' in order to 'relearn'.

UK

The National Trust worked with research agency Walnut Unlimited and academics from the University of Surrey to identify what place means to people – specifically, what happens to the brain when people are in places that have a special meaning to them.

The functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) study measured how respondents' brains reacted to places of significance. Complemented by qualitative and quantitative research, it reinforced the strong emotional responses places can generate.

"This opens a window into the brain, allowing us to explore automatic emotional responses, scientifically demonstrating a tangible link between people and places that is often difficult to describe verbally," said Dr Andy Myers, director at Walnut Unlimited.

In the fMRI study, 20 people were shown three images, in no particular order:
- of places and objects meaningful to them (that they had supplied before the study)
- of everyday places and objects
- from the International Affective Picture System (IAPS) – a database of standardised positive and negative images for studying emotion, which have been quantified for their emotional content.

Researchers looked for areas of the brain that were more engaged when viewing places with emotional importance, identifying three response areas: the left amygdala; the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC); and the parahippocampal place area (PPA).

They found that meaningful places elicit a significantly higher response in the amygdala than common places, suggesting that simply seeing an image of a meaningful place is enough to trigger an automatic, unconscious, emotional response.

As well as showing increased emotional response to meaningful places, the study indicated that places have greater emotional meaning for people than objects; the brain's response to special places was much higher than the response elicited by objects such as a wedding ring or a photograph.

The researchers also carried out an online survey of 2,000 people to quantify the link between people and places, and did qualitative research with 11 members of the public. Their findings highlight that being in a place an

Wish you were here

A piece of research commissioned by the National Trust has reinforced the long-held view that special places can play an important role in people's emotional and physical wellbeing. By **Katie McQuater**

individual deems to be significant generates emotions such as joy, feeling calm and being energised.

The study also reinforced the belief that meaningful places can offer people space to contemplate, thereby aiding wellbeing. In a context of rising anxiety, stress and depression in the UK, the research showed the positive role places can play in helping people feel calm and think through problems.

The proportion of respondents who said their special place makes them feel calm was 64%, while more than half (53%) said it offers an escape from everyday life, and 43% said it helps them to re-evaluate their stresses and worries.

Places also play an important role in shaping identity and people's connections with others, the research suggests, with 86% of respondents agreeing with

the statement 'I feel like this place is part of me'. Almost all respondents wanted to preserve their meaningful place (92%) and a large majority (79%) talked of a strong desire to share their connection to the place with others. In addition, more than three-quarters (79%) reported experiencing an 'internal pull' that drives them to visit their meaningful place.

Nino Strachey, head of research and specialist advice at the National Trust, said finding the strong connection between people and places underpins the organisation's work.

"For many people, the strength of their connection to a place means they have a strong desire to protect it," she says. "This desire echoes the work that the National Trust does."

US

Working fast

The trend for quantifying the self is being taken one step further in California's Silicon Valley, where tech's disruptors are taking extreme steps to boost productivity and cognitive function.
Katie McQuater reports

Silicon Valley, the home of tech disruption and birthplace of Facebook, Uber and Airbnb, is full of people who want to optimise, adapt and reinvent processes and industries. Now, biohacking – the practice of manipulating your body's biology to aid performance – is gaining traction there. It seems unsurprising; if your life revolves around optimisation, it follows that this might also extend to the human body and brain.

Biohacking is taking two distinct forms in the Valley: extreme fasting, when a person refrains from eating for up to 60 hours; and the use of 'brain drugs' – or mind enhancers – to boost memory and cognitive performance. Both have proponents in search of a means to rewire their body's physiological and neurological systems to prime them for productivity.

Self-improvement isn't a new phenomenon. People have been fasting for years for weight loss, while drugs such as modafinil have been used by some to boost concentration. However, this trend towards fasting and taking cognitive drugs is focused on increasing productivity and concentration – a psychological desire for optimum performance. With several high-profile advocates openly discussing the benefits, the trend is showing no signs of slowing down.

Hayley Ard, head of consumer lifestyle at research and trends consultancy Stylus, says biohacking is seen as a "shortcut to enlightenment". "Silicon Valley has a high concentration of entrepreneurs who are looking to boost their focus and stimulate their minds," she says. "In this competitive market, where performance is everything, biohacking has broad appeal."

Fasting community WeFast has 1,200 online members and holds regular meetings in San Francisco to mark the end of fasting periods with a group meal. Meanwhile, entrepreneur

Dave Asprey has turned his faith in the cognitive-boosting effects of buttered coffee into a lifestyle brand, with Bulletproof coffee.

Loïc Le Meur, co-founder of LeWeb tech conference, decided to start fasting after reading about the health benefits. He says refraining from the consumption of food and alcohol is "intense", but that he feels "incredibly good" each time he does it. He adds: "It is also a great exercise of will that goes perfectly with my meditation practice."

He is comforted by thinking of the human species during prehistoric times, when fasting was a normal part of existence. He says: "People were hunting and could not find any food for days or weeks. They were fasting all the time. Then they would kill a big animal and eat it, then fast again. Our bodies have been used to fasting since the dawn of time. It seems natural to me. Eating a big meal three times a day, with snacks in between, doesn't."

Research on the benefits of fasting has, historically, focused on the effect on the body, but recent studies have suggested there could also be neurological benefits to not eating.

Neuroscientist Mark Mattson's experiments on mice, for example, found that intermittent fasting protected the animals from neurodegenerative diseases and extended their life spans by 30%. Fasting on alternate days, the researchers found, increased the production of proteins that protect brain cells, enhancing their ability to repair damaged DNA. Scientists at the Buck Institute, meanwhile, found that nutrient scarcity reduces synaptic activity, which could allow the brain to recharge itself.

However, these studies have been focused on animals, not humans – and although there is a lot of anecdotal evidence from proponents, nutritionist Jo Travers says scientific proof is lacking.

"Some people swear blind that it has given them super-human clarity in their thoughts, but real evidence is almost non-existent," she says. "If it turns out it really does increase their productivity, maybe it will make it into mainstream advice eventually. But there is a risk that it won't actually work, and these people may end up malnourished or tired. They may also end up in the opposite state – not concentrating because they are so hungry."

Travers adds that daily vitamin intake is important, and that supplements are not always absorbed by the body in the same way as food, so may not be an adequate replacement.

She is also sceptical about the efficacy of cognitive enhancers. "While there may be evidence that B vitamins help cell division – including brain cell division – there is little evidence that taking a supplement will improve cognitive abilities and productivity," she says.

Such products often contain caffeine, which has long been associated with improved concentration and memory. "But people have been doing that for centuries, so there's nothing new there," adds Travers. Ard, however, predicts that biohacking products will become as widespread as coffee, as people look to compete with automation in the future employment market. "I wouldn't be surprised to see nootropic [smart drug] blends on the menu at chains such as Pret a Manger in the near future."

She refers to American company Hvmn, formerly known as Nootrobox, where some employees take part in weekly 60-hour fasts and are fitted with glucose-monitoring implants to track blood-sugar level spikes. "Bio-sensors like this could have the power to monitor workers' wellbeing on an intimate level. Although these systems would require consent, they could become psychological game changers."

The trend of biohacking raises questions about the value individuals – and organisations – place on productivity.

Niketa Kumar is a San Francisco-based psychologist who specialises in working with under-represented populations, particularly in tech. She is concerned by the trend – particularly prevalent in Silicon Valley – of prizing that which can be quantified above all else.

"I worry that the immeasurable values of life – kindness, compassion, respect for one another, social and moral responsibility – are pushed to the wayside. Values are an important

part of private and public life. What suffers when we prioritise measurable output and a bottom line above all else? Most things that matter. Increased productivity, when at the expense of the other, immeasurable, qualities of life, will not make you feel good long term.

"If you value productivity because it allows you to provide for yourself and your loved ones, spend more time with the people you love, or do things that bring your life meaning, that is very different from valuing productivity for the sake of productivity. In the latter, you are saying: 'My value comes from how much I produce.' Then you're in a precarious situation because, someday, you may not be able to work – and then what?"

Making money go further

Social housing residents in the UK are budgeting carefully to navigate a difficult economic climate, the opposite of many preconceptions of low-income households. By **Katie McQuater**

The challenges faced by social housing tenants in the UK are multifaceted. Amid continued government cuts to welfare, households across the country have been affected by the cap to benefits introduced in November 2016, the 'bedroom tax' – a cut in housing benefit where a household is deemed to have a spare bedroom – and inconsistent employment terms, to name but a few issues.

Despite these financial pressures, research by Clarion Housing Group, the country's biggest provider of social housing, found that residents – while still very concerned about money – are managing their finances well. Fewer people said they run out of money before the end of the month, compared with the group's study the previous year.

Almost half (47%) of the 2,000 residents surveyed are worried about money, with no statistically significant differences between those who are working and those who are not. Respondents with children living at home are more likely to worry about their finances (55%) than those without (43%), while those with a long-standing health issue or disability are more likely to be concerned (52%) than those without (43%).

The proportion of residents who usually have money left over at the end of the month has decreased, from 27% in 2016 to 25% in 2017, while the number of people who only have enough left for the essentials has increased from 25% to 31%. Despite this, the number of people who tend to run out of money before the end of the week or month has declined, from 23% to 19%, and fewer residents are unable to afford some luxuries as well as essentials (18% in 2016; 15% in 2017). This suggests people are becoming adept at managing their money in often challenging circumstances.

Kathy Ellis, research and customer insight manager at Clarion Housing Group, says: "Given the lack of movement on employment rates among Clarion residents, and the increasingly constrained benefit landscape, this would suggest residents are budgeting carefully and are managing to do more with less."

There has been no increase in the number of residents turning to quick-cash loans or cash converters, remaining at 5% in 2016 and 2017.

While it is the case that households are getting by on less money, they are, however, especially vulnerable to any fluctuation in income or to unexpected events – a washing machine breaking down, for instance. Despite the 5% reduction in the number of people who said they have gone without food to save money, this situation still applies for 14% of residents.

Nonetheless, the research found that the majority of respondents feel in control of what happens in their lives (83%). This sense of control, particularly over finances, is shown by the finding that more than a third (38%) have switched energy provider, with 19% stating they have done so in the past year. This figure compares well with national, quarterly domestic energy switching statistics from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which show 16% of UK households switched electricity provider – and 15% switched gas supplier – in 2016. It highlights

that low-income households are taking action to manage their bills – despite preconceptions that social housing tenants, particularly those on benefits, are passive when it comes to financial awareness.

"In social housing, we've historically been quite paternalistic towards our residents," says Ellis, who explains that the focus has now shifted from doing lots to educate residents, towards helping them to increase their income.

"We need to get residents better-paid jobs and access to training, and make sure they are getting the benefits they are entitled to," she adds. "The findings from the research have shifted the focus of our community investment programme and the key messaging from our arrears team."

For example, the company's customer services team wanted to increase the number of residents paying their rent by direct debit (DD). The business case for DD payments made sense, and follow-up research explored the reasons why regular payers were not making the switch. It found that residents were budgeting on a daily basis, and preferred to pay their rent using small, frequent payments, rather than one large monthly one.

Ellis adds: "If people are not paying their rent, let's not assume it's because they just don't want to – let's assume that maybe they need support. It's [about] shifting the way the business approaches this customer group." ◾

The human perspective

Human skills are more, not less, important as technology advances but businesses need to face up to some difficult questions about how technology is used, argues envisioner **Dave Coplin**. By *Jane Simms*

D ave Coplin doesn't take himself too seriously. *A Star Trek* fan since the age of eight, he is, nearly 40 years later, "a proper grown-up nerd" complete with pony tail, beard and hipster spectacles. Until very recently, he also had an appropriately nerdy moniker – chief envisioning officer at Microsoft. "I always told my mum I'd be a CEO one day," he jokes.

But we should take him very seriously indeed. An evangelist for the world-changing potential of technology since his university days, and still "a naive optimist", he nevertheless has a number of concerns. One, we have become enslaved by technology rather than liberated by it. Two, we have abdicated too much responsibility to technology, expecting it to provide answers without us asking the right questions, and allowing many of our innate cognitive skills to atrophy in the process. Three, workplaces have not kept pace with technological advances, severely compromising our productivity. And four, attempts to blame technology for a range of societal ills, from bullying, to job losses, to potential Armageddon, threaten to forfeit the enormous prize that is on the table – including a cure for cancer and Alzheimer's.

Grateful to Microsoft for "letting me raise my freak flag high" for 12 years, he left in September and set up his own consultancy, The Envisioners, to help organisations – businesses, government and even families – to address these challenges. And time is of the essence.

"I think we are heading into two decades of massive disruption that will be driven by artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, on the scale of the Industrial Revolution, if not greater," predicts Coplin.

"In the Industrial Revolution we automated manual processes, but this time it will be cognitive processes, so middle-class knowledge workers will be most affected. We have to prepare the younger generations for that world, and equip older ones who are caught up in the change with the skills to continue to be successful."

Critically, we need to hone our human skills, which become ever more important as technology marches on, argues Coplin. "We need to blend the best of digital with the best of analogue, and use technology to extend our reach," he says. We need to use technology more intelligently, including wresting back control of technologies that, whether we realise it or not, control us.

Email is a classic example. A technology designed to help humans communicate is making us communicate in inhuman ways, points out Coplin. The rot set in with the arrival of email on Blackberrys in the late 1990s: "Workers became mentally absent from their homes and families." And, in the office, clearing the inbox has become a proxy for real work – no wonder we have problems with productivity, he says. Facebook and other social media have had a similar effect on the wider population. "One of the core human skills we need to develop is to understand, at any point in time, if the technology can help us or not, and if it can, great, fill your boots, and if it can't, turn it off," he says.

Our obsession with "filling in the nooks and crannies of dead time" with email or social media gives us no time for deep thought and reflection, he continues. We've also lost 'the skill' of being bored. "Boredom is the gateway to creativity and innovation. I experiment on my son. If we're going on a long car journey, I might stop him from getting his technology out. He'll whine for half an hour, and then he starts to sing, and tell jokes, and

> **❝ ... we need to understand if the technology can help us or not, and if it can, great, and if it can't, turn it off ❞**

we have these wonderful conversations."

Coplin also nails the lie of multi-tasking, which isn't a skill at all, he says. The cognitive shifts we must make as we switch between different tasks and devices take a toll on our time and our brains, making us less effective and productive than when we concentrate on just one thing. More broadly, our reliance on technology makes us lazy thinkers. Research shows, for example, that our dependence on GPS is reducing our innate spatial awareness.

He knows this through study, and he knows it through his own experience. "I had an epiphany a few years ago when I realised how damaging all this technology had been to my mental state. So, I do practise what I preach. I'm like a reformed smoker, which is horrible for everyone around me."

Coplin is an advocate of 'humans plus machines', but the question then becomes *how* we use them to extend our reach – where we draw the line between what we do and what they do. Einstein apparently never memorised his own phone number on the grounds that he could easily look it up. On that basis, with a world of data at our fingertips, why would we bother learning anything?

"The greatest mathematicians of our time will tell you that 80% of the maths kids get taught is irrelevant," says Coplin. "The only time my son is ever going to need to solve a quadratic equation is in the lesson on quadratic equations. Yes, he needs the basics, but what he really needs to know is how to manipulate technology to use those principles. We don't need our kids to become computer scientists, but whatever vocation they choose, their technological competence will fundamentally affect their life success. At the moment, computer science is confined to the lab, but it should be done across the curriculum."

Much of Coplin's thinking is encapsulated in two slim volumes – *Business Reimagined: Why work isn't working and what you can do about it* (2013) and *The Rise of the Humans: How to outsmart the digital deluge* (2014). The third will be on the broad theme of education and skills.

Part of the education task will be to counter the "relentless negativity" associated with technological advances. Technology is a scapegoat, says Coplin: "It's shit people who cause bullying, not social media. We have to look at all the good that technology has to offer, and then work backwards to work out what to fix to achieve it."

But he agrees that people do things online that they wouldn't in the real world – or, at least, not to the same extent. "I think there is a bit of etiquette we need to learn as a society about how to behave online and how to respond to these things," he says.

Would legislation help?

"That's really hard to answer. I think we need more debate between the government, technology companies and society about the kind of behaviour we find acceptable, and the answer isn't as clear cut as we'd like to think it is. In my search-engine days [at Bing] the government told us not to serve links to extremist videos. Fantastic, that makes sense. Draw a line for me and I can do that. But they wanted *us* to decide what was extreme. I thought, that's not going to work: I'm a white middle-class boy from the East Midlands and my definition of what's extreme is probably going to be different from someone else's."

Nowhere is the need for moral and ethical governance more important than in the field of AI and machine learning – concepts that appear to both fascinate and terrify people. Why, given our love affair with the technology we carry around in our pockets, are people so afraid?

> **We don't need our kids to become computer scientists, but whatever job they choose, their technological competence will affect their success**

It's the media and popular culture, says Coplin. "Whenever you get a piece on robots, I guarantee you there will be a picture of, or reference to, *The Terminator*. Likewise, with AI it will be *2001: A Space Odyssey*. It always comes down to this adversarial battle between humans and machines – we seem to like it that way. But there are two things that people need to understand about AI – it's neither artificial nor intelligent. It is just automation – the equivalent of me turning up at your weaving mill with a spinning jenny 250 years ago."

Now, he explains, AI is 'narrow' – that is, the algorithms can only replicate within a given pattern that we teach them – but in a few decades, we will have 'general' AI, where the algorithms will start to learn and connect and prove themselves, and this is where the fear – that the machines will turn against us – arises. And although it's a legitimate fear, "there are lots of very bright, important people working right now to try to prevent the Armageddon".

The thing with AI is that you don't programme an algorithm; you teach it like you do a child – "and if you teach it the wrong things, it learns the wrong things". Eliminating bias is a current challenge. "If you do a Google image search on 'footballer' you'll have to scroll a long way down to find a woman. Is that the image of society that we want?"

Big data is another area fraught with moral and ethical challenges. The bigger the data – the more powerful the algorithms – the bigger the problems we can solve. In a business context, big data will allow companies to offer unprecedented value to their customers, but at the risk of invading their privacy. "To date, outside the tech companies, there hasn't really been a debate about what companies should and shouldn't do, because they've never had to think about these things before," says Coplin.

And it's easy to unwittingly invade someone's privacy, he warns. Researchers realised a few years ago that if you take two data sets of sufficient size, on a similar topic, although they are both anonymous, you can start to identify individuals within them. The concept of 'differential privacy' emerged to counter this – the statistical science of trying to learn as much as possible about a group while learning as little as possible about any individual in it.

Given these risks, legislation such as next year's General Data Protection Regulaton (GDPR) is an understandable mitigation strategy. But it closes doors that should be opening wider, argues

> ❝ Why don't we turn it around and put the onus on the organisation to behave responsibly with our data? ❞

▸ Coplin. Increasingly, he points out, big data will be the biggest and most valuable source of information for organisations in all sectors, including health – but he argues that GDPR severely limits their ability to exploit that potential.

There is an alternative, he suggests. "In today's world, all the onus is on the consumer – you have to read the terms and conditions, you have to give permission for your data to be used, and so on. Why don't we turn it round and instead put the onus on the organisations to behave responsibly with our data? We can kill them if they get it wrong, but let's trust them to do innovative stuff with it, for our benefit. That's challenging, because it's not a risk-management perspective, and therefore represents a huge shift. But we have to move in that direction."

But before we can do that, organisations themselves have some work to climb out of 'creepy' territory – we distrust the companies serving ads to us that we know are based on our data. The way for brands and advertisers to rebuild trust, says Coplin, is to be open and transparent with consumers about the data they have or want, and explicit about the value they will

get in return. "Context will, increasingly, be king; as an advertiser I want to know who you are, where you are, what emotional state you're in, what you did when you were here last time, what you've just done and what you're going to do next. Armed with all that information, I could do some great stuff that would benefit everyone."

More generally, organisations need to switch from using technology to become more *efficient*, and instead use it to become more *effective*, claims Coplin. "Two hundred years of business history has taught us that good businesses focus on efficiency and processes, but you can be really efficient and deliver poor outcomes. What we need to focus on is *doing the right things*, and only then make sure that we're doing them the *right way.*"

He finds it astonishing that most of us still follow a work pattern that was established when people congregated in mills or factories. Not only does technology allow us to break free of this 'false schedule', but it also allows us to 'democratise' data, flatten hierarchies and involve employees in problem solving – with commensurate rises in engagement. He points out most people have better technology at home than they do at work – and believes the reason organisations aren't more innovative is because they are slaves to the notion of 'productivity' – "a cold economic equation of output per unit of input".

He calls for a new definition of productivity for our digital age, and believes that if we measured ourselves on a broader range of criteria than just 'paid work' we might find the UK's much lamented 'productivity gap' just disappears. But, here too, making the shift involves changing the culture towards one of empowerment and trust.

If organisations don't make this shift, the brave new world that artificial intelligence affords will be closed to them. It requires (real) intelligence, vision and bravery, and an understanding that rather than replacing humans, it frees them up to do more of what the technology can't do – that is, be thoughtful, creative and innovative, and use judgement and empathy.

One thing organisations need to think about, is how they will run themselves in a world where big data allows them to accurately predict what will happen, rather than what they think might happen. The technology already exists. A few years ago, Microsoft used predictive big data to forecast the winners of 15 out of 16 World Cup games, *X-Factor* and the Scottish referendum (to within 2% of the public vote), among others.

Is Coplin a betting man? "No," he laughs. "I should maybe start." ∎

Trust in us

Can relationships between businesses and individuals be improved by new technology? **Tim Phillips** explores how the balance of trust might be changing with digital innovation

"I am not 'part of the family', or whatever the marketing spin is," says a respondent. "Somehow these brands feel like they have a right to invade my life every day."

He isn't a disaffected millennial or a political campaigner. He doesn't have an agenda, and isn't about to give up on society, drop out or go dark. The conclusion from a recent research report from strategy consultancy Quadrangle is that he's past all that: he's what the report is calling a 'post-digital consumer', and the number of people like him is growing, rapidly.

While these consumers remain economically active, many don't have the admiration for brands and products that marketers desire. The expression 'customer delight' would, in most cases, seem ridiculous to them. They understand that this is

> " In the minds of their customers, many established brands are 'abstract, unreachable, and not well-liked' "

what brands do, but they know they are being manipulated. They might quite like to take back control.

In short: with a resigned shrug, they have learned not to trust. But is this an inevitable outcome of

marketing in a data-driven commercial environment, in which the battle for share of wallet demands that we must squeeze every drop of value out of data? Or can that same technology be used to create new categories of sustainable, long-term relationships, based on transparency and authenticity? And, even if those relationships are possible, are they commercially viable?

There's not much good news about trust. The Edelman Trust Barometer, which tracks consumer confidence in institutions, has found that 24% of the population trust the media, 2% less than trust the government. Business does better, but it is only trusted by 33% of the population. In 2013, those figures were at a recent high of 36%, 37% and 49% respectively – in itself, hardly a result that prompts high-fives.

As part of the institution with the lowest score (the media), Trinity Mirror Group – with the help of Ipsos Connect – did some research into this erosion of trust, using an online community, focus groups and a 1,000-respondent questionnaire. It found that 42% distrusted brands – a disquieting result given that inspiring trust is the prime directive of branding – and 69% distrusted advertising. Four out of 10 respondents associated brands with being 'pushy'.

Andrew Tenzer, head of group insight at Trinity Mirror, refers to the disconnect between what marketing believes customers think and how they are really perceived as "brand delusion". He explains that, in the minds of their customers, many established brands are "abstract, unreachable, and not well-liked", especially outside London.

Loss of faith

This emerging crisis of trust has at least two dimensions: there are global and local causes. The causes of the global problems are well-documented – at least they become well-documented after the fact. For example, we learned recently that taxi-app company Uber suffered a massive data breach in 2016. Hackers stole information about 57m users and drivers, and Uber – while telling none of the people affected at the time – paid $100,000 to the hackers to destroy the data. In the words of the *Financial Times*, this latest own goal was "spectacular for its lack of judgement, even by the ride-hailing company's standards".

We don't know whether Uber was ▸
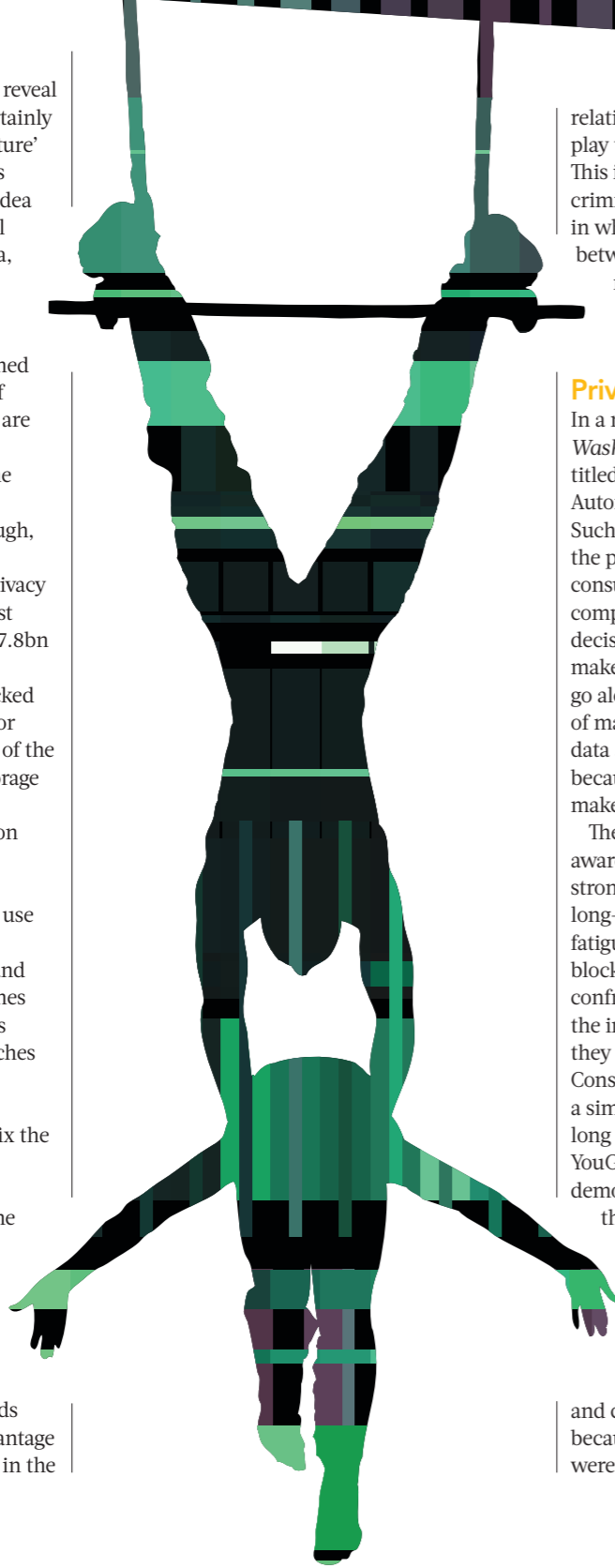
unlucky or incompetent to be hacked, but in choosing not to reveal the breach, the company is certainly guilty of undermining 'big picture' trust. Its secretiveness about its failings fits perfectly with the idea that a new generation of digital companies profit from our data, while not taking particularly good care of it.

In the past few years, organisations have been breached repeatedly with the simplest of tools, to the point where there are no longer any credible voices arguing against the terms of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – even though, according to a study by the International Association of Privacy Professionals and EY, it will cost members of the Fortune 500 $7.8bn to comply.

With the UK government locked into mirroring EU regulation for the foreseeable future because of the global nature of digital data storage and transfer, it will soon be implementing the Regulation on Privacy and Electronic Communications, which will provide new guidelines on the use of cookies, online behavioural advertising, direct marketing and the Internet of Things (IoT). Fines under this regulation will be as eye-watering as those for breaches of the GDPR.

But the billions invested in information security will not fix the other dimension of trust. The problems highlighted by Quadrangle's research – and the strong messages from Trinity Mirror's respondents – didn't originate in an information-security problem. Instead, it's a feeling that, day after day, the commercial behaviour of brands is a bit off; they are taking advantage of the information asymmetry in the

relationship with their customers to play them like pinball machines. This isn't a problem of regulation or criminal behaviour. These are cases in which the commercial contract between supplier and customer is made more profitable by breaking an implicit social contract of fairness.

Privacy fatigue

In a recent paper published in the *Washington & Lee Law Review*, titled 'Privacy in the Age of Autonomous Vehicles', Ivan Sucharski and Philip Fabinger name the phenomenon by which consumers are exhausted by complex and nuanced privacy decisions, so that they are unable to make an informed choice and just go along as 'privacy fatigue'. Instead of managing access to their personal data actively, they simply give up, because it has become too hard to make a conscious choice.

The public will eventually become aware of this, and may react strongly. An example of the long-term consequences of privacy fatigue is the jump in the use of ad blockers by people who are confronted, for the first time, with the information they were unaware they were giving away. The Consumers' Association (CA) issued a similar warning to companies as long ago as 2013, when a *Which?*/ YouGov survey of 5,257 UK adults demonstrated that few of us have the skills to make informed decisions with the information provided.

Professor Paddy Barwise, chairman of the CA at the time, said it was perfectly rational not to read the terms and conditions imposed by PayPal, because the CA had calculated they were longer than *Hamlet*.

CITIZENME: REBALANCING THE SCALES

CitizenMe is an app that is "trying to rebalance the value scales" by giving people control over how their personal data is used. Users pull their data onto the platform and can complete surveys, too. Brands then bid to use any of the data for research purposes, but users have complete control over what they choose to share – and are rewarded for it.

We asked Josh Hedley-Dent, a lead consultant at CitizenMe, to explain the model.

Q: What was the inspiration behind CitizenMe?
A: You've got huge organisations that can get value from our data, but we, as citizens, don't see much of that value in return. Our initial app launched three and a half years ago. It would scan your phone to see which apps you have, and help you manage the privacy permissions of those apps. We learned that the motivation for users was not about locking down their data –

they want to get value from it. We found through research that people are very reluctant to pull in health data, finance data and smart-meter data unless they get some kind of immediate return.

Q: What does the CitizenMe app do now?
A: It offers insight about yourself and the world around you. For example, if you answer a few questions, we can link to some open data about household energy bills, and tell you whether you're overspending on your energy. We're building up a number of different insights at the moment. We've got whole series based on how you are perceived online with your Facebook likes. We are trying to help people use their data in better ways to understand themselves.

Q: But users of the app can earn money as well?
A: We allow them to exchange those insights with researchers for

a cash reward. It's great that those insights are useful for you, but they are hugely useful for a lot of organisations as well. In traditional market research you might be lumped in with 2,000 other people taking the survey, for the chance to win £50 – but we pay people directly for sharing their data. There's no minimum fee that you need to build up before you can earn cash on the app; all of the money goes straight into user PayPal accounts. We allow people to donate their data to a charity as well.

Q: How successful has the model been?
A: We're just shy of 60,000 users now, and we're growing at about 4-5% a week.

As a two-sided business model, you need to be careful how you grow. If you've got hundreds of clients coming in, and only a few thousand citizens, that's a real imbalance.

Likewise, if you've got hundreds of thousands of citizens and only a few clients, your views aren't getting value from that.

So we have tried to throttle it a bit on the user side so far, but we can open up the exchange. We've done work with brands such as RBS, Barclays and JWP.

Q: What's next?
A: We have an endless backlog of stuff that we want to add! One is app-use data, actual time spent in the apps on the phone, and an accurate behavioural data view of that.

Open banking is coming in January 2018, so financial data will be opening up treasure troves of information, and we can help people manage their money better.

This year, there will be a community function on the app. The brands we work with have a real opportunity through market research to create some trusted relationships with individuals.

He diagnosed a 'kitchen sink' research process by which brands created these digital services: they would try everything and settle on the tactic that was most profitable in the short term – which might mean offering the service consumers understood the least. It's a strategy whereby service providers do things because they have calculated they can get away with it.

We can rethink what we mean when we apply the label 'trust' in this circumstance. Fixing it does not require a new law, or everyone to act together. Brands, however, will have to reassess the value of transparent relationships. They will need a better understanding of the long-term quality of those relationships and how their commercial value is undermined by short-termism. Finally, an innovative business model may be needed to put new ideas in place.

It also doesn't mean that big data is bad. On the contrary, there

is plenty of evidence that digital technologies, two-sided platforms and mobile devices can deliver a more sustainable contract, based on reliable, shared information. Some brands – and many researchers – are advocating or building these future-facing models of digital trust today.

> " The Consumers'
> Association calculated
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> longer than *Hamlet* "

Step by step

To create these sustainable relationships, Sucharski and Fabinger proposed a two-step process. The first step is to create better ways of giving informed consent. The second, they argue, would be "a radical rethinking of the privacy protection system by sharing

the vision of 'privacy as a service'". One way to find out what consumers prefer in terms of managing the relationship is to ask them. At least one supplier of services to the auto industry is taking note.

German company Here Technologies provides the location services embedded in four out of five cars sold today, and it agrees that the conventional approach to obtaining permissions is broken, and will not sustain long-term industry growth. So it is trying to create a better way.

"It is crucial to understand how we can increase control and transparency – increase empowerment and trust – so that people are ready to share their data and don't fear us," says Dora Heinkel, its head of market intelligence and trust.

"You can stick your head in a bucket, but you cannot rely on people who gave their consent being willing to do so in the future, without any restriction. This is not something that you can base your

AVIVA: NO QUESTIONS ASKED

Orlando Machado, chief data scientist at Aviva, has an ambitious way to create mutual trust in his business: "Can we offer people insurance without asking them anything?" he says.

For a business model that has been moving toward increasingly long, detailed forms – and ever-growing lists of terms, conditions and exceptions – that's a long journey, but one that Aviva's research suggests would have a huge customer benefit. "If you're buying home insurance, you have to answer a hellish set of questions around whether your locks comply to various British standards, the proportion of your roof that's flat, and all sorts of things. It adds stress and anxiety to customers, it makes it much more difficult for them to buy products, and there can be a real social detriment here, in that

customers aren't buying the insurance they need," Machado says. "That's the part of business that we're trying to overturn."

The nit-picking strategy undermines the trust relationship between an insurer and its customers. "The industry has ended up in this overcomplicated place, one step at a time," Machado adds. "I don't think there are people in our business who really love asking customers these questions – that's the way we've ended up doing it."

Aviva's research also shows that people who buy insurance products are often not confident they'll be covered if something bad happens, believing the insurer will use a loophole to wriggle out of paying. Insurance, designed to give peace of mind, is – in many cases – creating a climate of suspicion.

So Aviva's strategy is to find as much information as it takes to make a reasonable commercial decision from other sources – such as satellite imagery, flood-risk data, and crime figures – without continually asking customers for personal data.

The Aviva Drive app is one manifestation of this. Pricing car insurance is a problem because drivers do not reveal what economists call their 'type'. Imagine two drivers of the same age, living in the same area, with the same car. One is a good driver and one bad. It's in the interests of the bad driver not to declare this – he might not even know it – so the insurer has to offer both the same price. The bad driver gets a good deal on insurance, while the good driver overpays, unless the insurer can get better information.

One way to do this would be continuous surveillance, but the Drive app uses voluntary measurement. The smartphone's sensors gauge how good the driver is at acceleration, cornering and braking, and Aviva gives a 20% discount to drivers who score 7.1 and above out of 10.

"Although the Drive app is personal information, it's part of a much broader strategy that we have to collect data, which helps us understand risk without asking the customer directly," Machado says. "When we're talking about using data to earn trust, it's much more fundamental than 'You give us some data on your driving and we'll give you a discount'. We want to be saying, 'We will use all the information we have to take away the anxiety you have about the challenges that you are insuring yourself against'."

▸ whole business model on, because it's not future-proof."

Here Technologies has already commissioned BuzzBack to survey 8,000 consumers – in countries including the UK, Brazil and Japan – about how they would like to control the data that comes from passive sources, such as location or the IoT. It's a hard topic with which to engage customers, Heinkel admits – "who likes to read terms and conditions?" – but the results are being used to guide Here's product development, and will be shared publicly at the beginning of 2018, in an attempt to build consensus in the industry.

"This is impacting on our corporate strategy in general, and our data strategy specifically," adds Heinkel, who believes that – in creating new strategy – researchers must be advocates of sustainable

▸ trust with their clients. "Market researchers are all dealing with personal data and with sensitive information, both from the client side and from the participant's side. So market research, as an industry, can definitely take the lead on these discussions and contribute significantly."

A simple first step might be to test new ways to present complex legal information – just as research has been used, for decades, to perform A/B tests to simplify the buying process. RBS, for example, surveyed its small business customers and found that only 1% read their terms and conditions for a loan. In response, Andy Ellis, head of a small digital innovation unit called Strategy & Innovation, created a project that experiments with simpler small print to encourage borrowers to read it carefully. So far, the proportion of customers that now read the terms and conditions of a loan has risen to 30%.

Inevitably, the way in which data is collected will also change. Radical models such as CitizenMe (see panel, page 29) aim to give people total control over their data, which they can then choose to sell to researchers. But flipping the industry on its head won't happen overnight. There's another way in which technology can undermine or enhance trust, and that's the way in which ad hoc surveys are created and used.

You don't have to be an insight professional to have noticed the increase in customer satisfaction surveys. But Fiona Blades, founder of Mesh Experience, argues that this is one more aspect of a customer relationship that, for marketers, seems positive, but – for respondents – the process of answering questions can be a disappointingly one-sided relationship. There's more in it for the brand than for them.

"Our company was born out of the fact that we wanted to understand things through the customer's eyes," Blades says. "Sometimes when you just ask a survey question, particularly when they're not worded well, the customer is forced into answering something that he or she doesn't quite believe... whereas, if you ask people to tell you their experiences, they'll do as good a job as they can."

Mesh created mobile-phone surveys in the days before the smartphone – but, even with severe

> **For respondents, customer surveys can be disappointingly one-sided, with more in it for the brand than them**

technical constraints, it made the decision to impose minimal structure, as a way to prioritise authenticity in communication. "Respondents put things forward in such a way that, when we have asked them later, they felt good about what they said. They say, 'yes, that was me; those were my experiences... I wasn't kind of shoeboxed into answering something that didn't quite feel like me'."

Permission granted

Establishing sustainable, authentic processes for granting permissions and listening to customers is, arguably, the entry level of a trusting ▸

GREAT EXPECTATIONS: HOW TECHNOLOGY IS DRIVING TRUST

The next report from the MRS Delphi Group will be on trust, and will be launched at a special presentation and panel session on the first day of the Impact Annual Conference 2018 on 13 March. It will include original research, which asks consumers about their trust experiences and ranks what they truly think is important. Their expectations include transparency, ethics, data security, permissions and flexibility.

The aim of the report is to create insight for decision-makers who want to understand what those customer expectations are and score their organisations' performance against them. It will also offer guidance on how – and why – to apply technology to enhancing trust relationships with customers, and to diagnose any hidden trust issues in their organisation.

▸ relationship – the first stage of Sucharski and Fabinger's solution. But many services can go far beyond that, and use what we call 'trust' in a commercial sense – not as a way to win business, but as the foundation of the business itself.

It's ironic that Uber, so often the villain of digital capitalism, is one of the pioneers of using data in this way. When Transport for London (TfL) refused to renew Uber's operating licence, one of its prominent defenders in the press was Sarah Green, co-director of the End Violence Against Women

> ❝ We no longer need to rely on the emotional concept of trust, based on prior experience and word of mouth ❞

coalition, who pointed out that Uber was considered a safe transport option by many women. She said it was "absolutely real" that women would be concerned about the potential disappearance of Uber. "It makes sense that something as easy to use – and offering a door-to-door service – will give a lot of women a feeling that it improves their ability to get about."

Uber's app is valued by many vulnerable passengers because it can show the location of your car, who your driver is and that driver's rating, plus it allows others to see where you are. Uber, though, has shown

the limits of this approach if management commitment to transparency fails when it is most important, by not reporting promptly to police multiple allegations of sexual assault against its drivers. "Uber is allowing situations to develop that clearly affect the safety and security of the public," wrote Metropolitan Police Inspector Neil Billany in a letter to TfL in August 2017.

However, Colin Strong, global head of behavioural science at Ipsos, believes that business models that expose information transparently – built into services by default – are becoming a more rigorous foundation of what we loosely call 'trust' in business relationships. In many cases, he argues, they will replace the emotional side of trust, and may even improve it when commercial relationships are brief or infrequent, or when

preferences change more frequently. The sharing economy is leading the way in this, Strong argues, but it will be applied to other business models.

"There's some confusion about the distinction between trust and transparency," he says. "Digitisation means we have more access to information about others than we've ever had. So we can jump into other people's cars, let them into our houses or lend them our lawnmowers – not because we trust them more, but because we know more about them."

Using this approach, we no longer need to rely exclusively on the emotional concept of trust in an institution, a brand or a business relationship, based on prior experience and word of mouth. We don't have to be part of a global village. Instead, we can live in a global city, using data to improve our choices (see box p35, SkinNinja) In this world, it is the function of digital platforms to match service providers – taxi drivers, people renting their spare room, restaurants – to consumers who want to make an informed choice. They do that by providing the rules to help reveal useful information to parties on either side of the transaction, whether that is a rating, a price, a location or a recommendation. Those that do it best will build the

most sustainable service, whether the platform is helping consumers make informed choices about their financial futures (see box p29, CitizenMe) or beauty products.

"This is an inevitable consequence of where we are now," says Strong. "In a sense, that is what platform businesses do; they help you to make decisions more efficiently and effectively. An Airbnb, an eBay – or whatever it is – they use that information to help you in your decision-making process."

There is also tentative evidence that this may be a one-way street. Itamar Simonson is chair of marketing at the Stanford School of Business and author of *Absolute Value: What Really Influences Customers in the Age of (Nearly) Perfect Information*. He has completed experiments that show consumers use the availability of information from people unconnected to brands – such as Yelp, TripAdvisor and so on – to make more accurate assessments of quality in the products they choose.

Whereas, once, marketers could influence buying decisions using proxies for quality, Simonson argues many consumers have been "trained out" of this behaviour in the past 10-15 years. This even applies to our own previous experience, which he finds has less influence on our ▸

▶ future choices than before. So trust is rooted, for complex products, in the reported experience of others. Forrester Research finds that shoppers trust user ratings and reviews three times more than traditional marketing. Intuitively, this makes sense. Once you have used TripAdvisor, it's hard to trust a travel brochure without it. It's no surprise, therefore, that some brands have responded to the challenge by poisoning the well.

There are two responses to the need for good reviews: earn better reviews or try to game the review process – and there's plenty of evidence that some brands can't help but do the latter. Digital transparency is powerful, but far from perfect. Also, it's not clear that the trusted reviews always measure the things that matter most to us, or are free from perverse incentives, even without active attempts to game the system.

If we have been trained out of a state of emotional trust, however, Strong's tentative conclusion is that smart brands might be re-evaluating their reliance on the emotional "brand promise" in favour of a more rational brand transparency. There's already evidence that post-digital consumers instinctively discount the traditional proxies for trust and quality, such as the celebrity endorsement. As one of the respondents in Quadrangle's research says: "Bradley Walsh, if you shop in Farmfoods I'll stick my arse out in Burton's window."

In terms of brand transparency, technology may have a somewhat different role to play. Technology can help create trust thanks to open

> ❝ It's not clear that trusted reviews measure things that matter most to us, or are free from perverse incentives ❞

banking and Blockchain. Open banking uses application programming interfaces (APIs) to share customer information securely – so that advisers, for example, can see transaction information without the owners of that information having to hand it over. This means they can give advice – or, just as likely, use artificial intelligence to create intelligent advice – on how a customer can manage their finances.

After years in which banks have lamented their failure to create a single customer view (one respondent to Quadrangle's research said banks "must know more than the way they behave"), open banking offers this possibility.

HSBC, for example, started a test of open banking with 10,000 UK customers in October 2017. In the trial, customers have been able to add, to a single screen, accounts from 21 different banks, including Santander, Lloyds and Barclays. In this way, they can see a 'safe balance' based on all their money, or analyse their spending by category. Open banking offers the possibility to level the financial services playing field; innovators and start-ups will also be able to offer specialist services based on that data.

At Trinity McQueen, director Simon Shaw and his team are working on an open banking project for a client in financial services, trying to analyse how likely customers are to use it to solve their real-world trust problems. "Open banking is a flowerbed at the moment, which is having seeds dropped on it. It has huge promise, and a platform that gives small players a level playing field is hugely ▶

SKINNINJA: HERE COMES THE SCIENCE BIT

"A lot of brands make a lot of claims: it's a wonder drug; a superfood; the new this and the new that," says Charlotte Morris, co-founder of SkinNinja. "Well, what does the science say? Who wouldn't want to know what's going onto their skin?"

SkinNinja's consumer app was the brainchild of Morris's partner, Jo Osborne, an Australian former triathlete and survivor of skin cancer, who is allergic to sunscreen. She resented that every time she bought a beauty product, the list of ingredients obscured, rather than illuminated, the important information that she wanted to know. Did it work? Was it safe for her skin? SkinNinja's app uses science to decode the ingredients of beauty products and give straight answers.

Currently in beta, but freely available, the app is used to scan the product barcode and get an instant report of what's inside – divided into 'good', 'suspicious' and 'nasty' – with an explanation of each. "The average woman puts on 16 products per day," Morris says. "There's 30 ingredients in each of those products. I'm a fairly ethical, conscious consumer, but – using our data – I discovered, for example, that my favourite face wash had parabens [a preservative] in it."

SkinNinja does not commission its own research, choosing instead to make existing peer-reviewed data possible for non-scientists to understand.

"Every piece of data within the app is publicly available," Morris says. "It's just that it's currently all over the place, tucked away in research reports."

The app isn't campaigning for a particular cause; neither is it in favour of, or against, any brand. It doesn't tell users not to buy a product. Its focus is solely on transparency, Morris says, to even up the information asymmetry between brands and the people who buy their products. So the public can make informed product choices, better decisions, and trust the products they buy.

To help this process, the app has a 'Ninja Switch' function that shows a similar product with fewer nasties, and has sections for user reviews.

Morris accepts that transparency will not be an important part of the buying process for some consumers, but argues that too many brands in the category are comfortable with the commercial incentive to be non-transparent.

She says that some of the brand promises of the beauty industry are dubious. "As a marketer, it's been interesting to get a better insight into this".

exciting," says Shaw. "It changes the way customers will consent to doing things such as regular payments. This really puts customers in the driving seat."

As with the problems of privacy fatigue, however, what customers complain about – and what actions they are willing to take in relation to a tech-based solution they don't yet understand – are two different insights. This is another reason why industry support for open banking has been lukewarm.

Trinity McQueen's researchers are watching how customers manage the trust relationship in the real world.

"There is bound to be some scepticism initially," says Shaw. "What we do is spend some extended time with people, to find out how they live their lives, observing their real problems and frustrations."

Blockchain, though an entirely separate technology, also has the possibility to create a trust economy built on shared information – as long as customers are willing to take advantage of it.
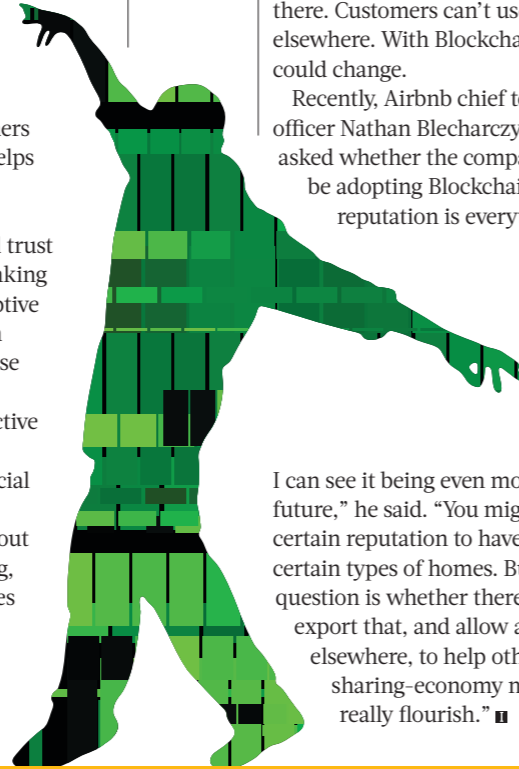
Using the software platform, parties to a contract can store data securely in a shared ledger – that we might consider as 'reputation' – and choose to expose it to others selectively. Clearly, this helps all platform businesses, especially in the sharing economy, to create digital trust relationships. If open banking potentially favours disruptive new entrants, Blockchain could be a general-purpose technology that makes a trust economy more effective for everyone.

While traditional financial services companies are overwhelmingly wary about investing in open banking, digital platform businesses are already working out how to encourage their users to help Blockchain become a kind of digital currency. At the moment, information about a company's – or a customer's – trustworthiness or reliability on one platform stays there. Customers can't use it elsewhere. With Blockchain, this could change.

Recently, Airbnb chief technology officer Nathan Blecharczyk was asked whether the company would be adopting Blockchain. "Your reputation is everything, and I can see it being even more so in the future," he said. "You might need a certain reputation to have access to certain types of homes. But then the question is whether there's a way to export that, and allow access elsewhere, to help other sharing-economy models really flourish." ∎

TRINITY McQUEEN: VALUES OF THE FUTURE

Predicting the future is a fool's errand: more fail than succeed. The trap we fall into is extrapolating present trends so that we are blindsided by the revolutionary. As Mark Earls said at a conference this year: "There is a natural human tendency to 'impose linearity' when thinking about cause and effect – A leads to B." Reality is more complex.

Think about it. The app industry is less than 10 years old. In 2017, it is worth $77bn, services a market of 2.3bn smartphone users, and employs more than 12m people.

No-one would have been able to predict this in 2007 – and for good reason.

The metaphors and analogies at our disposal at the time were blunt tools, unable to carve out a vision of this future. Or, to put it another way, you can't paint the future with the colours of the past. So – if you are asked in 2017 to make predictions for 2027 – you would be wise to explore a range of imagined futures.

■ As an industry, the landmarks by which we get our bearings are changing. Artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and big data will push us professionally. But the brain is the best algorithm – and it will be for years to come.

■ The great Bitcoin experiment may fail, but that's beside the point. The proof of concept for Blockchain technologies is a pull-and-push on the status quo. Its emergence could involve many unintended consequences. As Adam Greenfield points out in his book *Radical Technologies*, such technologies of distributed consensus may eliminate the need for an intermediary in transactions of value; smart contracts may eliminate the need for authorities to enforce agreements; and the reduced cost of enacting binding agreements means they can be deployed in new contexts. We may soon be living in a world where your car key stops working if don't keep up your repayments.

■ We forget the human in this equation – with our limitations, fickleness and fallibility – at our peril. Look backwards again. In 2007, Bebo was the teenager's social network of choice; in 2017, the teens I researched only talked about Instagram. Facebook occupied the middle years. You'd be brave to bet against them, but our platform monopolists may ebb as well as flow. Envisage a world where Facebook's growth ambitions are limited not by a data breach or scandal, but by the fact teens see it as something 'for old people – like mum or dad'.

New technologies will challenge our ethical boundaries. Whether we're clients, agencies or consultants our perspective needs to be clear.

Ultimately, this is not about individual technologies, platforms or daily commentary of whom and what. This is about our values.

What do our organisations stand for? What principles do we abide by? How do we want to be treated as individuals? How does that carry over to our participants, customers and partners?

The only prediction I make is that our integrity will be challenged regularly on the road to 2027. To stand a chance of making the right decisions every time, our people need to know what our values are – and what they are empowered to do.

By **Simon Shaw**, director at Trinity McQueen

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Commercial break

ITV director of audiences **Neil Mortensen** has a broad and varied research role, as he looks at everything from programme content to the UK's changing media landscape. By *Jane Bainbridge*

There is no shortage of headlines, reports, analysis, general musings and downright lies on the state of TV viewing in the UK. Whether it's the death of scheduled TV, advertising engagement, second screening or box-set bingeing – to name but a few – TV viewing is a hot topic and changing media habits are ripe for research and analysis.

As a commercial terrestrial TV broadcaster, pretty much every media consumption trend affects ITV – which is one of the reasons Neil Mortensen, its director of audiences, is so busy.

The multitude of projects his team is involved in cover everything from leisure-time trend analysis to individual programme research.

"Here, you're working with incredibly complex problems – and millions of them," says Mortensen." It's a big portfolio. It is a cliché to say my job is different every day, but it really is."

In terms of overall direction, he adds, it's simple: "We follow our company strategy, which has been set in place by Adam Crozier."

However, Crozier stepped down as CEO last year, and easyJet's Carolyn McCall takes over this month. How the change in leadership will affect ITV's business strategy remains to be seen, but – in the meantime – Mortensen will continue to ensure the research sits with the channel's renewed focus on programme development.

"We have invigorated how we get the audience into idea and programme development at an early stage. That really worked well this past year. I think we've more than trebled the number of labels [studios, internal and external] that we work with," says Mortensen. "It's been one of my objectives for the team to work with as many as possible.

Another has involved bringing all the audience functions back together, which Mortensen says helps connect the work and avoid duplication.

"We used to have disparate teams and, at its worst, you could have competing sets of information going around the building. You would also have bits of work that would only be used once," he says.

"The way I have been able to connect things ▶

It's hard to believe now, but ITV2's *Love Island* was once an abandoned series that had been off air for 10 years. In 2015, the audiences team started a project to include research with the commissioning and creative process, through all stages of the relaunched programme.

It started with some consumer insight qual – first, into what makes a brilliant reality show and, then, into awareness and attitudes to the old version of *Love Island* (it was originally a celebrity-led, mass-market format on ITV's main channel).

When the new-format series one was on air, the team did continual feedback and development throughout the run. From qual after the opening episode, insight was fed to the on-set team, and the findings were implemented in later programmes.

At the end of series one, it undertook a full quant review – with analysis across all platforms and screens – as well as more qual.

The verdict was "dial up and market the gameplay and challenge; dial up authenticity and realism; be spontaneous; cast in the same vein; keep the sex and naughtiness; include an extra episode on Fridays; and rethink the live show".

The research-tweaked series two started in 2016 and audiences grew again; all episodes got more than one million viewers and averaged 26% share for 16 to 24-year-olds – up 343% year on year. The success continued during the summer, the final episode of series three giving ITV2 its biggest ever Monday night audience, with an average of 2.43m viewers watching live.

The research also helped international sales grow and contributed to a 30% year-on-year increase in sponsorship revenue between the first and second series.

now, you get more value out of a project. ITV is a lean and efficient machine, and my job is to make the research work like that too. It should try to point to as many parts of the company as it can, without losing the original focus of the research."

A matter of fact

A major piece of work Mortensen has done in the past year is on the factual landscape. "[It's a] big piece of research that involves groups, lots of depth, lots of filming and some quant around it. We ended up coming up with 12 factual sub-genres, driven by the audience. I suppose, in the old days, we might have presented it and that would be it."

Instead, they held a day's workshop with the commissioning team to take them through all the ideas and then ran them with six of its studio development teams. "The commissioning editors gave each of the studio teams a couple of the genres to work on and let them choose a wild card."

This allowed the development teams in ITV's studio labels to be immersed in the audience insights and then work on specific genres of programme. Last summer, it culminated in the teams going into the 'dragons' den', each spending half a day with some of the audience that had taken part in the original research. "They pitched the ideas and then we worked with the audience to make the ideas better," says Mortensen.

There has yet to be a finished programme from the process, but Mortensen says his fingers are crossed and he hopes it becomes an established part of how the company works with research.

Six Up

Another project has been going since Mortensen joined four years ago. Six Up – a reference to the 1960s *Seven Up* documentary that followed a group of British children, from all walks of life, every seven years from the age of seven – involves ITV, working with The Sound agency, and visiting 20 homes across the country every six months. The project fuses ethnographic depth with the longitudinal insight of a tracking survey, and gives a picture of viewing behaviours through a family and cultural context.

With this research, ITV can look at issues such as the impact of demographics, technology adoption and life-stage change on people's TV consumption and tackle the 'nature versus nurture' debate – whether young people grow out of behaviours or if parents become more akin to their children.

Each wave of the research has led with a theme, including: the future of channel brands; the complexity of choice; branded content and the role of advertising in television today.

Six Up has had to deal with some challenges beyond just picking the right households, such as maintaining participants' long-term interest and balancing closeness and impartiality.

"Often, the other syndicated and public data we get doesn't look at people enough," says Mortensen. "It doesn't answer the specific business issues that we have. When we visit these families – which are chosen for their different life stages and technological prowess – we are looking for signals that are going to take behaviours mainstream.

"We are unashamedly big in our ambitions: we want to recognise the future of television."

Mortensen says one of the things learned from this project is not to generalise or make assumptions – for instance, young people do watch live TV and older people do watch Netflix. "This has been one of the best insight generators we have had for the business," he says. "Each time we go in to see the families, we investigate a different subject.

"We did a brilliant one at the start of this year; we went back into our UK homes, but then also visited homes in Madrid, Stockholm and New York. We wanted to identify the things that were just human and were happening anywhere."

To avoid confirmation bias, Mortensen believes research needs to burst the bubble and ensure those working in the business look beyond their own behaviour. "Our job is to be the voice of the audience for ITV," he says.

Those who work in advertising and media invariably live near London, commute on a train, work long hours, go out in the evening and may only watch one hour of TV; but in the UK as a whole, lots of people are home by 6pm and can easily watch three and a half hours of TV.

A significant difference between commercial and programme research is that, in commercial, you're trying to prove that something works and why, which is often not what's behind programme research.

"With programme understanding, you're just trying to get to the truth about how people feel. We get a bit transfixed with the new and shiny. Often I say to my guys: 'You know what, the best way we solve this problem is just by asking people whether they like it or not.' Sometimes it's as simple as that," explains Mortensen.

Compelling proposition

For drama, it is mostly in the hands of the commissioners, but what Mortensen and his team can do is give the commissioners a sense of what is happening in the UK, and insight into other territories – which dramas are working and why.

With offices around the world, there is also international work. For example, they are currently researching *Love Island* in Germany, where it was sold to RTL2.

"We will do work around their show and how it went. Then we will meld it with the work that we have done here. It becomes a more compelling proposition that it has worked in more markets than just the crazy UK."

Beyond ITV, Mortensen is actively involved in the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board (Barb), where he sits on its board. Barb is currently full steam ahead for the launch, in March, of Dovetail – its project to deliver comprehensive programme and commercial content-viewing measurement across all platforms. "We know the figures already – it's just a matter of getting them all in one place in a consistent, TV-like measurement," says Mortensen. "We would like to know the total programme performance of every show that we put out. I think the Dovetail contract is going to really allow us to do that."

A major challenge for Mortensen is ensuring that ITV gets sufficient cut-through at a time when so much attention is on streaming video on demand (SVOD) players – and how to research that is no small ask.

"It's such a competitive marketplace now," he says. "Netflix and Amazon get a huge share of emotion – a huge share of voice – above their share of actual audience. We are battling through a lot of that noise." ▮

▸ Compared with many businesses of ITV's size, Mortensen's team is relatively lean. It can vary in size depending on the project, but is usually around 30 people – and they work across entertainment, commercial, international, studios, online brands and strategy performance. Of course, he uses outside resources for his 'audience tool kit', including YouGov for its panel.

"We work with [YouGov] in numerous ways across the year – a bit of quant and online qual, lots of different things, including our brand and promo tracking," explains Mortensen.

In addition, he has a new community, ITV Village, to call upon. "It's like a little social network for TV and ITV viewers. We do the usual thing and buy sample, like everyone else, and we are expanding the panel from our current registered users.

"It's interesting, because it doesn't always have to be nationally representative. If we've got *Love Island* running, for example, we might just want to speak to 50 or 100, real, massively passionate fans (see box, *Love Island*).

"We can talk to people as things are going out on air. You can use those communities in all sorts of different ways."

As ITV is a commercial broadcaster, a fair degree of the research is within the commercial arena. "It's about innovation. Quite often, you are doing stuff that is based around small parts of communication: does this work? Does product placement work? Product placement is not obvious, so you can't ask people about it – you have to use more implicit testing."

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Insight into charity campaigning

Oxfam has led the way in raising money for, and awareness of, humanitarian problems for more than 70 years, but as competition for the charity pound increases, so too does the need for insight and evidence, as its head of insight, **Tina Trythall** tells *Rob Gray*

£65M
The value of Oxfam Unwrapped virtual gifts sold since launch in 2004. Buying a goat to help a family in poverty earn a better living is one of the bestsellers.

On 5 October 1942, as World War II raged, the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief was formed in an effort to alleviate the suffering of civilians caught up in the conflict. The group's first campaign was to call for the relaxation of a naval blockade, so food could reach starving people in Greece, and to raise money for those in need.

Fast forward 75 years, and Oxfam is still helping people who have been hit by disaster, while striving to make poverty a thing of the past. More than 22m people worldwide benefited from its assistance in 2016 – from the provision of emergency aid in humanitarian crises to long-term development projects to improve lives in poorer communities. Oxfam also campaigns for action to tackle the root causes of poverty, such as climate change, inequality and discrimination against women.

Today, the charity is a global confederation, working in more than 90 countries. However, its British offices are still in Oxford – in an airy, modern building on a business park close to the Mini car plant in Cowley. It's here that Oxfam GB head of insight Tina Trythall is based.

31,000
Number of volunteers in the UK who work in Oxfam shops, campaign at festivals, run marathons and organise Oxjam gigs to raise money.

450,000
Number of people in the UK who donated regularly to Oxfam in 2015/16.

Trythall came to Oxfam at the start of 2015, after two and half years in a prominent communications evaluation role at the Cabinet Office. Earlier in her career, she worked at the Central Office of Information (COI) and still has a connection to the corridors of Westminster and Whitehall, as a member of the Government Evaluation Council. This was set up in 2013 to get to grips with evaluation best practice across all government communications activity. Trythall has brought the evaluation model she played a part in embedding across government with her into the third sector.

"The insight function at Oxfam is about putting the audience and market understanding at the heart of public support, staff engagement communications and marketing strategies," she says. "We are ensuring our supporter- and public-engagement strategies are based on this audience understanding. It is about identifying who to target, who the audience is, to achieve our objectives. What do they know, think and feel about Oxfam?"

'Know, Think, Feel, Do' are the four watchwords at the heart of the insight strategy. This can be seen in action in Oxfam's work on refugees – an undoubted humanitarian crisis, but also an issue that divides opinion, even among the charity's staunch supporters. In the minds of many people, the plight of the displaced relates to the thorny subject of immigration. After conducting qualitative research to understand people's feelings, Oxfam worked with insight and strategy consultancy BritainThinks to frame messages that contained human, emotional stories. "It's about making

CV

TINA TRYTHALL

2015 – present
Head of insight, Oxfam

2012 – 2014
Senior communications evaluation manager, Cabinet Office

2008 – 2012
Insight and research consultant, Central Office of Information

2006 – 2008
Research & planning director, Butcher & Gunderson

1999 – 2006
Senior research manager, Central Office of Information

STAND AS ONE

Oxfam wanted to influence the UK government ahead of the September 2016 UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants. It wanted to apply pressure in: agreement on resettlement of refugees in the UK; offering a visa scheme; and better assistance for family reunification.

The campaign was promoted to potential new Oxfam supporters – for example, those attending festivals and via digital marketing – and to existing ones, via emails and in shops. Previous research had revealed high concern for the refugee crisis, but public opinion was split, with negative and positive attitudes towards helping refugees. It had to be honest and transparent, while managing the risk of alienating supporters opposed to refugees settling in the UK.

Key insights were:
- Focusing on families brought the plight of refugees closer to the audience
- Language should create a personal connection
- Outlining progress/impact would boost engagement.

Disappointingly, the UN summit generated few firm commitments. However, Oxfam overachieved on petition sign-ups: 80,000 versus a 50,000 target. "By reframing the campaign around families, and engaging people with a more personal sentiment, we included young people at festivals and acquired older members of the public, who were also in favour of helping refugees," says Trythall. "This meant we could go back to them with a financial ask, generating an extra £7,000 in revenue for the refugee crisis. The majority of these supporters were new to Oxfam."

Ongoing evaluation allowed Oxfam to manage the effectiveness of its work.".

Continuous development of creative resulted in increased sales of campaign wristbands in shops where new posters were shown. This evaluation was well-received and is now the blueprint for future campaign evaluations.

development; brand tracking; comms and marketing campaign effectiveness; audience segmentation; understanding the motivations of Oxfam supporters; and the organisation's staff survey.

Where research is outsourced, it tends to be for techniques in which the team lacks sufficient skills or when it needs additional resource. One example is work with an agency to better understand Oxfam's music festival programme. "We are looking at how our cause fits with the festival environment and how people respond to that," says Trythall. "An external agency has helped us in terms of citizen journalists. We recruited some festival-goers, who did a citizen's journalist piece over the days of the festival, to get a sense of what was making them tick at that moment in time. Then we did follow-up Skype interviews."

A lid on costs

The insight team is "strongly accountable" for the money it spends. To keep costs in check, for example, the in-house team often designs its own questions for the flexible section of the monthly brand and comms tracker it uses. "We just buy fieldwork and do the complete analysis, and that really keeps a lid on costs."

Oxfam has a network of 650 shops around the country, which – as well as playing a vital role in fundraising – is the 'face' of the organisation to a large extent. Campaigns are promoted in-store, but the retail setting also offers fertile ground for research. Studies among shoppers played an important role in developing Oxfam's newspaper, which was launched recently and is distributed through the shops. After the pilot issue appeared, Oxfam again canvassed the views of shop visitors about the content.

the message relevant to people," says Trythall. "These are families forced to flee. People can identify with families: with mothers and fathers, children and grandparents. In terms of framing our communications, we had to tell human, personal stories. We are talking about people, not a label of refugees."

A key aspect of the refugees campaign (see panel, 'Stand as one') was ongoing evaluation. Regular reporting into the team meant the campaign could be tweaked as it progressed; digital channels – and even some press activity – were optimised.

Trythall heads a five-strong insight team, which has primary and secondary research as its main remit. Insight doesn't sit in isolation – there is much interaction with other stakeholders within the charity. One of Trythall's key aims is to develop a more integrated and unified understanding of Oxfam's audience and market.

"We work with other data collectors/providers within the organisation to formulate insight on a big set of data," she explains. "We are bringing hard data alongside the soft data from research, and getting the insights from a holistic understanding, rather than just the research or

behavioural data that comes from analytics. Our work with a lot of internal stakeholders to deliver the end insight product is a big role in the team, and something that has been driven quite recently."

It's important to clarify that Trythall and her team work for Oxfam GB – one of 19 Oxfam affiliates around the globe. It is unique in being the only insight team across the confederation. Although British audiences are the primary concern, the team occasionally gives advice to other affiliates and takes a lead on strategy development research for the global secretariat, Oxfam International.

The insight team conducts primary and secondary research, delivered through a combination of working with external agencies and undertaking its own small-scale projects. Accountability on spend is tight, Trythall points out, but she has a good mix of ex-agency and client-side experience on the team. This offers the flexibility to look at each project requirement and come up with the most cost-effective mix – be that an in-house solution or turning to an agency. Research undertaken includes: strategy development for campaigns; brand mapping; creative

15 LITRES

The estimated amount of water per day that someone needs in an emergency for drinking, cooking and washing. Oxfam's engineers drill wells, truck in water, and distribute specially designed buckets, with a lid and tap, so people can collect and store clean water.

From time to time, the insight team interviews shop managers and staff to identify issues on the ground. "They know their customer base and their community best – but you can't always rely on shop managers because, obviously, they come with a biased view." In addition, there has been some accompanied shopping research, walking customers through stores and then conducting group discussions afterwards, to gain insight into the retail experience and how it might be developed.

Clearly, members of the public have differing motivations for visiting a charity shop. For some, it is primarily about supporting the cause and ethical shopping; for others, securing bargains is what matters most; while for others still, it is serendipity – who knows what treasures await discovery on the shelves!

The insight team also played a role in the early-stage development of a new MyOxfam app, which allows people to control "how they want to support" Oxfam. Digital accessibility and supporter choice are big issues for the sector. Lifeboats charity RNLI announced that, from 2017, it would only contact people who had chosen to opt in. Trythall says Oxfam is "looking to move to opt in for all new supporters", and is revising its approach to consent, in line with the forthcoming regulatory changes bound up in the General Data Protection Regulation.

Despite near-universal recognition of its admirable track record over three quarters of a century, Oxfam has arguably never faced greater challenges in terms of fundraising and galvanising supporters. Competition for donations is intense; there are more than 165,000 registered charities in the UK.

It is also a matter of some concern that, while fundraising by charities in fields such as cancer has held up well, there has been a "fall-off in engagement" in recent years when it comes to international development. This is not a problem exclusive to Oxfam, which has been collaborating with other charities in the sector – including sharing some insight – to find ways of reversing the trend.

"Everyone is finding it challenging," says Trythall. "Some of that comes down to austerity. But international development is probably feeling it hardest because, not only is giving being restricted by financial considerations, but there is an attitudinal decline as well.

"The tracking we have done at a sector level shows a challenging falling-off in engagement. We have to look at how we reshape our message to engage people." ▮
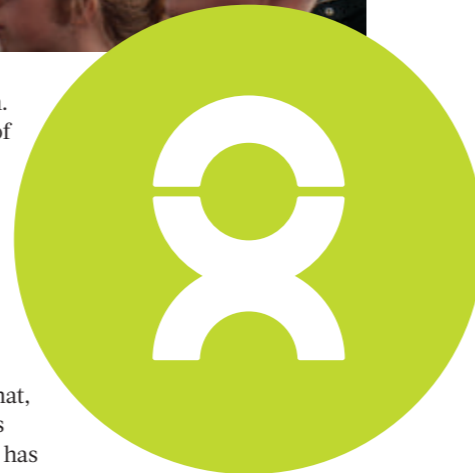
8M

Estimated number of people in the UK who backed the 2005 campaign Make Poverty History. Oxfam played a key role in this coalition campaign, which helped persuade world leaders at the G8 to increase aid and cancel the debt of the poorest countries.

NEW
TRANS◄►ACTION

The physical and digital have had to merge for Clydesdale and Yorkshire bank owner CYBG to stay relevant in an experience era. As group innovations and marketing director **Helen Page** explains, the customer has been put at the centre of the process

Like any other bank post-2008, Clydesdale Yorkshire Banking Group (CYBG) is no stranger to a challenge. Formed of two constituent brands, Clydesdale and Yorkshire, CYBG became independent from the National Australia Bank after its initial public offering (IPO) in February 2016, and swiftly turned its attention to digital. The company had a problem, however: its two legacy brands were bleeding customers. A loyal base of older customers was dwindling, and it wasn't attracting new ones.

"Our customer base was ageing and declining. We had to do quite a bit of work thinking about how to use younger audiences, who are somewhat picky about what banks they select," says Helen Page, group innovations and marketing director at CYBG.

Not only did CYBG need to learn more about its current customers, but – against a backdrop of radically changing behaviour around finance – it also wanted to tap into a younger customer base and attract millennials. The group would need to appeal to a new and increasingly discerning set of consumers, with different priorities and attitudes from those of the past.

Customer insight has been central to this transformation. The company built its stand-alone digital banking brand, B, as part of its response to the insights gathered from extensive research with 10,000 customers. This study was supported by Leeds-based RDSi and helped CYBG build what it views as a new approach to banking.

Instead of the traditional method of creating a new proposition with trials and focus groups, explains Page, CYBG started from scratch, and asked customers to share their frustrations and concerns around banking.

"What we didn't do was build something and then test it. We started from a blank piece of paper and asked people 'what do you want a bank to do for you?' Problems, concerns, fears with money – and we built B from that."

The research – comprising qualitative, quantitative, conjoint and testing with the group's existing user base – unearthed one key insight: banks hold a lot of data on people that could be, but isn't, used to help them manage and control their money better. In addition, the experience consumers have with lifestyle platforms and services – and that they now

BELOW CYBG's Studio B in Kensington High Street uses facial recognition to read customers' expressions

expect from their interactions with brands – was not being replicated in banking. So CYBG set about investing in, and building, a digital proposition to service this customer need.

The resulting app-based banking service, B, uses artificial intelligence to analyse and predict spending patterns, allowing users to exert more control over their finances. Such control is particularly pertinent to younger consumers. Despite media representation of millennials as
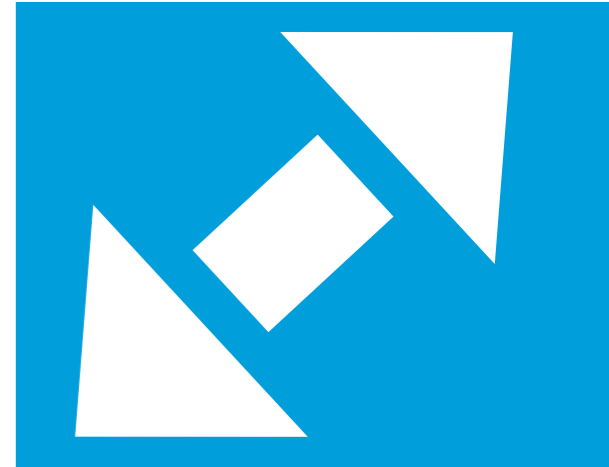
feckless spendthrifts, on the whole they are discerning, risk-averse people, who prefer to map out their lives with the help of technology.

A recent study by Foresight Factory, for example, found that more than half (58%) of millennials were interested in services that help them calculate their future financial situation.

It was important for CYBG to test the app with customers on a regular basis throughout the iteration process, rather than just at the initial phase, says Page. "We brought customers in on a regular basis to user test with us, asking them what features they liked. We iterated over a period of months to get to the final offering."

While CYBG implements all the research one would expect for a company of its size – a net promoter score (NPS) survey, plus qualitative and quantitative work – its focus now is on "big insights", adds Page.

As a result, it started to look at transactional data in a different way – from a behavioural perspective – to develop a solution to help customers understand their spending better.

The app is able to tell people whether they will be 'in the red' in two weeks' time, or have enough money left to spend, based on their transactional history with the bank – including

when their salary is paid and what bills they have on a regular basis.

"Based on the frequency and patterns of your spend, we can tell you whether you should slow down or whether you're going to be OK," says Page. "We'll alert you before you go overdrawn. It's about having that constant interaction – that constant support in your pocket, if you like."

This sounds useful in theory, but isn't it a bit overbearing for a bank to be telling its customers to stop spending?

Page stresses that users are in control of how much interaction – such as alerts – they want to have, and what information they receive. "We're not on your back, but a customer pain point was, 'you have all this data about me and you're not using it to help me reach financial control'.

"It has to be their choice. Some customers love looking at their data and some never want to see a bank statement again. They can't decipher them – that's why the app is set up in a very particular way. Previously, you would have seen a long list of transactions on a statement that wouldn't have told you very much." For example, by looking at transactional data it identifies total cash withdrawals, repeated purchases and predictions of overspending.

CYBG isn't the first to build an app that helps users control and track their spending. The personal finance industry is undergoing major disruption, particularly from new players such as mobile banking start-up Monzo. However, the B app differs because it offers an integrated solution, says Page, as opposed to a stand-alone money tracker. "You've got lots of digital players coming onto the scene, but this is a fully integrated bank and savings account."

B users can also manage their accounts by visiting any Clydesdale or Yorkshire branch,

BELOW Studio B, on Kensington High Street resembles a high-spec, well-designed retail store rather than a bank

while existing bank customers – who also have a B account – can use the app to manage all of their accounts.

Physical meets digital

While the group has focused much of its attention on digital, its history as a legacy brand is rooted in physical branches, with Yorkshire and Clydesdale banks a stalwart of town centres across Scotland and the north of England.

Although like almost every other high street bank brand, it has reduced its branches, insight from the bank's customer research indicated that people want a continued bricks-and-mortar presence, in addition to online services.

"Customers still want a high street presence," says Page. "They don't need it in the way they used to, but they still want it – so we've got the beauty of having both. When you want to see us
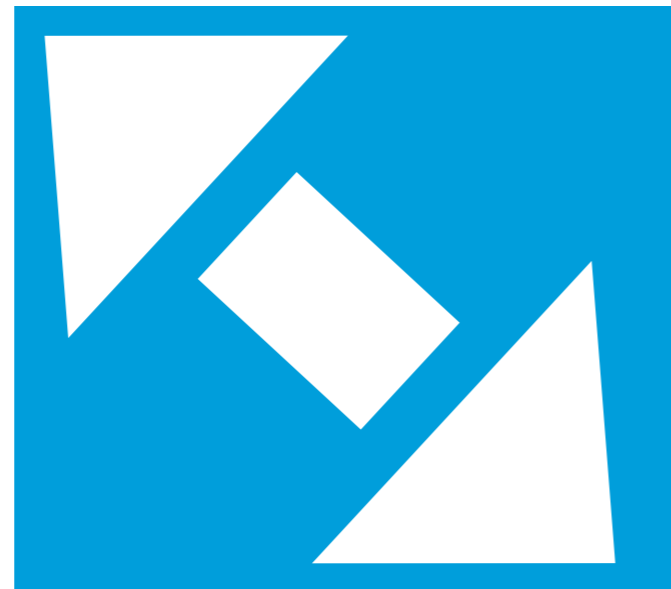
face to face, you can.

"We can be on your high street, in your communities and support your local businesses in a very different way from a new digital player who doesn't have a physical presence."

It was perhaps this insight that helped to inform CYBG's decision to take the B brand one step further, by going back to its roots – the high street – albeit in a different guise.

The company opened its Studio B branch on Kensington High Street earlier this year. Described as a 'customer lab', it more closely resembles a high-spec, well-designed retail store than a typical bank. As well as offering

the usual banking services, the space allows CYBG to interact with customers to "design the next generation of banking", says Page. Facial-recognition technology is used to read people's expressions in-store, while their bank balances can be checked using Amazon Alexa voice commands.

In this way, CYBG is extending beyond its customer base and interacting with people in ways that traditional market research methods might not allow. There's a willingness among younger consumers to share and openly discuss their financial issues – perhaps more readily than previous generations of customers have been – to inform and design a service that fits their needs better. Page describes the process as "co-creation".

Since the initial launch in London, the Studio B concept has been rolled out to Birmingham, where a new store opened in September 2017. In addition, Clydesdale Bank's flagship store in Edinburgh has been used to trial new technologies; it has worked with Mastercard to test robot capability in-store.

Page believes it's "not about data", but rather about the insights that should be informed by talking to customers, testing campaigns and propositions. "We want to work with customers in a very different way," she says. "I'm very keen for it not to feel like a traditional bank. It's about building things that customers said they needed, as opposed to the other way around."

It's not just customers that CYBG is looking to ▶

ABOVE Clydesdale Bank's flagship Edinburgh store has been working with Mastercard to test robot capability in-store

LEARNING FROM FEEDBACK

Having previously worked at RBS and NatWest, Helen Page believes CYBG – being smaller – can be more agile in the way it approaches innovation and development, and she likes the freedom to move quickly. "In a big corporate environment, it's a lot harder to do."

The group's size has also allowed her to bring in customers for feedback that will inform decision-making, and to amplify the role of research internally. Last year, Page launched a customer-voice forum that involves senior colleagues meeting customers once a month, to discuss their experience with the banks. Senior stakeholders also visit customer service call centres around the UK on a regular basis, to listen in on calls.

"Sometimes it can be really enjoyable and, other times, it can be uncomfortable, hearing that we've given someone a bad experience," says Page. "My challenge to the rest of the bank was: 'If we're really serious about this, we have to do it and not just pay lip service to it'."

Until recently, Page ran the complaints function, responding to customer complaints directly. Chief executive David Duffy also reads every customer complaint that comes into the organisation.

CYBG has invested heavily in its customer and market insights over the past year, building the team so it can manage more in-house, in addition to working with external agencies on national surveys and large quantitative data. The company uses Bright and Experian on NPS.

Weekly updates on customer insights are shared within the business, and employees can access a hub to pull out specific insights relevant to them. A monthly internal publication, *What did we learn?*, also gives key market insights – outlining findings around NPS, Studio B work, and any ad hoc research the team has done around customer insights.

Bright ideas to make you smile

for insights in its approach to innovation. Historically, banks have been insular and resistant to collaboration, but Page acknowledges CYBG is under threat from several players. As a result, it constantly looks outside of the business and the industry to unearth findings that could help develop future digital propositions.

For instance, the company recently looked to a Spotify study that suggested people's music tastes are very defined by the age of 33. CYBG started thinking about how people's choices about banking – around mortgages or saving, for example – might be predetermined by a specific age or life stage.

"It's about applying some of the stuff we learn from other sectors to how we communicate with customers – and engage and build propositions for them. It has been fascinating to learn from other industries about how they use insights in a very different way," says Page.

The group is also working with Amazon and its Alexa voice recognition, specifically how the technology can be used to simplify payments.

Future focus

Millennial customers may want the convenience, simplicity and modernity of a digital experience, but Page says they still turn towards traditional banks when it comes to life's bigger moments such as taking out a mortgage.

So CYBG has launched a 'B@Home' app that helps users plan and budget for their first home. The aim is simplicity. "[We want to make it] easier, quicker, more like something

you do in your everyday life, rather than it being drudgery to buy a house or remortgage," she says.

Page is pragmatic about the role good customer experience – across channels – must play if the bank is to stay relevant in the experience economy we now live in. "People buy things in such a different way now. We're more choosy, we're less loyal, we're prepared to pay more for something if we get a better experience," she says.

"In the past, it was all about the cheapest – it's now more about the customer experience. If I want to have a better experience with a brand, I'm prepared to pay for it.

"People talk about not wanting to pay a monthly fee for banking, but then they pay an extortionate amount for Amazon Prime, or to have something delivered the same day in a way that, years ago, you wouldn't have considered. It all comes back to the experience." ∎

Interview by **Bronwen Morgan**, written by **Katie McQuater**

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FIVE VITAL SIGNS THAT PREDICT BRAND POTENTIAL

KANTAR MILLWARD BROWN'S BRANDZ RESEARCH HAS IDENTIFIED KEY ATTRIBUTES THAT THE 'HEALTHIEST' BRANDS ALL HAVE, AS **JANE BLOOMFIELD** EXPLAINS

Uncertainty after the UK's vote to leave the EU has triggered changes in consumers' priorities and purchase behaviours. It has never been more important for brands to understand how they are perceived in the market, and what this means for their future health. By measuring how they perform against five 'vital signs' of health, brands can get a strong indication of their growth potential.

BrandZ research has measured the world's leading brands on consumer perceptions of key brand attributes since 2006. Those that have grown their value the most during that time exhibit strength in five areas. They live by a **powerful purpose** that serves to improve consumers' lives in some way, and use it to guide their **innovation**. They make their innovations clear and meaningful to consumers through **creative and memorable communications**, and bring everything to life with a **great brand experience**. Over time, consumers develop **love** for the brand.

Brands that score highly with consumers on all five of the above vital signs have the best chance of driving purchase, commanding a price premium, and expanding successfully into new categories and geographies. This is why the 'healthiest' brands in the BrandZ Global Top 100 have vastly outperformed their rivals, increasing their brand value 232% since 2006, while the less 'healthy' brands have grown 15%.

One of the healthiest is Amazon, which has grown its brand value by an astounding 2,228% since 2006, having evolved from an online bookseller into a platform that is integrated into every part of our daily lives. It has a compelling purpose: to be 'the Earth's most customer-centric company'. Put simply, it wants to make people's lives easier. It delivers this promise through innovations such as Amazon Prime, Alexa and the 'Go' shopping concept, plus an exceptional brand experience that continues to appeal to consumers.

Adidas, another all-round high performer, has increased its brand value 259% since 2006. It has sharpened its purpose – to inspire and enable people to harness the power of sport – by focusing on speed, key consumer targets and an open-source attitude to collaboration. The brand innovates constantly, capitalising on the evolution of fitness and health into more of a lifestyle movement, and forming unique collaborations that blend technology, fashion and luxury. Perceptions of innovation are driven through a forward-looking approach to digital communications, alongside physical experiences, such as its London fitness studio.

THE RISING STARS

BrandZ research has highlighted a number of younger brands, with robust vital signs, that have the potential to become forces to be reckoned with in the next few years.

Netflix is one that scores highly in all five areas. A new entry into the Global Top 100 after growing its value 30% in a single year, the streaming platform has redefined how consumers access film and other entertainment – helping to accelerate a whole new way of watching content and changing completely the traditional 'appointment to view' landscape. It is an innovator, producing high-quality original content such as *House of Cards* and *Narcos*, and has improved the customer experience by launching offline viewing to make it accessible to subscribers everywhere.

Best known for inventing the bagless vacuum cleaner, Dyson may not yet be in the Global Top 100, but it's an all-rounder that scores particularly highly on purpose and innovation. Positioning itself as a design and engineering pioneer unfettered by category boundaries, it also manufactures fans, heaters, lighting, hand dryers, hairdryers and tools – and, from 2020, intends to produce electric cars. Dyson's advertising features striking demonstrations of the effectiveness of its products, and its brand experience is excellent; customers are guaranteed access to expert advice and hassle-free help in the event of a problem.

A SHOT IN THE ARM

Brands that measure their performance against each of the five vital signs can improve their overall form and, as a result, their future financial health, by focusing investment on any areas in which they're lacking.

This is of particular importance for the UK's leading brands. Overall, they lag their global peers when it comes to healthy vital signs; only 22% of the BrandZ UK Top 50 are classed as healthy, compared with 50% of the 2017 Global Top 50. Over a decade, the value of the UK Top 10 has grown less than a third as fast as the Global Top 10 (67% v 249%). They're seen as less innovative than they were in 2006, and are less loved.

As the foundation of a healthy brand, a clear, compelling and differentiated purpose should be the highest priority. It acts like an anchor for everything the brand says and does, and must be recognisable, coherent and consistently expressed in every innovation, advertising campaign and interaction within the brand experience.

While a purpose does not need to be 'worthy' – based on societal issues or changing the world – it must clearly and genuinely articulate how consumers sit at the heart of the brand.

For example, Tesco's long-standing mantra 'Every little helps' refers to value for money, as well as its work promoting good causes. Its current 'Little helps to healthier living' campaign directly supports this purpose, and brings it to life through Tesco's advertising, in-store experience and community projects. The retailer has recently refocused on the customer, launching innovations including a one-hour delivery service and ditching the 'price war' in favour of improving its brand experience. This strategy is paying off: Tesco scores very highly on purpose, communications, experience and love, and is currently the UK's seventh most valuable brand, at $8.9bn (£6.7bn).

Sustaining healthy vital signs in an increasingly tough and competitive environment will be an ongoing battle. How consumers define and perceive a purpose that reflects their values, for example – or an innovation that meets their needs – will continue to evolve.

Brands will need to use human and data insights to track shifting trends, attitudes and habits, and meaningfully communicate their benefit to consumers if they are to stay relevant. ∎

Jane Bloomfield is head of UK marketing, Kantar Millward Brown

There are a few things that all businesses need to know to operate successfully, regardless of their market. Understanding customers and what they are willing to pay for a product or service is crucial, while the need for good knowledge of wider market trends, competitors and the economic climate can't be overstated.

Yet for SMEs, market research is often considered too expensive or difficult to do – despite it playing an even more critical, often immediate, role in such businesses. Research helps companies to identify gaps in processes, correct pricing strategies, remove assumptions and, in some cases, change their business model.

SMEs, generally defined as businesses with fewer than 250 employees, are the backbone of the UK's economy, contributing £202bn last year. This figure is expected to rise to £241bn by 2025, according to research from Hampshire Trust Bank and the Centre for Economics and Business Research. But, in an uncertain economic climate after the UK's vote to leave the European Union, companies need to be more clever than ever about how and where they invest.

Common hurdles for SMEs include not having the budget or time to invest in research; this is particularly true for those firms at the micro end of the scale. In recent years, technology has alleviated some of the pressure on small businesses and start-ups, helping them to get the measure of their customer base, or easily assess the impact of a campaign. Websites such as SurveyGizmo offer a cost-effective means of conducting research and carrying out sense checks, while tools such as What Users Do allow companies to test and learn simply and cheaply.

Phil Morrison, managing director at Whycatcher, says the arrival of market research software has helped SMEs to unlock "deeper insights" – which, previously, may have needed outside

RESEARCH ON A SMALL SCALE

OFTEN CONSIDERED TOO EXPENSIVE, TOO UNWIELDY OR ONLY THE PRESERVE OF BIG BUSINESS, MARKET RESEARCH IS ALSO CRITICAL FOR MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMEs). BY **KATIE McQUATER**

expertise – without breaking the bank. But research also requires a shift in mindset, and businesses must be prepared to take on any negative feedback they encounter. Culturally, moving from assumptions and gut feeling isn't always easy.

"SMEs often get their insights from gut feel or conversations with customers," says Alex Johnston, director at Jigsaw Research. "It takes a shift in thinking to trust a survey, but many SMEs who do research for the first time report that the project busts their own pre-conceived ideas wide open."

Morrison adds: "Businesses can't be sure what value they'll get from market research until they've done it. As a result, they often rely heavily on assumptions – or internal data that is readily available – but miss out on the full picture because there are limits to what that data can tell them."

Research might yield easily actionable insights requiring simple tweaks to processes, propositions or messaging. At other times, it uncovers the need for a bigger rethink. "The findings may speak to the core of your business, making it necessary to review your pricing, products and processes to gain or maintain a competitive advantage," says Morrison. "But there can be big rewards – or savings – as a result."

LISTENING TO THE MAJORITY, NOT JUST THE MINORITY

Edinburgh-based photo website Blipfoto changed its business model because of insights derived from research. The site had a loyal following, but ran into financial trouble – and the team wanted to understand how its members could help make it sustainable. Blipfoto worked with independent research consultant Ruth Stevenson to find out which new membership model it could use to be financially viable without driving away existing members.

Blipfoto founder and director, Ian Stevenson, said the company didn't simply want to be swayed by a "vocal and influential minority. We had a lot of very vocal members in the community, some of them saying, 'we can't offer a free membership tier – the cost of supporting it will kill the company', and others saying, 'we must offer free memberships, it has always been part of the ethos of the site'. We had no way of knowing how this vocal and influential minority reflected the views of the majority."

A survey presented five theoretical types of membership, and attracted 1,300 responses. While a minority only wanted free membership, more than half felt there should be a paid option as well. The realisation that the company's income could be equally as high with, or without, a free membership option was key to the board's decision to offer a free tier. "It allowed us to follow our inclusive values with confidence, and avoid the controversy that withdrawing a free membership option would, undoubtedly, have caused," explains Stevenson.

The company has since run a second consultation exercise to assess member satisfaction across areas such as content moderation and site rules, helping it to adjust where there is consensus among members.

INSIGHTS BAKED IN

BKD, a company that makes baking kits for children, is in a period of rapid expansion. With recent investment from Peter Jones on *Dragons' Den*, and its products now

available at John Lewis, the company has had to scale up quickly to stay on top of demand for its products.

Amid this expansion, it undertook a piece of research with Jigsaw, to gauge customer reaction to its products and test whether its pricing was a barrier to purchase. Price point was a concern for BKD, as the products launched with premium retailers, such as Harrods, before being made available nationwide at John Lewis. The company was worried customers may view the products as too expensive, says founder Adelle Smith. "We found that customers wanted the quality, but not the matching price tag – so this is something we had to look at closely."

BKD reviewed its pricing structure, which also meant working on its wholesale prices and rolling these out to current stockists.

Another key insight from the research was that many customers were buying the products for use at home, not as gifts, as BKD had assumed. Customers wanted the products to be cheaper so they could use them on a more regular basis – as a result, the company has developed a new range to pitch to supermarkets.

ACTIONS, NOT WORDS

Of course, all the effort that goes into research is wasted if the insights uncovered are not actioned. This is where issues can arise for SMEs in particular, as a barrier to conducting research in the first place is that they don't necessarily know how to interpret the findings.

Morrison advises that key representatives of the business are involved throughout, to input to the process and build a coordinated plan of action afterwards.

BKD's Smith adds: "We think it's really important to stay connected to our customers and make sure we're providing the products and services that they really want. It's easy to make presumptions about what people want and, unfortunately, we are not always right about these things." ∎

IN THE CONSTANT QUEST TO IDENTIFY WHAT MAKES PEOPLE CARE ABOUT BRANDS, CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AGENCY PSONA HAS DETERMINED SIX MOTIVATIONS THAT MAKE BRANDS MATTER. BY **JANE BAINBRIDGE**

For all the energy and investment that companies put into marketing and researching their products and services, it can be hard to acknowledge that, in most cases, people just don't care about the brands.

So when customer engagement agency Psona commissioned the Foresight Factory, the aim of the research was to cut to the heart and find out what matters most to consumers about brands.

The project involved online surveys with 2,000 consumers segmented into five age groups – from Generation Z to the 'silent' generation (75+) – and looking at 10 sectors.

"We believe most brands don't matter to people and it's actually really hard to create communications that truly have an impact. But we also had a hypothesis that it was the small brand behaviours – micro-moments, to borrow Google's language – that make up a customer experience, which cumulatively drove people to love or hate brands; with a less than forgiving space in the middle," says Ellie Gauci, executive strategy director at Psona.

From the research, Psona identified six drivers that make brands matter to people: they recognise me; support me; inform me; connect me; entertain me; and inspire me. Help, inform and reward were the vital components of brand expectation.

Delving into the findings, however, resulted in some of the more interesting insight, with one thing in particular standing out: a noticeable gap between people's expectations and actual delivery. "One of the central questions in the research asked people to rate how brands performed against 18 statements that we hypothesised as defining 'good brand behaviours'," explains Gauci.

With brands under-delivering in one of the areas that matters most to people – informing them – this then played into issues of data use and data transparency. When concerns about data transparency were scrutinised by age, the biggest gap was found among the silent generation. Gauci thinks the negative stories about how some brands and charities have exploited older people is one reason for this, as is their greater caution when handing over personal data.

"Gen Y have grown up with making their data public and brands have focused on capturing them as an audience in the past 10 years, building their customer experience infrastructures around them, which has shown them the value of sharing their data.

"They also know that they have control to withdraw their data at any point, delete profiles, make subject access requests to big brands and have URLs removed from Google searches. So their expectations adjust accordingly."

But it's not just data transparency issues that concern older people. Despite often being more brand loyal, companies are failing to reward them for loyalty. So, is it that brands simply do not care about this group?

"The marketing industry is obsessed with adopting the new shiny technology. So much so that they, perhaps, alienate these older audiences. For example, the benefits of joining a loyalty programme, such as M&S Sparks (whose core audience is probably older), can only be seen by logging into the online account area and choosing the promotions/offers in which you want to participate. Other loyalty programmes are run through apps, the mechanics of which are built around familiarity with this technology, such as location-based targeting of loyalty rewards via apps like O2 Priority.

"Our research told us simple gestures that recognise loyalty – such as saying thank you – and straightforward mechanics, like a coffee stamp card, work a treat for making people feel their custom is valued," says Gauci.

If older consumers want their loyalty acknowledged, younger groups want a two-way dialogue. The rise of social media, instant messaging and video chat technology means people expect to converse with brands and be heard.

The value exchange for this dialogue is that younger people are happy to be rated as a customer (48% Gen Z and 54% Gen Y, compared with 33% of the over 75-year-olds).

Overall, one of the key things to come out of the research is just how clued-up shoppers are today.

Gauci says: "We're in the era of 'savvy consumers'. People know what's possible with technology and data and they are unwilling to accept brands that don't do what they know is possible: respecting real loyalty; being transparent with people's personal data and using it to inform and validate choices; setting up timely reminders around services; and using their previous behaviour to suggest new opportunities or create new products." ∎

DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

Winners and losers

In marketing academic Scott Galloway's latest book, *The Four: The Hidden DNA of Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Google*, he posits the view that the Big Four have amassed "unprecedented power" and that analysts are now "marinating in data". In stock-market terms, the market capitalisations of these tech giants represent the biggest transfer of value – from established businesses to new entrants – in the history of the stock market.

Scott says "Google is God", and notes that one in six questions asked of it has never been asked before. It uses the information it finds to take intelligence to the next level. Google updates itself immediately, and the more people use it, the better it gets for everyone. Revenues are growing, but the cost per click is going down – which offers a compelling proposition whereby the product gets better, yet keeps getting cheaper.

Moving on to Facebook, Scott describes it as "Love", because it is used to create more empathy and has become the new religion. Judging by user growth, Facebook is the most successful thing in the history of the world. It has amassed 2bn monthly active users since it was founded in 2004. By contrast, the Catholic Church has 1.29bn members and it has been going since the 1st century.

When it comes to competition, Scott expects Facebook "to wipe Snapchat from the face of the world". He notes that Instagram Stories is already overtaking Snapchat, while Snapchat features are rapidly being developed across the businesses of Facebook.

Turning to Amazon, Scott views the company as "the digestive tract", which is effective at "sorting out stuff". In the US, 58% of households have Amazon Prime, its paid subscription service that – for a

"In the US, 58% of households have Amazon Prime"

monthly or yearly fee – gives users access to free two-day delivery, streaming video/music and other benefits. This has enabled Amazon to invest in adjacent businesses such as entertainment, where it will spend $4.5bn on content this year – more than any of the traditional networks and second only to Netflix.

Put simply, Amazon "can overwhelm any competitor with brute force". Scott views it as "the antichrist of retail" and says it is now going after the consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies. Amazon takes every dollar and reinvests it, running at break-even so it has huge capacity for innovation and growth.

Finally, "Apple is sex" and Scott believes the brand is used to signal power, wealth and taste. In his view, it should be seen as a luxury – not a technology – brand. For example, the high margins of Apple are like those of Hermes and Ferrari. People don't think

with their brains when they buy Apple. The company's products are at a premium price, yet it has the highest market share – a highly unusual position. The decision to launch its own stores was a stroke of genius, as these act as "temples to the brand".

To the chagrin of the traditional players, Facebook and Google delivered 103% of the growth in the online advertising industry in 2016. Scott remarks that great power brings responsibility, but Facebook and Google have brought negligence and "they have let us down" in terms of fake news and allowing inappropriate material on their websites. This has created an unsafe brand environment, where an ad can plant itself directly next to paid content featuring a preposterous headline such as 'WikiLeaks confirmed Hillary sold weapons to Isis'.

Turning to the big advertisers, Scott states that Unilever needs to cut media investment spending by 5-10% per year for the next three years, but "it wouldn't miss this" because it can optimise using technology. However, Amazon is rapidly moving to build its own private label – for example, in batteries – and steers consumers to these products when they are using Alexa voice search. The group is developing Amazon private label to offer generic product at much lower cost.

The future belongs to the fast, not to the big. Scott observes that 90 of the top 100 brands in the US lost share last year, but he sees the big brands getting hurt by Amazon starting to fight back. Let's hope he's right. ∎

Lorna Tilbian is executive plc director and head of media at Numis Securities
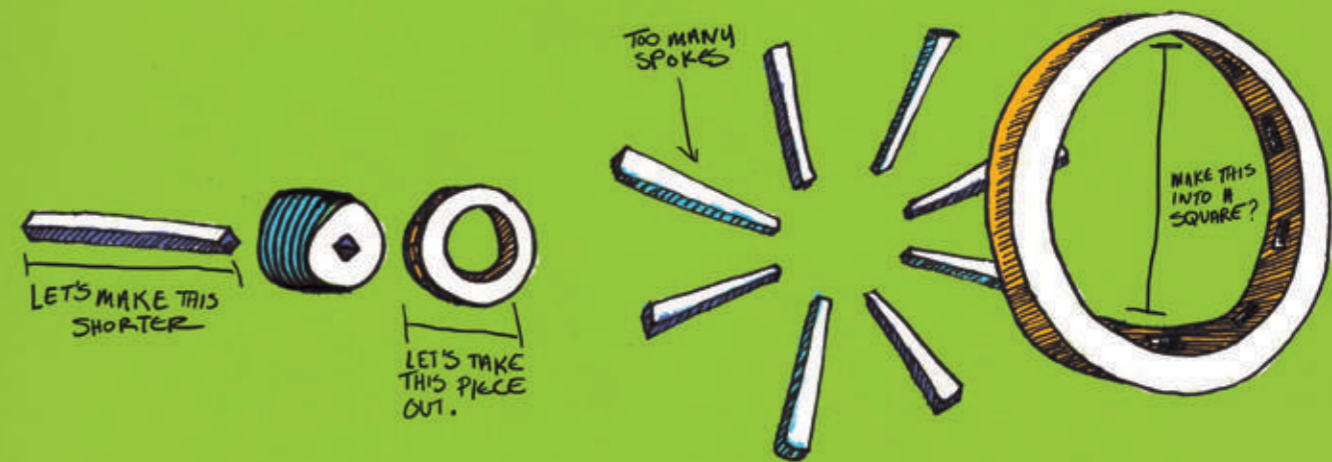
ROSE-TINTED TECH

TECHNOLOGY IS ALLOWING PEOPLE TO CONNECT WITH THE PAST IN EXCITING WAYS, WITH A WHOLE HOST OF NOSTALGIA EXPERIENCES DESIGNED TO REKINDLE MEMORIES AND HELP US DISCOVER HISTORY, WRITES **KATIE McQUATER**

Nostalgia has become a tool of engagement for tech platforms, brands and entertainment companies. If nostalgia is an ache for the past, technology is reminding us of that ache – and, in some cases, administering a psychological salve. One need only look to the success of *Stranger Things*, the Netflix original show set in the 1980s and filled to the brim with references to the decade, as evidence of our modern-day fascination with looking back. The second season averaged 15.8m viewers, in possibly the most mainstream manifestation of the nostalgia trend.

Our smartphones are peppered with the past, with features such as Facebook's 'On This Day' and the iPhone's Memories reminding us of historical events – whether we like it or not. As more and more of our lives are played out online, so too are they committed to digital memory, to reappear in two, five, 10 years' time.

The trend has also extended to remakes of old gadgets, such as the Nokia 3310 and the Polaroid, the latter enjoying a sales uplift on eBay of 74% from August to October 2017. Nintendo, meanwhile, sold 2m of its SNES Classic in the first month after the game console's relaunch.

TAILORED PLAYLISTS

In music, Spotify has launched Time Capsule, a feature that allows people to access a personalised playlist based on their listening history, in response to users searching for music that reminds them of their youth. The streaming company worked with Dr Tim Wildschut, associate professor of psychology at the University of Southampton, to understand more about how nostalgia works. According to Wildschut, there are two types: nomothetic, which applies to a cohort – for example, things that a certain generation would find nostalgic; and idiosyncratic, which applies to individuals. The Spotify Time Capsule combines both, so users get a playlist not just tailored to their age, but also to their individual tastes and listening behaviour.

Nostalgia has gained increased attention in recent years, as academics attempt to understand its impact on our psychology and behaviour. Rather than a wistful wander down memory lane, it is, according to Wildschut, a powerful motivator that has the capacity to ease feelings of loneliness and uncertainty. "The caricature of nostalgia is that it's stuffy, it's for old people and it's ossifying – that it freezes you and you don't want to do anything new," he says. "But nostalgia has a very strong motivational component. It makes you want to go out and do things."

These actions may resemble the ones you experienced in the past, but, in Wildschut's view, memories offer a blueprint for how people would like the future to look. For this reason alone, it's a powerful phenomenon for brands and tech platforms.

He refers to a scene in TV's *Mad Men* in which the lead character, Don Draper, defends the product name 'Carousel' during an advertising pitch for Kodak. "This device isn't a spaceship," says Draper, "it's a time machine. It takes us to a place where we ache to go again. It lets us travel the way a child travels – around and around, and back home again, to a place where we know we are loved."

That feeling of connectedness can

have a brand impact, says Wildschut. "If you can trigger nostalgia and link it to your product, you're in business, because it's very powerful."

But why does the trend resonate so much today? Is a sense of disillusionment prompting us to seek comfort in the memory of simpler times? Perhaps. Feelings of uncertainty are a driver, according to Dr Ben Ho, associate professor of behavioural economics at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York. "People seek more nostalgic entertainment in uncertain times. We can see this in the movies people watch during a recession, and in studies of the content of advertisements. Nostalgia also appears to be cyclical, adds Dr Ho. "In times of uncertainty or low consumer confidence, nostalgia will be on the rise." Studies are conflicted about whether loneliness and social isolation are problems particular to today's society, compared with previous eras. There's no evidence that loneliness is making more people feel nostalgic now, but researchers have discovered it gives them the psychological reserve to feel less lonely – a kind of immune-system response, argues Wildschut. "Loneliness is associated with nostalgia and loneliness increases nostalgia – it's not the other way around," he says. "It's almost like a homeostatic model or an immune system, where loneliness triggers nostalgia, and nostalgia acts to reduce loneliness and make you feel more connected."

SHADOW EXPERIENCE

The link between emotion and memories has potency for brands and tech companies, according to Shazia Ginai, head of business development at Neuro-Insight. "Messages or events encoded in our long-term memory are more likely to influence future behaviour, such as purchase decisions," she says. "Invoking a specific time is to invoke a host of memories and associations that go with it – some very positive, some perhaps less so, but powerful nonetheless. This is because of the effects of mirror neurons in our brains, which create a 'shadow of an experience'; when the memory of a past event surfaces, the same parts of the brain that were activated by the initial stimuli are reactivated to bring it back to life."

However, personalised features that draw on previous online experiences to bring memories 'back to life' face one obvious risk: there are some things of which people would rather not be reminded. For example, Facebook drew criticism in 2014 after a father, whose young daughter had died, was served a 'Year in Review' summary that included a picture of her face. What was created as an ostensibly fun, light-hearted feature has the potential to remind people of very difficult times when they least expect it. The implication is that, while algorithms can tie together groups of images, they can't assign meaning in the way a human could. They can't yet understand that memories can bring us pain, as well as joy.

So what's the future for the nostalgia trend? In recent years, there have been developments in evoking memories via visual or auditory media, but this could be taken further in a virtual reality (VR) context. VR can be used to build empathy by allowing users to experience the world in someone else's shoes – simulating the sense of living with autism, for instance. Could it be used in a similarly immersive way to build connections with others?

Immersive experiences evoking past environments, both real and imagined, have already been created. Sarah Rothberg, artist and adjunct faculty at New York University's interactive telecommunications programme, recreated her childhood home in

'Memory Place: My House', an example of how the medium could be personalised to feature our own individual memories in future.

"Nostalgia is a desire to return to a place and a time – usually, a sort of airbrushed version of the past," says Rothberg. "It is inextricably linked with our sense of self. Well-done VR delivers a feeling of presence, as if you are really in a place." However, she describes the social impact of VR in tandem with memory content – being led by companies such as Facebook – as "unforeseeable". "I can publish 360 photos on Facebook, and those could show up as a memory that Facebook 'cares' about. While 360 photos aren't true VR, because of their limited interactivity, they point to a future where the media of memories could be virtual spaces you can inhabit."

If the trend seems like just another means of escapism from modern society, Ho is clear on the distinction. "Insofar as escapism has a negative connotation, the two are not the same. Nostalgia provides positive psychological benefits. One study even showed that the increase in social connectedness makes people more altruistic."

Far from removing us from our surroundings, nostalgia encourages connection. "It affords you some sense of closeness towards others – it's a way of assimilating proximity," says Wildschut. "When you do that, you feel closer and supported." ∎
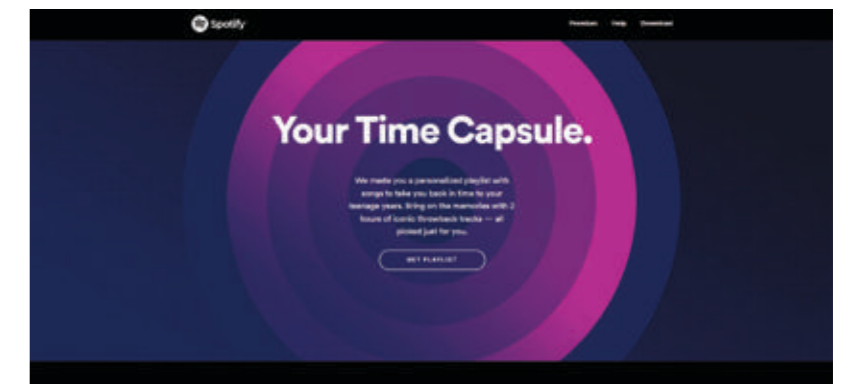
Spotify offers its users personalised nostalgia playlists based on their music-listening history
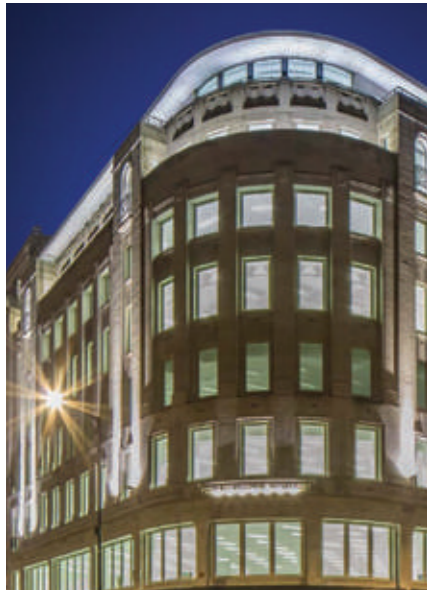
View from Silicon Valley

Last month, I passed a milestone at terrifying speed; a year working in San Francisco has flashed past in the blink of an eye. That day, my team asked me what had surprised me the most about relocating here. It was interesting to reflect on the preconceptions I arrived with, and what the reality is. I thought I'd share a couple of these and, hopefully, they'll offer some insights into the cultural differences between UK and US clients or agencies.

Preconception 1: In the home state of Hollywood, storytelling will be a more important strength to develop as a researcher than in the UK.

Reality: Wrong! The truth is that clients and agencies here feel much more academic than their British counterparts. Of course, communicating research in a persuasive, compelling way is a huge priority in whichever market you travel, but there's a big difference in what you are expected to demonstrate. It's much more common in the US to have to show your workings in a presentation – to explain to a stakeholder why you're using a five-point, instead of a seven-point, Likert scale, or to go into the specifics of your sample design. In the UK, we're usually trained to avoid detail like that, and to dial up the narrative and creativity instead.

Similarly, it's common in the UK for our industry to shy away from the 'R' word, and to call ourselves 'insight managers', 'consumer experience strategists', and all manner of synonyms... anything but 'researchers'. That encourages us to aspire to tell stories in a very

"US workplaces are task- rather than relationship- oriented"

different way, almost like brand strategists or creatives. In the US, research managers are expected to epitomise academic rigour before anything else, and that comes through in every presentation I see here. There's no right or wrong way to build a presentation or introduce your profession, of course, but I admire how practitioners in the US are still proud to call themselves researchers.

Preconception 2: Californian cheerfulness will make small talk and networking around meetings easier than in stoic, polite British offices.

Reality: Nope. The American and British approaches to conversations at work are complete opposites. In London, you'd rarely talk to a stranger in the street or while buying a morning coffee. Indeed, the very idea of talking to someone on the tube seems heretical. Yet, at work, we Brits are surprisingly big on small talk. Think about how many times you've started an email with 'hope you're well' or 'hope you had a great weekend' – or talked about the weather or holidays for 10 minutes before a meeting.

From my experience in client or agency settings here, those social norms are often reversed in the US. Members of the public are incredibly friendly – true to the Californian stereotype – and people will make conversation with you in all sorts of places, so I'd expected that to carry on through to the office. Not so. American workplaces are task- rather than relationship-oriented. British clients and agencies require some degree of relationship building before they get to business, but that's not the case here. Meetings get straight to it, with little, or no, conversation beforehand, and emails are direct – blunt, even. That was a big surprise to me and took a while to get used to, but it made me reflect on years of working with American clients and see them in a new light. It's something to admire, too; meetings are shorter and more effective, and I've learned a lot from their directness.

So, the takeaway (aside from that I'm often/always wrong with my cultural assumptions) is: the next time you win an American client, or find yourself working with a US-based team, flex your methodological muscles in presentations, flaunt your research pedigree proudly, and be direct, honest and save all the small talk for the coffee break. That's the American way. But don't expect to ever get used to the date format. ∎

Matt Taylor is consumer insight lead at Twitter

SHOWING YOUR EMOTIONS

WHEN **KEITH BRONI** WAS APPOINTED EMOJI RESEARCHER AND INTERPRETER BY GLOBAL AGENCY TODAY TRANSLATIONS, SOCIAL MEDIA WENT CRAZY. BUT AS EMOJI USE INCREASES, THERE IS MORE THAN A TWITTER STORM TO THIS ROLE AND PICTORIAL LANGUAGE UNDERSTANDING

Q: What attracted you to this area of research?

I was struck by the surging popularity of emojis, and became interested in investigating their growth and their influence on how we communicate digitally. Since being introduced to the western world in 2011, their use across digital messaging or social media platforms has skyrocketed. A September 2015 report by Emogi found that 92% of the online population are at least occasional emoji users and, in July 2017, Facebook revealed that five billion emojis are sent across its Messenger platform every day.

Q: Are emojis truly universal or does culture, age and other demographic context affect how they are used or interpreted?

Emojis have a scale of universality, which varies from icon to icon. For example, 😀, 🖤 and 😡 are widely understood, across demographics and contexts, to be expressions of happiness, love and anger respectively. However, there are many icons where demographic context is vital to understanding intended meaning and likely interpretation(s). Older people are more likely to interpret the aubergine emoji 🍆 as a simple vegetable as opposed to something more risqué.

Additionally, the device you use, or the messaging platform through which you communicate, can influence intention and interpretation. Different emoji 'fonts' can change the appearance of some icons to a potentially confounding extent. The most well-documented confounders are Samsung: many of its emojis appear to intentionally buck the design trend seen across other vendors' designs. For example, its eye-rolling icon 🙄 looks expectant, and its smirking icon 😏 looks condescending – very different expressions to their most commonly intended meanings when seen on other devices.

This is why our research can allow for a greater understanding of use trends and intended meanings.

Q: When interpreting emojis, is the fact that they mostly originate in the US, and have a cultural skew, an inherent problem?

It's not so much a problem as an obstacle to be conscious of. While there is an argument to be made for a growing western cultural skew in emoji creation (the body that oversees the creation of new emojis consists, predominately, of US-based tech firms), there are more Japan-specific icons in the 2,666 emojis available. Icons that depict objects are often not widely understood outside Japan – such as the emojis displaying Japanese kanji, including 🈴 and 🈲 (meaning 'good bargain' and 'secret' respectively). Icons such as the love hotel 🏩, white flower 💮 and Shoshinsha mark 🔰 are also quite specific to Japanese culture.

The difficulty in evaluating the interpretation of these icons is when users who are unaware of their intended purpose use them for their own micro-meanings among their peers. If these micro-meanings begin to spread and gain acceptance, then emojis could have multiple, valid interpretations in different contexts.

Q: Do different rules apply to the uptake and use of emojis than to new words added to our lexicon?

Yes and no. The popularisation processes of words and emojis mirror one another, in that adopting a term or emoji depends on a shared agreement of its use among an audience. However, the way words and emojis are created differ dramatically.

While anyone, in theory, can put forward a new word or phrase – which can eventually enter the popular lexicon of a nation or culture, a la 'selfie' or 'spoiler' (terms that didn't exist a decade ago) – the creation of an emoji is quite a formalised process. It is administered by the international Unicode Consortium, which oversees the standardisation of software and text within digital devices. Anyone can submit a proposal for a new emoji to be added to the Unicode Standard, but an oversight committee signs off proposals.

So the propagation processes are markedly different: a new emoji can take at least a year and its release across different vendors' devices will most likely be staggered across a number of months, while a new word or phrase can be adopted overnight if it is disseminated via a large enough platform.

Q: Emojis have been used, mostly, to add emphasis or intent; do you think they raise more problems than they solve?

No – their contribution to our digital communications is a net positive. They can be used to imbue additional meaning into digital, text-based utterances, which are subject to being misinterpreted as more negative in tone than intended (a phenomenon known as Poe's Law). With continued growth and conformity across platforms, meanings can converge and allow us to complement, augment or even replace particular words or phrases across different contexts – and even between different languages.

Q: How prevalent is their use in a business context?

Emojis are used more in personal communications, but they are growing exponentially in business contexts. Companies' social media pages, mobile app messaging and B2C messaging platforms have all made more use of emojis. A recent report by Intercom on B2C messaging found that emoji use in business messaging increased fourfold in 2016. Customers were four times more likely to respond to a business message if it contained at least one emoji.

This is in keeping with previous research into how emojis can positively affect business communications: the presence of congruent, complementary emojis in a social media communication have been shown to increase the social sharing of that communication, as well as the open rates of emails and push notifications. Emojis resonate with people; they humanise business communications and allow companies to engage emotionally with consumers – provided, again, that businesses take heed of the various pitfalls already outlined.

Q: Is it time for brands to include emojis in their tone of voice criteria to prevent mis-use?

Absolutely. While there are many advantages in using emoji in your B2C communications, they are certainly not a one-size-fits-all solution. Brands need a strategy for emojis – to identify which icons convey the sentiments they wish to associate with their products and/or services.

Q: Since their wider take-up, what do you think has been the most significant development in emojis?

The Unicode Consortium's emoji subcommittee prioritising diversity with the introduction of gendered variations – and, more recently, some non-gender-specific human and activity emojis, as well as skin-tone variations based on the Fitzpatrick scale. This increased the number of icons available dramatically and means users can embody themselves or their peer groups within emojis.

Q: What emoji, that is not yet in existence, do you think is most needed?

There has been a campaign for several years for a red-haired human emoji, which is now on the 2017 candidate shortlist. Additionally, many platforms still do not allow for the Fitzpatrick scale skin-tone variations for multiperson emojis, such as the family icons. While in demand, this is difficult to deliver given the sheer number of possible skin-tone combinations across these icons. For the family icons alone, Windows had to introduce 52,000 combinations – the only platform to do so to date.

Q: What's your favourite emoji?

'Raising hands': 🙌. I love the sense of positivity, celebration and victory. ■
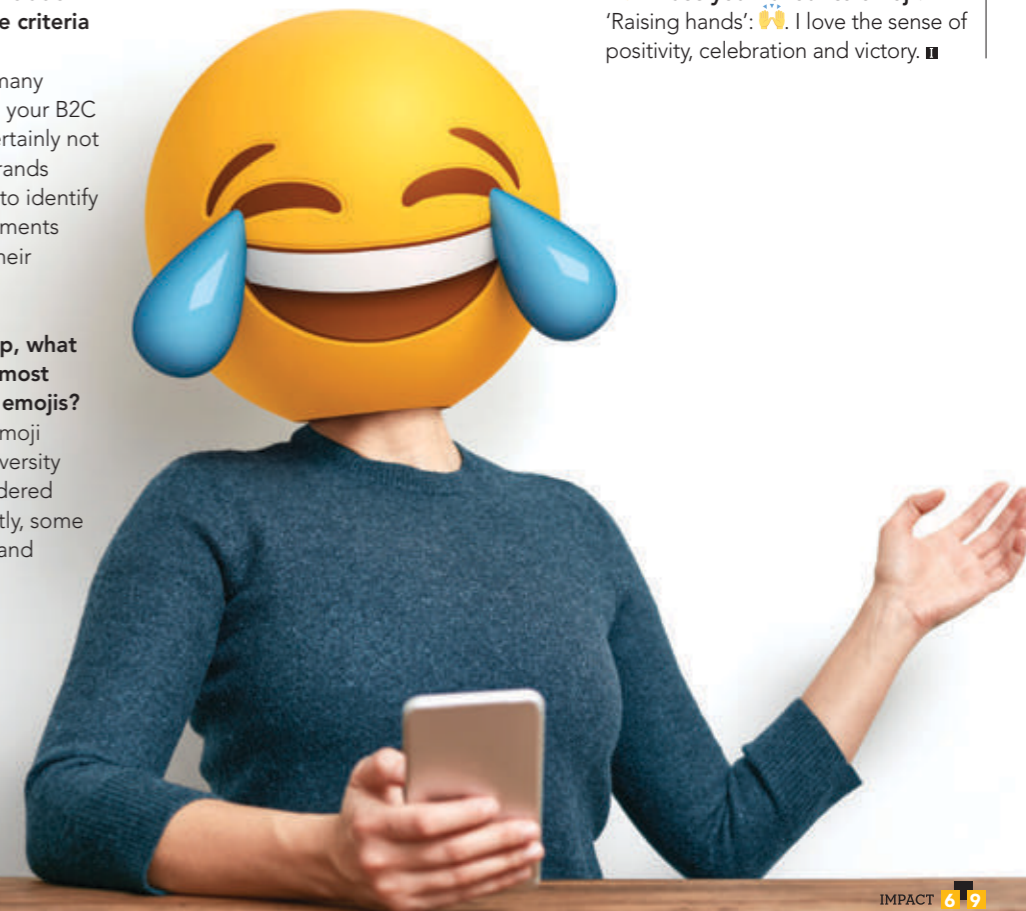
BREAKING FREE

I n October 2017, sparked by the allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein, actress Alyssa Milano asked her Twitter followers to tweet the words 'me too' if they had experienced sexual assault or harassment, to highlight the scale of the problem.

The global response that ensued – more than 1.7m tweets including the hashtag #MeToo, and 12m Facebook posts in less than 24 hours by 4.7m users around the world – became a rallying cry against sexual assault and harassment; a collective outpouring of shared experiences. Experiences that, for many, had previously been kept a secret.

As social media timelines filled up with stories, the norm of silence had shifted. Buoyed by the experiences of others – including the very public revelations from high-profile Hollywood actresses about Weinstein's alleged abuse – the unleashing of honesty had empowered millions of women to speak out when they may otherwise have not.

In a new paper, Harvard Law School professor and co-author of *Nudge* – alongside Richard Thaler – Cass Sunstein outlines how this phenomenon of 'unleashing' can shift norms and ultimately effect social change.

Sunstein, who has been writing on norms for many years, says he was influenced by the context of the dramatic shifts taking place across the current political landscape. "It seems to me that 2017 is a year of unleashing, in so many domains. I was influenced by some dramatic movements on both the left and the right, and the ideas just poured out."

Sunstein wrote the paper ahead of the Harvey Weinstein allegations

WHEN SOCIAL NORMS BREAK DOWN, PEOPLE MAY REVEAL PREFERENCES OR VALUES THEY PREVIOUSLY FELT THEY HAD TO CONCEAL – SOMETIMES WITH PROFOUND CONSEQUENCES. IN A NEW PAPER, HARVARD UNIVERSITY LAW PROFESSOR CASS SUNSTEIN EXPLORES HOW THE UNLEASHING OF HIDDEN PREFERENCES CAN CREATE SOCIAL CHANGE. BY **KATIE McQUATER**

coming to light, but its arguments offer a means of understanding some of the ways in which unleashing preferences can effect social change (including in the context of sexual harassment) – with both positive and negative consequences.

Sunstein's paper explores two propositions: first, that the erosion of social norms releases people – in that it allows them to reveal what they believe and prefer, as well as act as they wish – and second, that the revision of norms can construct, and give rise to, preferences, values and beliefs that did not exist previously.

He begins the paper with an anecdote from the time he spent as a visiting professor at Columbia Law School during the 1980s, when he witnessed an older male law professor stroking the hair of a female law student in a hallway. When he spoke to the student about it, she initially dismissed him by saying it was not a problem, but 30 minutes later knocked on his door in tears.

Sunstein writes that social norms placed constraints on the student – while she hated what the professor was doing, because of existing norms she did not want to say, or do, anything in response. When Sunstein made a comment that it was inappropriate of the professor, she felt able to express her true thoughts, at least to him privately.

When legislation is passed that entrenches the revision of norms – such as judicial rulings that forbid sexual harassment in the workplace – or when new leaders are introduced, Sunstein argues the effect can be transformative, as it signals information about what other people think; a major influence on the construction and deconstruction of norms.

NORM ENTREPRENEURS

Individuals can also play an important role in unleashing hidden preferences to effect social change. 'Norm entrepreneurs' – a term coined by Sunstein in his 1996 paper *Social Norms and Social Roles* – are those who oppose existing norms and try to change them.

They are essential catalysts for social change, Sunstein tells *Impact*. "They can be ordinary people, willing to tackle, or to object to, a long-standing norm. They can be celebrities, willing to put their reputations on the line. In any case, norms can't shift unless people are willing to be brave enough, or foolish enough, or reckless enough, to challenge them."

This phenomenon can have both positive and negative consequences. That same process of norm erosion that empowers sexual harassment victims to speak out, could also serve to unleash less desirable preferences and beliefs – or reinforce discrimination.

The phenomenon can be even more potent when the norm entrepreneur in question is a powerful figure. The paper looks at the results of a study on whether Donald Trump's political success had affected Americans' willingness to publicly support a xenophobic organisation (Leonardo Bursztyn *et al* – *From Extreme to Mainstream: How Social Norms Unravel* – published in May 2017).

Two weeks before the presidential election in 2016, the study recruited 458 participants from eight states that Trump had been predicted to win. Half of the participants were informed that Trump was projected to win the election, while the other half received no information. Respondents were asked whether they would authorise a $1 donation to an anti-immigrant organisation, with half of the group being told that if they decided to make the donation, it would be kept anonymous. Meanwhile, the other half were given no assurances regarding anonymity.

The research found that, for those who had received information about Trump's projected victory and authorised the donation to the anti-immigrant group, anonymity did not matter. For those who were given no information on the expected Trump win, 54% of participants authorised the donation provided it would be anonymous, compared to 34% should the donation become public.

"The general conclusion is that if Trump had not come on the scene, many Americans would refuse to authorise a donation to an anti-immigrant organisation unless they were promised anonymity," Sunstein writes in the paper. "But with Trump as president, people feel liberated. Anonymity no longer matters, apparently because Trump's election has weakened the social norm against supporting anti-immigrant groups."

In effect, Trump is operating as a 'norm entrepreneur' here: "He is shifting norms in such a way as to weaken or eliminate their constraining effects," writes Sunstein.

He also argues that some revisions of norms do not unleash any pre-existing preferences or values – instead, they create new ones. He argues that the rise of Nazism can be understood in such terms.

As previously hidden preferences are unleashed, change can happen very quickly, Sunstein says. "We can have an unexpected upheaval. Lives, workplaces, and even nations can be turned around pretty rapidly.

"Some change is good, and important; other change is destructive and must be slowed down or stopped. We have to ask where we want to go, before deciding where we go." ∎

A preliminary draft of Sunstein's paper, *Unleashed*, is available via the Social Science Research Network (SSRN) website: www.ssrn.com. The paper will appear in *Social Research* in 2018.

LET ME TELL YOU A STORY

SCIENTISTS HAVE USED EEG TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE BRAIN REACTS TO VIDEOS AND DETERMINE WHAT MAKES AN AUDIENCE ENGAGE WITH THIS TYPE OF CONTENT. **JANE BAINBRIDGE** REPORTS

Storytelling is a favourite buzzword of late in the world of marketing. Narrative arcs have entered all corners of the business world, from insight presentations and advertising, through to social media campaigns and customer relationship management (CRM).

Evidence of its value has been presented in a paper by a group of researchers who used encephalography (EEG) to explore people's responses to narrative videos. Looking specifically at energy efficiency social marketing,

the team employed EEG to assess the role of attention, working memory, emotion and imagination in narrative transportation, and how these stages are ordered, temporally.

Dr Tom van Laer, senior lecturer in marketing at Cass Business School – and one of the study's authors – explains why they concentrated on these four areas.

"Narrative transportation is defined as the extent to which a consumer empathises with the story's characters [emotion] and the plot activates his or her imagination, which leads them to experience suspended reality [working memory] during story reception. The more receivers pay attention to a story, the more narrative transportation increases," he says.

The study involved participants being shown four different narrative videos about energy efficiency, targeted at people aged over 60 in New South Wales (NSW), Australia. Research had found that this group was particularly concerned about domestic energy use.

The work focused on Energy+Illawarra (www.energyplusillawarra.com.au), a community-oriented, interdisciplinary, strategic social-intervention programme.

Engineers, geographers and marketers work together to improve energy efficiency in the homes of low-income, older people in Illawarra, a region of NSW.

"We already knew that transporting stories can put you in another person's shoes, in a figurative sense," explains Van Laer. "The developed films suggest watching an engaging story can also transport you into the 'body' of an object."

With EEG, the team could gauge people's neural responses to the stories. "We wanted to measure how stories activate and excite the

neural pathways in our brains that form the basis for our actions," adds Van Laer.

The EEG analysis focused on two segments: the start of each narrative video, when the story becomes apparent (the four topics for this study were energy use practices involving fridges, lighting, laundry and star ratings of domestic appliances); and the story segment of each video. This was to identify whether different processes occur at the start of a story than in the later stages.

"The results showed heightened activity in areas of the brain associated with empathising with the story characters, as well as imagination of, attention for, and memorising of the plot. These mental processes are involved in spurring our brains into action," says Van Laer.

"Brain response was especially strong for the fridge-freezer film. This household appliance has been associated with the visceral nervous system and deep inward feelings, because it stores a basic need – food," he adds.

So, is the length of the video – and hence story – a factor? "We don't know. Previous research shows that lengthy texts are more persuasive; however, stories can be very short. The increasingly popular flash fiction reinforces the notion of very short stories – such as the alleged six-word novel For Sale: Baby Shoes, Never Worn.

"The research questions are numerous: how short can a story be and still truly be a story? Can

consumers become and remain transported when reading these very short stories? If so, what is the effect of length on narrative persuasion?" Van Laer asks.

Overall, the research found that – to have a lasting influence on people – content needed to: gain attention by working memory and invoking an emotional response; follow a beginning, middle and end structure; let the person identify with the subject and make them care about the subject.

Greater narrative transportation can lead to positive attitudes and behaviours. So how can this research apply to brand marketers?

"To be deemed transporting, stories must be perceived as produced by storytellers who are motivated by their inherent value, without an overtly persuasive aim," says Van Laer. "When, instead, story receivers realise a profit motive behind a story, narrative transportation may be inhibited.

"As a result, story receivers may be inclined to generate critical thoughts in response to stories that ooze with commercial interest. If storytellers' dominant aim is to persuade, this aim needs to remain hidden for narrative transportation to occur. The problem we see with a lot of advertising today is that the creators and marketers are identifying with their peers and not their audience. They're creating content in a bubble, thinking about what they want to see and not what stories their ideal customers want to engage with. We've seen this happen when ads go viral for the wrong reason." ∎

Ross Gordon, **Joseph Ciorciari** and **Tom van Laer**, 'Using EEG to examine the role of attention, working memory, emotion and imagination in narrative transportation', in *European Journal of Marketing*.

COLLECTIVE PERSPECTIVE

ONE PERSON'S FRUSTRATION WITH EMPLOYEE SURVEYS HAS LED TO A NEW APPROACH TO STAFF INSIGHT, USING COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE. **JANE BAINBRIDGE** REPORTS

Knowing how staff feel about the organisation for which they work – what it's good at and what it needs to work on – is, one would assume, paramount for good business and employment practices.

Which is why most larger businesses run regular surveys. After several years specialising in employee insight, however, these surveys and their findings left Michael Silverman thinking they were a waste of time. Too quantitative and numeric, they didn't contain enough qualitative or open-ended questions to gain useful insight.

A psychologist by training, Silverman worked in academia before moving into research at Ipsos Mori and, then, into client research as head of employee insight at Unilever.
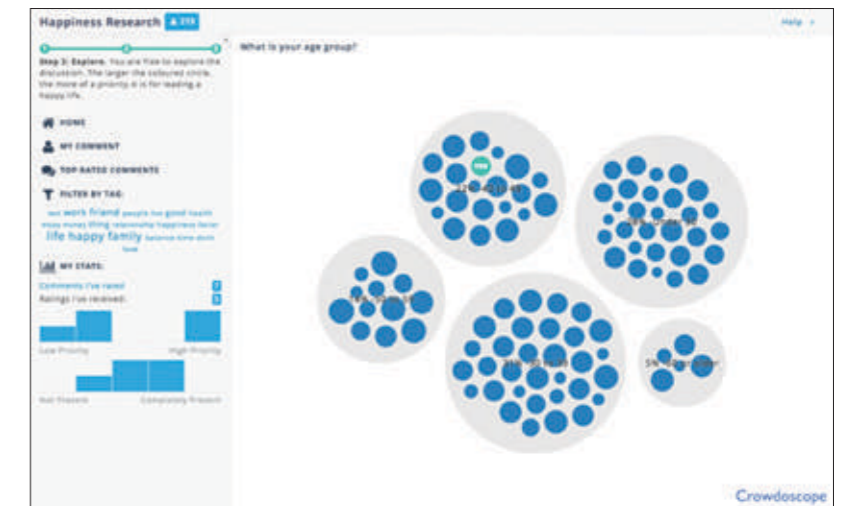
"Other areas of research were moving on and doing cool things, but even in a company like Unilever – where it is up to the minute with consumer insight – its employee research wasn't," says Silverman. "I had this conflict that I was working in an area that I disliked."

This led him to set up his own business, Silverman Research, and to design the research tool Crowdoscope. It draws on collective intelligence to gain better insight into employees, although the research can be applied to groups outside of a workplace context. Collective intelligence allows people to interconnect, and build discussions and understanding, as they emerge from groups. "The results of a staff survey lack interaction between people in terms of rating each other's ideas, suggestions and opinions. They feed up the information and someone else decides what's important. It's a closed-loop system. [With Crowdoscope], the information feeds back to participants, which changes the output in a way that you wouldn't get with a survey," says Silverman.

But is there a danger this collective interaction could feed a neurosis or put weight on otherwise less important areas? "Hopefully, it'd be the opposite," says Silverman. "It would help to identify things that are important that would have been missed in a survey. By reading other people's comments, someone may change their opinion, or understand the diversity of opinion and shift. That's one of the outputs – greater understanding of participants."

To avoid people being affected by what their boss says, Crowdoscope anonymises users. "Everyone has an equal chance of being heard. That's how the algorithms are designed. You can be assured you receive the same amount of attention as other people."

The research tool still opens with a few box-ticking questions, but offers more qualitative insight when people write comments, which are then rated by others.

"It's how you analyse the two alongside each other; you're not just interested in what people are talking about – you're interested in how those topics and ideas are rated. You can say, so many people were talking about this and this is how the community feels about it," Silverman explains.

The data visualisation groups people based on a simple multiple-choice question – such as age, location, or agreeing or disagreeing with a particular question. In an employee context, a popular way to group people is by business unit or function. "Organisations are often quite siloed, so it can be nice to read comments from people who work in a different area," Silverman says. "The trick is organising the groupings in a way that is helpful and relevant to the open-ended question you're asking."

Unilever has used Crowdoscope to explore inclusivity in the business and Silverman thinks it's particularly good for that type of research. "Diversity and inclusion go hand in hand with giving people a voice, and Crowdoscope gives people an open forum. It's transparent and honest; if someone does have a problem, it's not hiding it behind closed doors. Lots of companies do the research, but then they try to gloss over it."

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FOSTERING INCLUSION

THE MARKET RESEARCH
SOCIETY AND LIGHTSPEED
HAVE SURVEYED THOSE
WORKING IN THE SECTOR
TO DETERMINE HOW DIVERSE
AND INCLUSIVE IT IS.
KATIE McQUATER REPORTS

As brands attempt to engage with increasingly diverse consumer groups, it has never been more pressing for market research to understand that diversity. If it is to do this, the industry must have diversity in its own workforce, to ensure it accurately reflects the markets it serves.

The Market Research Society (MRS) recently commissioned a study to determine the current state of diversity and inclusion in the sector, and create a starting point for a course of action for the industry.

More than 500 market researchers were polled in the online survey, conducted in partnership with Lightspeed, which found that market research displays greater diversity in some areas than other comparable industries – but there is still cause for concern, particularly around inclusion. While the conditions for diversity may be in place in some areas, the survey showed that discrimination persists around gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, health and beliefs.

Jane Frost, chief executive of the MRS, says: "It is our responsibility to hold up a mirror to the industry for our clients and stakeholders. If we're not doing that, we aren't fulfilling our duty to accurately represent and reflect the market research industry. As the voice of market researchers, it is also important for the MRS to identify areas for improvement and facilitate discussion around the pertinent issues raised in this report."

The results paint a mixed picture in gender diversity. Women account for half (49%) of senior management positions in market research, which is a positive figure, compared with the advertising industry, where women hold 30.5% of management positions, according to a recent diversity census by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising. However, out of the women in the sample, only a third reach senior-management level, compared with half of men, highlighting

the persistence of gender inequality. In addition, while 27% of men working full-time in market research earn at least £70,000, only 17% of women do.

The survey also suggested a problem of gender bias, with almost half of the women surveyed (47%) saying they had felt 'negatively discriminated' against at their current company, compared with 13% of men.

"While it is heartening to see that half of senior roles in market research are held by women – a parity not seen in other industries – the sector still has work to do to ensure pathways are kept open for all women, regardless of background or ethnicity," says Frost.

Of those market researchers surveyed, 69% identified as white British – a lower number than in the last census, published in 2011 (86%). A 2015 study of marketing industry professionals, by *The Drum*, found that 86% of respondents categorised themselves as white.

While 14% of those employed full-time in market research identify as black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME), only 31% of these reach senior management roles, with BAME individuals accounting for 11% of senior management positions in the sample. In addition, 63% of BAME market researchers surveyed felt their company was not doing enough to accommodate and support people of all ethnicities.

According to the survey, 8% identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual, which is higher than the 2% of the general population recorded by the Office for National Statistics in 2016. However, discrimination is still present here: more than half of

those who identified as gay/lesbian/bisexual (55%) had felt negatively discriminated against in their current company.

Participants also responded to questions around the wider issues that impact on diversity and inclusion, such as recruitment and flexibility. More than half (57%) believe there are 'conscious and unconscious biases' at play in recruitment within their business, while 58% feel steps should be taken to ensure candidates are interviewed by people from different backgrounds.

The research also indicated an appetite for flexible working to enable greater inclusion within the work environment. Three-quarters (76%) of those surveyed felt a focus on 'flexibility and the idea of allowing work to fit around people's lives, no matter their circumstances' would be beneficial in creating an inclusive environment.

Alex Wheatley, innovation researcher at Lightspeed, says the research has exposed "clear disparities" in the way people are treated in the industry. "However, the picture is still an optimistic one, as the issues are rectifiable and the building blocks for improvements in diversity and inclusion are wholly present," he says.

Frost adds: "The research highlights that the issues surrounding diversity and inclusion are complex and far-reaching, and extend beyond gender and ethnicity. To ensure the future health of the sector, market research businesses must take steps to ensure that we enable a diverse and inclusive workforce to flourish." ∎

The Market Research Society will hold an event at the House of Commons on 15 January, hosted by MP Seema Malhotra, to discuss the issues uncovered in the report and the next steps for the industry.

THE JOB MARKET
A VALUABLE REVIEW

It seems that we trust each other most – certainly when it comes to booking a holiday, restaurant or day trip, when we often refer to TripAdvisor. In fact, lots of us are TripAdvisor reviewers and we like earning badges for useful reviews (well, I do at least). That is the world in which we live, and sites such as Glassdoor, which reviews companies and their management, serve the same purpose.

We have recently had a number of candidates refuse to go for interview or accept job offers with companies that have poor Glassdoor reviews, so I thought it might be worth a mention in this column.

As recruiters/employers in this sector, we can point out that most of the reviewers are in the US, or that they are old reviews, but it doesn't matter – the Google footprint of that employer brand is there, online. Unlike TripAdvisor, these are more often negative.

Glassdoor isn't as prolific in the UK or in research, but it could become more important as the next generation of researchers flood your offices. So it is crucial that you think of your employer brand at all relevant management touch points.

That means, hiring, managing, developing and even firing. I have talked before about having the right people in management roles – you need managers who can lead, coach and motivate your team.

> **Glassdoor could become more important as the next generation of researchers flood your offices. So it is crucial that you think of your employer brand at all relevant management touch points**

The employee survey, which is sometimes hailed as a bit of a PR exercise, can be valuable here if it's used properly – in much the same way that any feedback programme is used today. It allows your team to feel their opinion is valid, relevant and will be listened to. It can also showcase the benefits and value of your human resources (HR) function – it's better for you if the frustrations are dealt with up front, rather than anonymously posted on Glassdoor.

We come across a huge range of situations in which people are leaving an employer/team for reasons that could have been totally avoidable if there had been clarity and communication. That clarity can come from access to management or HR – there should be a process in every company for people to air frustration.

TripAdvisor is undoubtedly one of the greatest examples of how peer-to-peer reviews can affect the success of a business. Restaurants and hotels encourage us to give a review, so why not do the same for companies?

Don't let the disgruntled colleague get things off their chest on Glassdoor – finish your exit interviews (you should be doing these, by the way) with a request for a Glassdoor review.

It is entirely possible that, in five years' time, everyone you hire will have checked out your review – so don't wait. Embrace it and be ready.

Sinead Hasson is founder and managing director of recruitment consultancy Hasson Associates.

ETHICAL DIMENSION TO AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) – with its complex software systems, allowing accelerated analysis and learning by machines at a much higher rate than humans – promises much in our digital and data-driven environment.

Its impact is felt in all aspects of our lives, from smartphone digital assistants and fraud-detection tools, to product-recommendation services and credit applications. AI is at the centre of not only recommendations that we receive, but – more critically – the decisions that are made about us.

Exponential growth and access to personal and non-personal data is driving AI use across all sectors. In research, text-data mining and analysis – with developments in natural language processing (NLP) and machine-learning models – aid the automation of data analysis, data collection and report publication. However, as AI permeates our economies and communities, the promised benefits from the technology need to be balanced against the possible harms; it must be appreciated and recognised that AI can create new injustices or embed old ones, and that the data used to train machine learning can contain a range of biases, especially around race and gender.

DATA-SHARING ATTITUDES

A body of research shows a gap in public trust, and differences in attitudes towards data sharing (often dependent on how that data will be used). For AI to be successful, concerns must be addressed and the public brought along. If people become more afraid of sharing their personal data, it could have long-term implications for research participation, development of innovative commercial solutions and society – as well as for the use of AI, where opacity of processing and varied levels of human intervention raise specific concerns for individuals. So, what is the solution?

The current data protection framework – and new rules that come

into effect in the UK on 25 May 2018 – offer some legal oversight and control of AI. The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) strengthens individual rights and focuses on transparency and accountability, as well as automated decision-making. This legal framework will be underpinned by regulatory guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office and targeted enforcement. Core to GDPR will be:

- Data protection impact assessments (DPIAs) – these are a methodology for identifying and mitigating risks to privacy and fundamental rights. Integrating them into project-management processes, with buy-in across an organisation, can help identify privacy issues in AI use
- Greater algorithmic transparency and accountability – legal responsibilities under the data protection framework include obligations to ensure meaningful transparency, so that individuals can be informed, and unintended harm can be undone.

HARDWIRING ETHICS INTO AI

However, data protection law by itself will not suffice. Although opinions vary about the level of oversight or regulation necessary to address concerns about AI, a wider cultural mind-set will be required. A key element will be demonstrating trustworthiness in data stewardship by embedding ethics.

All organisations – public, private and not-for-profit – using AI need to understand the nuances of consumer privacy preferences as it applies to their market and organisation. A core question for the research sector in maximising the use of AI is how to work with others to ensure the benefits of these innovations are delivered in a robust, ethical way.

Ethical approaches that go beyond the law will help ensure that industry sectors and organisations take their obligations seriously, and implement AI – and use data – in a fair and

transparent manner. A mix of tools will be appropriate, including:

- Self-regulatory schemes and codes, with ethical principles and expectations, that can give industry-specific guidance
- Consumer-facing marks with consumer recognition, such as the MRS Fair Data Scheme, to build trust across markets
- Internal ethics boards and review committees, and processes that consider wider organisational data management when using personal and non-personal data
- Anonymisation techniques that protect privacy by ensuring there is no reasonable likelihood of identification of individuals in data sets
- Data trusts, where individuals pool their data, stipulating conditions under which data can be shared.

Data privacy, compliance and building consumer trust are critical. The landscape for developing and using ethical tools and principles is complicated by the range of sectors and players involved. AI is reliant on data scientists, as well as other scientists and experts from diverse fields. All have different ethical underpinning, and some are at an embryonic stage in considering ethical frameworks.

There are many ongoing domestic initiatives – for example, the House of Lords Select Committee Inquiry, new government AI strategy, Royal Society and Royal Academy reports on data governance – as well as European and international schemes. Suggested solutions range from proactive regulation to general oversight – but, across these initiatives, there is a clear need for a focus on embedded collaborative, ethical approaches that raise awareness about the collection and use of data, and assist firms and consumers in benefiting from AI. ∎

Dr Michelle Goddard is director of policy and standards at MRS

THE BENEFITS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) NEED TO BE BALANCED WITH POTENTIALLY PROBLEMATICAL DATA USE. **DR MICHELLE GODDARD** LOOKS AT THE RULES IN PLACE TO HELP ENSURE ETHICS ARE PART OF THE AI EQUATION

Market pressure: scaling up our response

We closed 2017 with - for the first time - a sell-out MRS Awards celebration. Congratulations to all of our very worthy winners.

It would be foolhardy, however, to enter the new year without a sense of caution. Uncertainty is the new norm, but it does bring with it opportunities.

Our commitment to our members is to mitigate against this uncertainty. We do this by helping government develop policies that protect the sector and build the capability, capacity and connectivity that you need, now more than ever.

We will be doubling - tripling, even - these efforts in 2018. As demonstrated in the latest *Research Live Industry Report*, the economic climate continues to be tough, amplified by Brexit. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is fast approaching, coming into force in May, and technology is reshaping the sector at pace.

One noticeable change in how the MRS is responding to these pressures is the expansion of the annual conference to become Impact Week 2018 – more international, more transformational, more aspirational. As Unilever's Stan Sthanunathan, patron of the event, puts it: "Impact Week is going to be the most important week in our professional lives this year."

Next time I pen this piece, GDPR will be upon us – then we must think about e-privacy, the implications of artificial intelligence on ethics, and more. Watch this space for announcements on new initiatives in data analytics from MRS and check this page for our GDPR communications. If there is something you think we have missed, don't hesitate to contact me. There's little time to waste.

Jane Frost CBE, chief executive, MRS
jane.frost@mrs.org.uk

MRS

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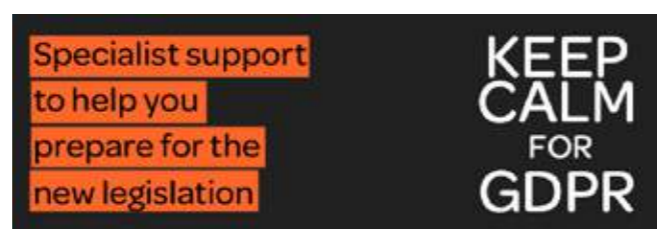
GDPR guidance

The deadline for compliance with rules in the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – 25 May 2018 – is just around the corner. But there is a way to keep calm in the build-up.

To help your organisation understand and comply with the GDPR, MRS has developed a comprehensive suite of support materials. Our data-privacy experts have published the GDPR in Brief Series, exclusively for MRS members and Company Partners, which are available at mrs.org.uk/gdpradvice

Mark these dates in your calendar for 2018:

January
23 – Company Partner Operations Network meeting:
Free event, exclusive to MRS Company Partners.

29 (and 10 April) – GDPR Masterclass – Accountable Research Organisations: Paid-for event, exclusive to MRS Company Partners.

March
6 – GDPR Standards webinar: On the starting blocks – what to concentrate on in the final run up to GDPR enforcement. For MRS Company Partners only. Visit mrs.org.uk/gdpradvice

13 (and 21 May) – GDPR and Data Privacy in Research: One-day training courses. Visit mrs.org.uk/gdprtraining

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Calendar

Member events

January
18 – The Brexit Diaries: Engaging with the public in Brexit Britain, London

February
28 – An evening with Wendy Gordon: From methodology to mindframes, London

March
22 – Frontline finances – How research improved the financial lives of MET officers, London

Training highlights

February
22 – Infographics and data visualisation
Discover how to design an infographic and visualise data in the context of market research.

26 – Finding the story in the data
Focuses on what comes before the storytelling; how to take information and reliably find the key messages.

March
6 – Using statistics to forecast trends and service demand
How statistical methods can help you know when to expect peaks in demand and when resourcing costs can be saved.

7 – Using R in data analysis
Discover the basic principles: how to use R in research; how to limit the knowledge hurdle; and how to write basic R scripts.

19 – Negotiation strategy in market research
Be more confident at the negotiating table. If you want to secure the best value for your delivery and organisation, this course is essential.

20-22 – Essentials of qualitative research
From briefing and research design, through fieldwork and analysis, to the presentation of the findings.

28 – Data science – a practical approach
Learn about the data, questions and tools to tackle increasingly sophisticated questions that stretch the limits of traditional market research techniques.

Conferences

January
25 – Kids and Youth Insights

February
8 – Social Media Research Summit

March
13-14 – Impact 2018: MRS Annual Conference

Find out more at mrs.org.uk/events

Where next?

You've reached the end of *Impact*, but there's plenty more original content to enjoy in the MRS's family of publications, including Research Live and *IJMR*

RESEARCH-LIVE.COM

Breaking the filter bubble
Publicis Media's Heather Dansie and Trinity Mirror's Andrew Tenzer explore the findings of Trinity Mirror's and Spark Foundry's research on the meaning of community in the wake of Brexit, fake news and centralised commerce, highlighting rules to escape your filter bubbles to connect with communities.
www.research-live.com/filterbubble

The focus group is dead. Long live the focus group
For years, the future of the focus group has been debated, thanks to questions about its subjectivity, bias in the selection process and time constraints. Yet our profession is still heavily reliant on such research. Black Swan's Steve King urges researchers to enhance traditional methods with data-driven techniques.
www.research-live.com/focusgroup

Behaviour change for healthcare comms research
Healthcare brands are competing on the margins for success, so campaigns and interventions need to be much more targeted to create behavioural change, say Incite's Pamela Walker and Sarah Angus.
www.research-live.com/behaviourchangehealth

BE360: What's up doc?
Poor health literacy is a widespread problem in the UK. Around 43% of England's working-age population struggle to comprehend written health materials. In the latest of the BE360 series, Crawford Hollingworth and Liz Barker, of The Behavioural Architects, explain how behavioural science can improve health literacy and healthcare decisions.
www.research-live.com/whatsupdoc

IJMR

Why do users in China recommend bike apps?
Since the end of 2016, bike sharing has taken off in China, and competition is fierce. This study – by Liang Ma, Xin Zhang and Gao Shan Wang – looks at the factors affecting users' intention to recommend bike-sharing apps.
www.mrs.org.uk/bikeapps

Investigating brand experience and service quality impacts
Azize Sahin, Hakan Kitapçi, Erkut Altindag and Mehmet S Gök examine the impact of brand experience and service quality on behavioural intentions via brand trust.
www.mrs.org.uk/brandtrustbehaviour

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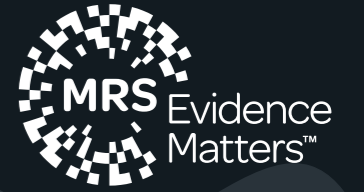
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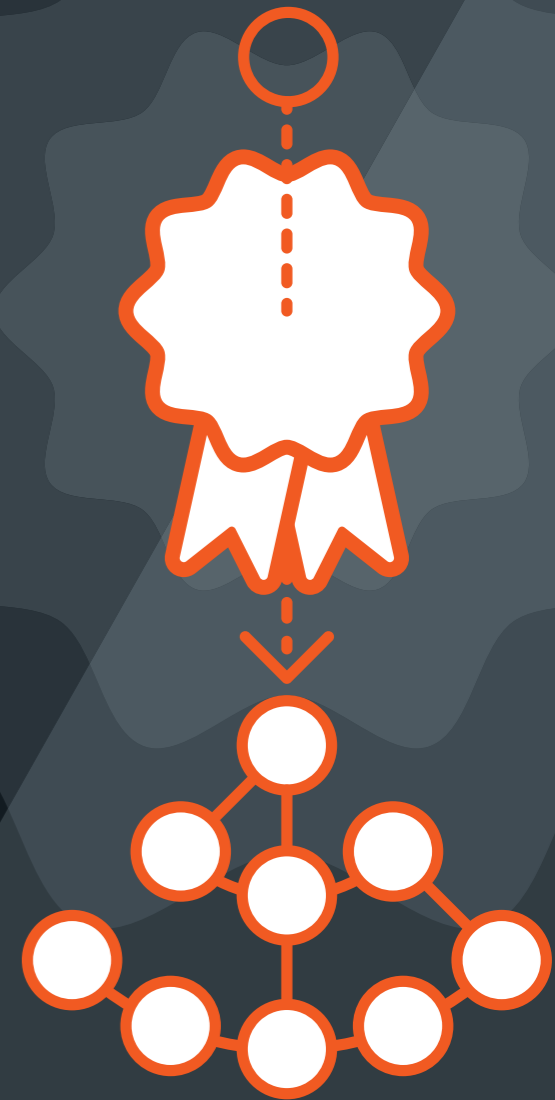
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Driven best practice."

- Stuart Bluck, Head of Research & Insight

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