impact

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Using evidence & insight to make a difference

Mind your language

How to navigate global projects

MRS

MRS Evidence Matters™

EDITORIAL
Editor (maternity cover)
Colette Doyle
+44 (0) 20 7566 1819
colette.doyle@mrs.org.uk

Editor
Katie McQuater
+44 (0) 20 7566 1862
katie.mcquater@mrs.org.uk

Deputy editor
Liam Kay
+44 (0) 20 7566 1864
liam.kay@mrs.org.uk

ADVERTISING
Sales & marketing director
Helen Oldfield
+44 (0) 20 7566 1842
helen.oldfield@mrs.org.uk

Sales manager
Alex Pout
+44 (0) 20 7566 1844
alex.pout@mrs.org.uk

PUBLISHING
Digital director
Christian Walsh
+44 (0) 20 7566 1861
christian.walsh@mrs.org.uk

Operations director
Nikki Bower
+44 (0) 20 7566 1851
nikki.bower@mrs.org.uk

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION
CPL
+44 (0) 1223 378 000
www.cpl.co.uk

PRINTER
Geoff Neal

SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS AND ENQUIRIES
+44 (0) 845 194 8901
info@mrs.org.uk
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ADDRESS
The Market Research Society
The Old Trading House
15 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0JR
+44 (0) 20 7490 4911
www.mrs.org.uk

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cover istock.com / fizkes
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Letting the evidence speak for itself

There's a real feeling of 'we've hit the nail on the head here' when an organisation manages to tap into the modern *zeitgeist*. Speaking at the Market Research Society's (MRS) Impact Conference 2022 in mid-March, former Unilever CEO turned climate campaigner Paul Polman urged the insights profession to step up to the plate to hold business and political leaders to account. He said the MRX sector needs to ensure it is "fact-based in the decisions we take". That's an interesting turn of phrase, particularly in light of the MRS's compelling and judicious slogan, #EvidenceMatters.

Evidence was also the word used by Pete Markey, chief marketing officer at Boots UK. He described the role of the modern marketer as "part artist, part scientist and part champion for the marketing function within the company". He also maintained that the most effective pieces of research balance creativity with the need for robust evidence, thereby using insight to create "a reliable narrative" for an organisation.

Another speaker extolling the benefits of marketing insights was Joanna Jensen, founder of skincare line Childs Farm. She noted that insight is "hugely important" to her brand and pinpointed research as a key growth driver of the business. She explained that it provides the company with a direction to go in and allows her an essential glimpse into the mindset of her customers. Moreover, she maintained that the research that brands showcase to retailers, outlining key data such as footfall and basket sizes, enables them to perform better commercially.

You'll find highlights of this year's conference on pages 12-15, including an interview with incoming MRS president Saj Arshad and a fascinating piece from outgoing president Jan Gooding, reflecting on her five-year tenure. Arshad, chief customer and marketing officer at Santander UK, referred to the "immense complementary overlap" between research techniques and data mining and the use of big data in customer insights. One of his priorities as president will be to discover how the sector can push on into the issue of big data at scale, to drive commercial effectiveness.

Our special report in this issue takes a look at how to manage international research projects successfully. This is an area of specific relevance to UK operators, as projects of this kind represent around 36% of the country's research revenues. While we all like a laugh at the expense of poorly worded translations (who can forget the apocryphal tale of the Chevrolet Nova, marketed in South America with a name that reads in Spanish as "Doesn't go"), language that fails to resonate with panellists, or is wide of the mark in terms of research objectives, may equate to opportunities missed, spiralling costs and data of dubious quality.

Again, the moral of the story is that companies need to do their homework before embarking wholesale on costly commercial ventures: proof positive, if any were needed, of the vital importance of getting your facts right.

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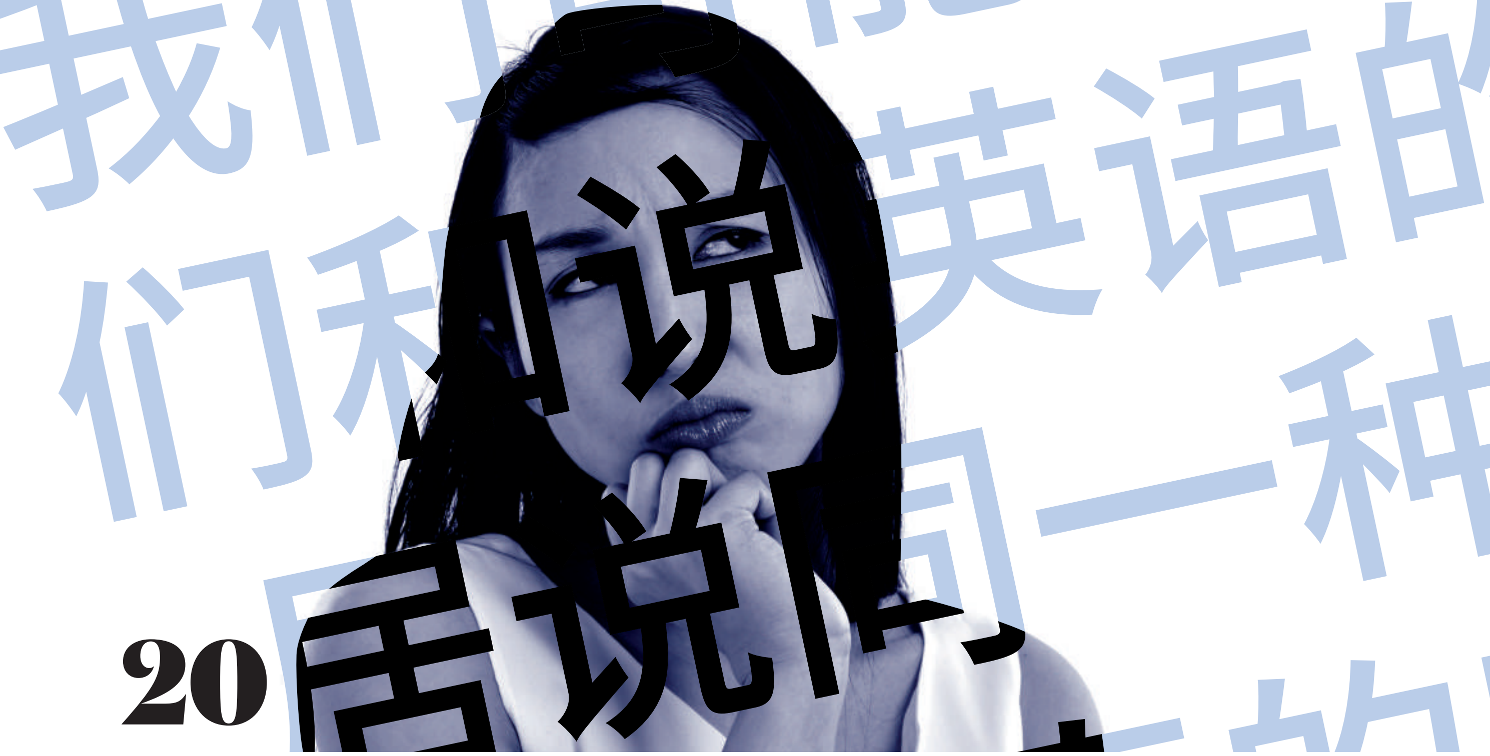

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Columnists

Newhall Room, Birmingham

On the bias

One of the strangest things to emerge in market research is how a tiny recontextualisation of a question can lead to a completely different answer. An extreme case of this is the extraordinary discrepancy between how people evaluate their own lives "as experienced locally", contrasted with what they think of life "in general". So, for example, if you ask people "how happy are you with life in modern Britain?" you will get far more negative answers than if you ask people "how happy are you with life in Sevenoaks?"

Another bizarre discrepancy arises between people's individual experience of the NHS and their wider belief in how it is faring overall. Ask generalised questions about the NHS and you'll get far more negative responses than if you focus on the respondent's own recent experience, which tends to be fairly favourable.

Of course, one possible explanation is that the news, which in Britain tends to be reported on a national basis, has an extraordinary negativity bias. Some of the blame for this probably resides in the culture among journalists, whereby your status depends on the extent to which you reveal that the world is rotten to the core. One older friend of mine even dates this to Woodward and Bernstein's Watergate exposé, which he says changed journalists' self-image from drunken hacks to crusaders on the side of truth.

Journalists ever since have focused on finding the next Watergate, to the exclusion of anything else. By contrast, it may even be reputationally harmful to report positive information. The assumption is that any journalist relaying a good news story 'has been paid to do so', hence your reputation may suffer from reporting anything nice.

It's also worth noting that good news and bad news have very different timeframes – making bad events much more newsworthy. In *Factfulness*, his stats-packed counterblast to the world's default pessimism, Hans Rosling argues that, in many ways, the world is moving in a better direction than everyone thinks. He attributes our pessimism to the fact that most progress and improvement (the escape from poverty, for instance) tends to be boringly slow, and hence not remotely newsworthy. Bad news, by contrast, happens fast. The collapse of a dam or an invasion happen overnight.

Perceptual asymmetries of this kind are everywhere. At the age of 56, I suddenly realised that my own children, twins of 20, haven't really noticed any significant technological improvements in the course of their adult lives. Things that to me still seem childishly miraculous, seem completely banal to them. This was brought home to me when sitting on a plane at Sydney airport, waiting to take off to go back home to the UK. I briefly took out my mobile phone and gave a little giggle.

"What the hell are you doing, dad?" asked one of my children. "Oh, just for 20 seconds back there I turned on the central heating at home," I explained. "God, dad, you're such an idiot!" To me, born in 1965, it still seems remarkable that you can make a boiler click into life from 25,000 miles away. To them, it is simply how the world works.

"I do wonder if we research the young too much and the old too little"

The behavioural scientist Robert Cialdini has done a great deal of work investigating media bias. His finding was that the most potent – and perhaps the most insidious and unnoticeable form of media bias – does not arise from the media telling you what to think: their real power lies in telling you what to think about.

In other words, by making Downing Street parties a front-page story, you raise the significance of a negative story.

To quote Citizen Kane: "Make the headline big enough, I'll make the story big enough." News editors, by determining the relative prominence given to different stories, have an extraordinary power to highlight, downplay and omit.

I do wonder whether we research the young too much and the old too little. Young people lack an adequate frame of comparison. It is too easy to be an anti-capitalist aged 22, when you have seen few of the improvements free markets deliver. Perhaps this explains why older people tend to be a bit more right-wing than their kids.

Someone aged 92, in the case of my father, finds life almost unrecognisable from his childhood. Someone aged 25 has barely noticed anything. There has never been a point in history where the contrast between the experience of the old and the young can have been so stark.

World view

News, analysis and insights from around the globe, edited by Liam Kay

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) affect 1.5 billion people globally

(p10)

“We benefit from expertise and experience that transcends borders”

(p9)

Without data adequacy, the UK economy could have lost £85bn

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“Local pastors and imams could help spread health messages”

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Hygiene practices can reduce NTD infections by 70%

(p10)

“It’s still possible to attract the best talent, but we need to continue to invest”

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Data flows

A Brexit agreement for data transfers between the UK and the EU was agreed last year – how might it affect the data analytics industry? Liam Kay **finds out**

Brexit is a word that evokes many feelings. The fraught decoupling of the UK and the European Union (EU) between the 2016 referendum and the Brexit agreement at the end of 2020 had a profound impact on the relationship between the two entities, with the withdrawal treaty coming into effect last year.

Data analytics and the transfer of information was relatively absent from the main arguments between the UK and EU during Brexit. An adequacy agreement, ensuring the ability to transfer data between the UK and EU without barriers, was ratified in 2021, but included a four-year 'sunset clause' allowing the deal to expire if there were significant changes to data protection laws and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the UK in the meantime. The deal was crucial for the UK economy – Chris Combemale, chief executive of the Data and Marketing Association (DMA), claims that, without it, the UK economy could have lost up to £85bn.

Almost a year on, what does it mean for the UK's data analytics industry? Combemale says there are opportunities for the UK, post-Brexit, if there is a cooperative relationship with Europe. "The UK must now progress new data legislation, such as the crucial National Data Strategy, knowing that a high-standards and innovation-focused approach rests in harmony with the European perspective. We must maintain a strong relationship with Europe while capturing opportunities with the rest of the world in matters of data transfers and standards."

Sarah Hall, professor of economic geography at the University of Nottingham and senior fellow at think tank The UK in a Changing Europe, says there is a newfound appreciation in the UK of the importance of data analytics to the economy, as shown by data's inclusion in trade deals with Japan and Australia.

"There are two sectors of the economy that are real strengths of the UK, but which were quite quiet in terms of the focus during Brexit negotiations: financial services and data analytics, and data and digital services," Hall says. "Neither were included in the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and had side agreements instead, but they are sectors that have been identified as key opportunities for the UK post-Brexit, and that would suggest their success will be more centrally considered in future trade agreements."

The question is whether there is further divergence. Last autumn, the UK government said it would "build on" key elements of the GDPR, but would diverge from what it called a "one size fits all" approach, saying that current regulations "place disproportionate burdens on many organisations".

Hall says divergence from the current GDPR in the UK is possible, although it is likely to be piecemeal changes rather than a wholesale rewriting of the legislation. "There will be some sense of recognition of trying to reflect what the sector wants and what it might benefit from," she notes. "The Treasury sees digital, data, artificial intelligence and blockchain as being important elements of future growth for the UK economy."

Combemale adds: "To achieve sustainable economic growth across the digital sector, we must maintain the core framework of UK GDPR, with the development of industry codes of conduct as specified, and achieve clarity around the use of legitimate interests for marketing. The DMA and many of our members welcome the government's approach in maintaining a high level of data protection, and support some of the suggestions that will create greater clarity and certainty for organisations and people."

Long-term challenges remain, however. Dom Boyd, managing director of Kantar Insights UK, argues that a lot of international talent has left the country over the past two years. There has also been a drop in graduates from Europe and there is a longer-term challenge of attracting less experienced graduates because of new minimum skills standards.

"We benefit from expertise and experience that transcends borders," he says. "It's vital that the sector is alive to the extra barriers that Brexit poses to people coming to work in the UK from overseas, whether they are hard measures – such as tighter work-visa rules – or soft ones, such as the changing perceptions of Britain on the global stage.

"It's still possible to attract the best and brightest talent, but we need to continue to invest and demonstrate to the international market that we are an excellent place to live and work."

Emerging from the shadows

How do you help prevent people from picking up neglected tropical diseases? Sherrelle Parke **examines an M&C Saatchi project in three African countries to examine how behaviour might change in future**

When we ask research participants about personal aspects of their lives, and when we expect instant self-examination of their behaviours, how confident can we be about the level of accuracy and the completeness of their responses? This perennial question is what has driven the development of behavioural insight shadowing (BIS), a bespoke and adaptive approach in the qualitative research of behaviour change, within the Ascend West and Central Africa Programme. This aimed to prevent neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) through effective behaviour change communications (BCC).

The objective of the research was to generate in-depth, culturally specific audience insights. In late 2019, M&C Saatchi World Services adapted the typical ethnographic approach to deliver real-time insights about the attitudes and behaviours of those most vulnerable to NTDs: farmers, fishermen, and families with limited water and facilities. The research locations included urban, semi-urban and rural households in NTD-endemic areas of Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The mixed-method approach included BIS and a large-scale household survey, plus 36 focus groups conducted across the three countries.

- Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) affect more than 1.5 billion people globally *(M&C Saatchi, 2019)*
- 40% of people with NTDs live in Africa *(M&C Saatchi, 2019)*
- Improved hygiene practices can reduce the chances of an NTD infection by 70% *(WaterAid, 2015)*

Behaviour settings

BIS is underpinned by 'behaviour settings theory' as a framework, which considers that all behaviours occur in a setting with distinct components, such as the props, the routine, the norms and the competencies, to name a few. BIS methodology, as used in this project, involved a whole-day observation of household activity. The observation ended with an in-depth interview with participants to discuss and validate the accuracy and normalcy of observations, review and reflect on behavioural drivers, and address potential bias.

African researchers from research organisations MRS Nigeria and Market Liaison were trained in the BIS approach and helped improve operational delivery, ensuring that local languages and cultural norms were understood, specifically the etiquettes of visiting participants' homes and navigating access to small communities.

Opportunities for change

BIS methodology produces ethnographic stories – research outputs that are anthropological and graphic in nature – and qualitative data that complements mixed-methodology approaches. Cultural insights are then used for more impactful BCC interventions that lean into existing norms where possible, improving the applicability and sustainability of BCC messages.

BIS findings highlighted the importance of gendered behaviours relating to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), as well as the ways in which health messages were accessed via local media and local influencers. Findings also identified specific opportunities to impact on behaviour change.

For example, nearly all survey respondents responded that hand washing was important, but BIS observations aided an understanding of a hierarchy of importance when soap, water or time was limited. This prompted BCC messaging that aimed to shift the hierarchy towards the prioritisation of disease prevention.

Women drive the household WASH routines: they make daily decisions about how water is used in the home, they direct children to wash hands and fetch water, and they do the cooking and cleaning. BCC that speaks to their role and sense of responsibility is paramount.

The study found that WASH routines, dining routines and religious adherence are temporal: taking place at the same time of day, every day, presenting an opportunity for messages that chime with established routine.

Many WASH activities involve social interaction: during outings to local water sources, participants encounter influencers, such as pastors and imams. These familiar and respected voices can effectively spread health messages and endorse social change.

BIS adds value by helping to identify and understand the cultural contexts in which daily behaviours occur, and can help develop culturally appropriate BCC. Moreover, it is important in determining whether such intervention needs to be in alignment with everyday routines and attitudes – or in disruption of them.

Sherrelle Parke was, until recently, a senior research manager at M&C Saatchi

Reinvent, refresh & regroup

The world is slowly emerging from one of the most extreme challenges it has ever faced. In this context, the Market Research Society's (MRS) Impact Conference 2022 looked at how society can rebuild in a way that offers true progress and prosperity. Colette Doyle, Liam Kay **and** John Reynolds **report on some of the ideas proffered with a view to reinventing the way we work, create and interact**

The rule of law

As president of the UK Supreme Court, Baroness Hale of Richmond presided over the court's examination of the legality of the government's decision in 2019 to prorogue parliament. This extended over five of the eight weeks leading up to the deadline for the UK to either agree a deal with the EU or depart without one in place.

Hale said the arguments went to the essence of the Prime Minister's role within the constitution, with the court eventually finding against the government. The ruling reversed the prorogation on the grounds that the government's decision went beyond the powers it had under the constitution and undermined parliamentary supremacy.

She noted that the ruling was outside of the arguments of the rightness or wrongness of Brexit. She also underlined how important it was for the court to put the public debates on the issue to one side when deciding on the legality of prorogation.

"Whether we should or should not have left the EU was not the argument. We were not concerned about that one little bit. We were concerned about the relationship between government and parliament," Hale explained.

Balancing evidence with creativity

The most effective pieces of research balance the need for robust evidence with creativity, thereby using insight to create "a reliable narrative" for an organisation, according to Pete Markey, chief marketing officer at Boots UK. Markey described the role of the modern marketer as "part artist, part scientist and part champion for the marketing function within the company."

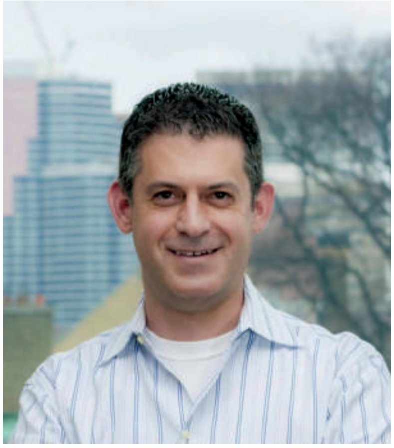
He continued: "It's definitely possible to combine data and creativity; you just need to make sure that both your company and your agency are on board and that you build in time to properly pre-test and measure. There are a lot more tools available nowadays (digital and AI solutions) than there were previously and these give you confidence and enable you to sell an idea within a business."

Markey also commented on the importance of bravery in leadership. "Bravery means not being afraid to push boundaries in terms of the established norms – we need to have the courage to question things, question the way that something has always been done. Some of the breakthrough moments have come when you go into a job and ask: 'Why do you do it like that?' and the answer is often because that's the way it's always been done."

He concluded with his top tips for insights professionals: "Be bold, use the platform that you have as an opportunity to help unlock potential in a business. Find those insights that can make a real difference. Help to shape the thinking of the organisation, champion the customer and drive growth."

Avoid Silicon Valley for true innovation

“Innovation is not invention,” with the latter more focused on ideas or prototypes than putting products to market, according to Dan Breznitz, professor and chair of innovation studies at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto.



Putting an idea into the market, improving it, figuring out innovative ways to produce it, combining it with other products, distributing, selling and servicing the product are, in Breznitz’ words, “much more important in the long run for human welfare, growth and prosperity”.

Breznitz said that the West had become obsessed with creating new Silicon Valleys, replicating a model that does not work in practice and creates widespread inequality, with most other innovative cities and regions looking nothing like California’s economy.

“Most places will never become Silicon Valley and nor should they aspire to be. They have other options that we have stopped talking about,” he said.

Covid-19 also underlined weaknesses in current Western thinking about the nature of innovation, maintained Breznitz. “We shipped everything we thought was not glamorous to Taiwan or China, assuming that it is not important as long as we have ‘the brain’, and everything will be fine,” he said.

“When Covid-19 hit, we realised we didn’t have masks, we didn’t have ventilators and a lot of other stuff. We don’t know any more how to produce them or innovate in their production. Maybe we need to revisit what innovation is all about if we care about the most prosperous UK.”

MRX must ensure society’s leaders are held to account

The insights sector has an important role to play in holding leaders to account, ensuring “transparency” and verifying that decisions are “fact-based,” according to former Unilever CEO turned climate campaigner Paul Polman. Polman decried what he described as the loss of human values over the past few years across the world. He accused business leaders of signing pledges because it was “flavour of the month” and political leaders of “playing with the truth” and “disregarding science”.

He urged the insights profession to step up to the plate to hold these leaders to account. “Market research has an important role to play in ensuring that we continue to have transparency in what the realities are that we’re facing in this world. And that we are fact-based in the decisions we make.”

The former CEO hit out at political leaders for failing. He blamed them for not fixing underlying issues, leading to populist, nationalist and xenophobic candidates being appointed by a dissatisfied electorate, citing the “outright tragedy” of Brexit as an example.

He described the kind of leader likely to gain people’s trust. “Leaders who instil a high level of humanity, operate with empathy, compassion, are strongly purpose-driven, understand the power of partnership, think multi-generational – these are the leaders that instil trust.”

The privilege of presidency

This year marks the end of Jan Gooding's tenure as president of the Market Research Society (MRS). Here, she recalls some of the highlights of her time at the top

I remember how honoured I felt when MRS CEO Jane Frost first approached me, five years ago, to invite me to be president of the MRS. She explained that, in addition to its broad ambassadorial remit, she hoped I would help champion the drive to improve the diversity and inclusion of the sector.

In my first speech to the 2017 conference, I said: "No-one is able to say that their sector or company is completely inclusive. You are no exception – and it's important that you put some energy into addressing the issues that have been uncovered, working from your strengths, so you never doubt your ability to be insightful about the people you profess to understand." I have been so heartened by the huge strides the MRS has made in this area over the past five years, both in drawing attention to the issue and galvanising change.

As I come to the end of my term, I have been reflecting on my personal highlights over the past few years. It probably won't surprise you to know that the first one that comes to mind is the launch of MRS Pride. Michael Brown and John Bizzell first pitched the idea to Jane Frost as a way of providing a forum for LGBTQI people (and their allies) to come together.

I remember walking into a packed room, with people standing at the back, and the buzz of excitement and anticipation as the session began. It was an evening with everything from panel discussions and original research to a poetry recital. Showing, in just a few hours, the amount of work to be done and the appetite of people to do it. It was an exhilarating, historic, inspiring and deeply moving milestone for the MRS. The success of that event was followed by the launch of the CEO Inclusion Pledge and the formation of the Diversity, Inclusion and Equality (DI&E) Council – brilliantly chaired by Babita Earle – and the establishment of further industry community groups and networks, such as WIRe, CORe and MRS Unlimited.

Diverse representation matters because it leads us to be better at our work. For example, I have watched with admiration as MRS board members such as Rebecca Cole have led on enquiries into topics such as "what is meant by a 'nationally representative' sample?" Just one among many challenging questions around inclusion that potentially make research more complex and costly, but must be addressed if the term is to remain credible. It takes courage and commitment to delve into the accepted practices of the industry, and the MRS board has demonstrated its willingness to grab hold of the difficult stuff that takes time and dedication to change.

Another highlight for me was my involvement in selecting the recipient of the President's Medal each year. Reading each of the submissions was always fascinating, and it was tough to make the call on who would be the overall winner. Part of the challenge was assessing the sheer range of issues being tackled, from research looking into election rigging and manipulation strategies in Africa, to the impact of penal architecture on prisoners and prison staff. Meticulous and groundbreaking investigations that didn't fit easily into any traditional research category, yet demonstrated the vital role it plays in solving world problems.

The summer date I always looked forward to attending was the annual awarding of MRS Fellowships – an occasion when individuals with illustrious careers in every corner of the industry were recognised and celebrated. The ceremony was always skillfully presented by the witty double-act of Professor Paddy Barwise and Peter York. Traditionally held in the Paternoster Chop House at its old address, which always amused me once I recognised it as the location for Channel 4's programme *First Dates*, there was always so much mutual respect and admiration in the room.

In a world where trust in our institutions, media and brands has been declining steadily, the role of research practitioners in providing trustworthy data and insight has never been more important. I step down as your president confident that the MRS will continue to provide the invisible threads that bind together our world-leading research practitioners. In particular because it is better placed than it was before to access, understand, and represent all voices in the UK. I shall continue to cheer you on from the back of the room.

Forward thinking

Saj Arshad is chief customer and marketing officer at Santander UK and the incoming Market Research Society (MRS) president. Here, he chats to *Impact* editor Colette Doyle about the expertise he brings to the role and what he hopes to achieve

What do you believe will be the biggest challenges you are likely to face as president of the MRS?
The first will be replacing the force of nature that is Jan Gooding. She's done an incredible job over the past five years. The second will be to work with the leadership at the MRS to plot a course through a post-pandemic world. Finally, I will be focusing on supporting the society with its digital agenda.

Which parts of the role are you most looking forward to?
I'm energised by people, so I'm really looking forward to getting to know the team at the MRS as well as meeting – or at least speaking to – as many members as possible. Learning about the work of the MRS, and the contributions we are making to business, academia and society at large will also be very interesting.

The difficulty of attracting and retaining new talent, improving the survey experience for respondents, and sustaining momentum when it comes to diversity and inclusion initiatives have all been identified by market research practitioners as key action points for 2022. What would you add to that list?
I would have to say declining participation rates: respondents can be bombarded with surveys and engagement is at an all-time low. We need to balance the need to be more creative while ensuring we're maintaining the highest professional standards. As a sector, we need to lead the way in terms of the best-quality briefs, survey design, targeting and analytics that will drive the most successful outcomes.

There is also a need for agility: feedback must be quick or real-time. For many organisations, gone are the days when we have weeks or months to turn around a survey. Growth of data-driven decision-making is another issue: it's not just about the data. The most powerful insight comes when we harness the power of qualitative feedback to answer the 'why' to supplement the 'what' from big data.

Then there's the increased role of technology; this applies across the sector. Not necessarily creating new research methodologies but applying them differently. Finally, I'd point out that security is more important than ever in terms of how we safeguard data and how we can use it more ethically for the greater good.

How will you bring your previous experience at Bupa, Alshaya Group and Santander to bear in this role?
A consistent theme across my entire career has been using customer and consumer insights, both qualitative and quantitative, to inform commercial decisions. Being market-orientated is key to the success of any organisation, so using such a structured approach will only increase in importance. Customers, whether in business-to-business or business-to-consumer sectors, have more and more choice every day. For organisations to thrive, they must remember this, and maintain their focus on understanding the jobs their segments have to do and develop their plans accordingly. This is equally applicable in sectors outside the commercial sphere.

Then there's the importance of developing a compelling narrative for an organisation, aligned to its purpose or north star. This makes sure its people are motivated and clear on exactly what they should be doing day to day, as well as ensuring that the experiences a consumer has are consistent and add up to a bigger story about the brand. It's about harnessing the power of the team to amplify the external impact.

The democratisation of research, and the Office for National Statistics recognising the importance of qualitative methodologies, are just two factors likely to impact on the data analytics and insights industry in the coming 12 months. What do you think are the principal trends that will shape the sector this year?
Being able to identify critical data that will drive action among the massive amount of unstructured data available across a myriad of sources. Advancing data analytical capabilities to drive value through artificial intelligence, machine learning and predictive modelling. Plus, delivering the insights from complex data sets through simple tools, so that they are accessible to the broadest audience.

What do you hope to have achieved by the end of your tenure?
It's a bit early to say in detail, but it will certainly involve working with the MRS to identify and prioritise the three biggest issues that we need to address. Rather than trying to tackle numerous issues, I feel it's more beneficial to make significant progress across a smaller number of meaningful initiatives.

A woman of substance

Joanna Swash, group chief executive at Moneypenny, talks to Jane Simms **about her focus on staff wellbeing, redefining the way we work and learning to navigate the new normal**

It is a source of amusement to Joanna Swash that every time she goes back to her old school ("state school", she emphasises), the same one her children now attend and where she is a parent governor, she remembers her three Ds at A level and the teachers' comments that "I would never make much of myself".

Swash is the group chief executive of Moneypenny, an outsourced communications provider that handles more than 20 million calls, live chats and online interactions annually for 21,000 companies – from the likes of BMW and Innocent to SMEs – in the UK and the US. She has also recently been appointed to the Prime Minister's new Business Council, established to translate the 'levelling up' slogan into practical actions that will boost productivity and growth throughout the UK. "There are three pillars – innovation, infrastructure and skills and I'm going to be working on the skills side," she says.

There is a great deal of work to be done, says Swash, on raising young people who are equipped to work, giving them good career advice, and better connecting the education and business worlds.

"We shouldn't be measuring success by the number of pupils who go to university," she insists. "No wonder so many graduates wish they had done an apprenticeship instead, or are unhappy in their jobs – and we've got a skills crisis.

"We should be measuring success by the number of people who, 10 years after they leave school, are living a happy fulfilled life and doing a job they adore. If you measure the wrong things, you get the wrong result."

People at Moneypenny, by all accounts, are doing a job they adore. Famous for a culture based on mutual trust and respect, the company is regularly recognised in the top 10 of the *Sunday Times* Best Companies to Work For list.

A very visible (but by no means the only) manifestation of the board's efforts to ensure that staff are happy, engaged and supported is the bright and lofty modern atrium in the company's Wrexham head office, which – with its treehouse, model giraffes, and aptly named Dog and Bone pub – resembles a playground for adults.

Happy equation

If staff are happy, then customers are happy, says Swash; for her, it's a simple equation. "My job is to keep people happy so that clients get long-term relationships that benefit their brand. So, we need a great reputation as a good employer, which allows us to cherry pick the best people locally, and then ensure they feel safe and secure, and happy enough to want to stay with us."

It's the same with employees as it is with clients, she continues: "We are open to feedback, we solicit feedback, and we act on feedback – and, since the beginning of the pandemic, we are listening more intently than we ever have."

If the formula is so simple, however, and it yields such great returns (the company expects revenue to grow by 15% this year, to more than £60m), why don't more companies emulate the Moneypenny culture?

"Leaders have to live and breathe the values, and ego often gets in the way," Swash explains. "You know the kind of thing – 'I've worked my way up the organisation and I like having my dedicated car parking space'. You can't be like that if you want a culture of equality. I believe in 'servant leadership' – it's not about what my business can do for me, but what I can do for my business. So, if I walk into the kitchen here and there are pots around, I'll clean them. You do what you can to make it a good environment."

The culture at Moneypenny is rooted in firm foundations. The business was established in 2000 by brother and sister Ed Reeves and Rachel Clacher, and, from the start, they planted themselves firmly in their employees' and customers' shoes. The novel idea at the heart of the venture was to make answering services more personal, by ensuring that Moneypenny people taking the calls on behalf of clients had a strong relationship with those clients: each client has a dedicated, hand-picked PA.

The company's enduring ability to understand fully its clients' and its staff's requirements, combined with its commitment to technological innovation and a strong teamworking ethos, mean it has weathered the two years of Covid lockdowns better than many. It migrated its then 1,000-strong workforce to home working in just three weeks, with barely a ripple to business continuity.

While trying to ensure that remote staff were well supported, physically and emotionally (regular brownie parcels and 'care packages', along with Christmas roasts, found their way to employees during the lockdown), the business was also at pains to support its clients in their hour of need. It introduced short-term and flexible contracts and payment freezes, as well as innovative new services, such as a digital switchboard solution, to help manage high volumes of calls to its employees without compromising the end-customer experience.

"I believe in 'servant leadership' – it's not about what my business can do for me, but what I can do for my business"

These measures meant that, while there was a 50% drop in call traffic during the first lockdown – mostly caused by small businesses closing – call volumes quickly returned to 116% of their pre-lockdown levels, reflecting the growing demand from businesses to facilitate home working for their staff and adopt new technologies to support them.

While some of this growth was organic, Moneypenny used the first lockdown as an opportunity to win more customers by taking advantage of cheap advertising rates. When everyone else was pulling in their horns, it poured its marketing budget into a radio campaign and full-page ads in the Sunday broadsheets bearing the strapline, "Maintaining a reputation like yours is how we've built ours".

"I went down to the Co-op, with my mask on, and came back and filmed myself for Workplace [the medium she uses to post regular updates to staff] unpacking the shopping and looking at the ads in the papers," recalls Swash. "I felt a mixture of pride in the brand, and awareness of the enormous risk we'd taken."

Doing things differently

The advertising campaign was a first, and it paid off. The following week, there was a flurry of calls from big law and accountancy firms. "We were absolutely hitting our target market," says Swash. "Larger businesses take longer to change their strategy, but you have to educate them and work with them, to the stage where they trust you to do a good job with their brand."

The atrium at Moneypenny's Wrexham headquarters, complete with treehouse

But she thinks a greater acceptance of risk is one of the outcomes of the pandemic. "Historically, our clients have been early adopters, and that's changing," Swash observes. "Because we all had to do things differently, almost overnight, doing things differently is becoming more normal."

One seismic shift is that companies are redefining their workplaces. In a few short weeks, the pandemic achieved what some had been advocating for years – a more flexible working approach, including more home working – along with a realisation by employers that staff are equally, if not more, productive when they work remotely. It's strange that the old 9-to-5 'factory' model has persisted so long, given most people no longer need to be together, in one place, between set times, Swash points out.

As they manage the return to work, however, companies – including Moneypenny – are trying to work out how to implement a hybrid model that works for everyone. "During the crisis, most of us managed to spin off a home-working model in weeks. It wasn't perfect, but it would have taken 18 months to get a perfect one, because you'd have looked at it from all sides," says Swash. "What we did showed how resilient and flexible UK business leaders and teams could actually be. At Moneypenny, we had to tweak and adjust and patch things up as we went along, but we had something that worked – and, crucially, that worked for our customers."

"Culture thrives on being able to see each other face to face, and we've got to replicate that with a hybrid model"

It is now focusing on what "a truly extraordinary home-working model" would look like. Not only is hybrid working here to stay, but it also works in companies' interests, points out Swash. At Moneypenny, this is manifested in a very obvious way: it has recruited 300 people since the start of the pandemic and having employees working from home part of the time means it doesn't need to take on any more office space at the moment.

We mustn't, however, throw the baby out with the bathwater, she warns. "We are all human, and largely sociable creatures; we have friends at work and we've missed each other," Swash says. "Culture thrives on being able to see each other face to face, and we've got to replicate that with a hybrid model. So, when people are in the office, we need to ensure they get the most out of being there, while at the same time making sure people at home still feel involved, loved and engaged."

Aspects of the authentic leadership that Swash espouses, and that does so much to make staff feel involved, loved and engaged, include a lack of ego and a willingness to admit to mistakes and ask for help. She's refreshingly honest about her failures – like the small business she tried to run before she joined Moneypenny.

"I set up a company to re-manufacture laser-printer cartridges, on a very small scale. But it was messy, and it was really hard work. I was great at sales, but not so great at everything else," she admits. "My mum said to me, 'for goodness' sake, go and get a proper job'." So she did, joining Moneypenny in 2005 as its first salesperson.

What was it about her that impressed Reeves and Clacher, and that allowed her to rise so smoothly through the ranks? She was commercial director until 2016, when she became managing director, and was promoted into her current role in 2018.

"They trusted me in the sales role, and I understood clients and the products, and the importance – and nuances – of keeping people happy," Swash says. "I also had an entrepreneurial approach: my mantra is 'why not?'. And I like to put myself in others' shoes. It got to the point where they trusted me to lead the business in a way that allowed them to step back."

Reeves remains a director and is an active member of the board, but Clacher now focuses on her charity, WeMindTheGap, which began as the Moneypenny Foundation with the vision of giving new life and work opportunities to underserved people in local communities.

Swash tries to give the same space to her top team. "Another of my mantras is 'only do what only you can do'," she says. "Sometimes, it would be nice to do other people's jobs – it makes you feel needed. But if you employ a talented top team, as we do here, you have to trust them to get on with it. I help them set the strategy and support them when necessary, and then I get out of their way."

But doing what only she can do gets more and more difficult the stronger the team becomes.

"I take myself out of my comfort zone all the time so that I continue to learn and grow," Swash says. "That allows others to come up behind me – I'm creating a vacuum."

Giving back

She focuses on business development, the brand, and motivation, and is spending a lot of time building the US business. Moneypenny launched in the US in 2015 and, in 2018, won private-equity funding to fuel its ambitious States-side growth plans. In March 2020, it bought two US answering-service companies, Ninja Number and VoiceNation, and a year later acquired offices in Atlanta. "We signed a lease on 30,000 square feet of office space on FaceTime," recalls Swash.

Her extracurricular activities are about 'giving back', but they also help to build the brand. In addition to the Business Council, she is involved with The Good Business Charter and Northern Powerhouse, and she mentors young entrepreneurs running fast-growing companies for the Be the Business organisation. The day after we speak, she is due to give a presentation to 40 'future leaders' in the property industry – a large and fast-growing sector for Moneypenny.

At the time of writing, the detailed remit of the Business Council is still to be decided, but Swash is already "being vocal, spreading the word, getting the views of our own people, our clients and the local community, and taking them back to the council. I'm thrilled and honoured to have been given a seat at the table, and my responsibility is to do as much as possible to get the ear of others, in order to deliver change".

Rachel Clacher "could not be prouder" of her former protégée. "To watch her growing our business is humbling," she says. "A brilliant leader", she is ideally placed to drive "powerful national conversations about purpose, opportunity and investment in our people and communities".

As for Swash, she remains resolutely upbeat: "I'm doing this amazing job, in an amazing company, with amazing people – I've been given this new opportunity and intend to make the most of it."

Swash is "thrilled" to be on the government's new Business Council

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Breaking down the barriers

Understanding cultural nuances and couching survey questions in a clear, jargon-free manner are essential to the success of global research campaigns. Rob Gray **helps navigate the minefield that is international communication in the MRX space**

Mind your language! This is not a warning about rudeness, although rudeness might be an unintended consequence; rather, it's a pointer to the problems that arise from using sloppy, hard-to-understand or unengaging language when conducting research. Language that fails to resonate with panellists, or is wide of the mark in terms of research objectives, may equate to opportunities missed, spiralling costs and data of dubious quality. It may prove an insurmountable barrier to accessibility.

There are two major aspects to language-related problems that risk undermining research: clarity of communication and cultural adaptation. In the case of the latter, this is most obviously an issue for international/global research, although it is equally applicable when conducting research among minority groups in the UK who do not speak English as a first language. More on that later, but first let's address the huge area that is international research.

International projects with data collection in one or more overseas country, but controlled and invoiced from the UK, have long been a particular strength of UK suppliers. In 2016, The Market Research Society (MRS) found projects of this kind represented 36% of UK research revenues, and the picture seems little changed since then.

As noted in the *ResearchLive Industry Report 2021*: "The UK retains its long-term status as a hub for management of international projects." Given that around one third of projects emanating from the UK are international in nature, cultural adaptation is certainly far from a minor consideration. Yet many researchers believe there is still a long way to go in getting the language aspects of such projects right – even in English-speaking, or supposedly English-speaking, markets.

"In a global research context, people tend not to think about English-speaking markets," says Ruth Partington, chief executive of Empower Translate, a specialist in market research localisation. "We do a lot of English adaptation – adapting UK English for markets such as the US, Australia, Singapore and India. We do global adaptation for accessibility. If you go into China and you speak UK English, it's much less recognisable to the Chinese than American English, because they've all grown up watching *Friends*, or whatever American TV series it might be. So, there are the nuances and contextualisation."

A good example of how layers of meaning may easily be missed by an English speaker from outside the UK is provided by the so-called 'pork pie plot' against Boris Johnson, in which Conservative backbenchers with concerns about 'partygate' met in Melton Mowbray. How likely is it that someone who has never lived in the UK would grasp that Melton is the home of the pork pie, or the fact that 'porky pie' is also rhyming slang for a lie?

Clearly, one would not necessarily be dealing with such layers of complexity when doing market research. Nevertheless, it is important to understand – and, where necessary, explain – cultural context, so that people can really engage with what you ask them.

Mustard Research strategy director Andrew Wiseman says that, on balance, he would argue that local language is preferable for international research, but that the debate is complex. "For some audiences, especially in the B2B space, using English internationally is the norm, on the premise that decision-makers in global organisations typically speak English as a secondary language. However, for many consumer audiences, the fluency of English is unlikely to be native, although admittedly at a higher level of fluency than our own foreign language skills may be.

"Of course, it's helpful to have access to language skills in the immediate research team, but this mustn't


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be taken as a replacement for native language speakers when it comes to translation. At Mustard, our translation partners are picked on the basis of their native language capability. This provides obvious speed and cost benefits, but also the cultural and linguistic nuances of how consumers in those markets talk about the issues that the survey is looking to explore."

Wiseman notes that there are plenty of phrases that work well in English, but that don't necessarily translate to other global languages – an issue that can be overcome by using native translators. He also recommends native proofreading, rather than back-translating, both for grammatical and contextual reasons. Finally, he asserts that a collaborative approach with your local market client contact is vital, to ensure that a balance is struck between keeping the feedback informal while delivering the data needed for decision-making.

"It's also worth thinking about the context of phrases such as 'quite' and 'very' in research," adds Wiseman. "There's a famous picture that does the rounds from time to time: 'What the English say, what the English mean, what anyone else takes away.' In the context of something being 'quite good', typically this would mean it was OK but had room for improvement, whereas the global context could be 'that was good enough', meaning job done. So, again, ensuring that scale questions are interpreted in context is critical."

The case for investment

Some agencies and clients may be disinclined to invest in professional translation because they see it as a way to keep costs under control. However, this is likely to be a false economy, and it should be noted that the cost of expert translation is far from high. Partington says translating an English survey into the languages of your study typically represents less than 5% of total project cost.

"Translation is such a small cost comparatively compared to the richness of what you're going to receive from it as well," she argues. "For global research, translation should be king. It should be the north star. Everybody should think, 'I am doing this piece globally, I have to translate it and the translation has to be good'."

Good translation will help researchers reach their quota quickly and meet the timelines projected to the client. Ultimately, it should lead to better value and higher-quality insights – great, actionable points, in other words.

Cultural differences must also be borne in mind. This calls for knowledge of local market habits and attitudes. "There are very few occasions when you'd want to use English over a native language," says Opinium CEO James Endersby. "One of the biggest difficulties in international research, we find, is cultural differences in response patterns. For example, cultural acquiescence bias often means certain markets – for example, China – will almost always come out top for levels of agreement. This makes cross-market comparisons extremely difficult. It is also a known problem even within markets, because certain ethnic or cultural groups will be more likely to agree with any statement. Some techniques, such as bipolar scales, can mitigate this, but there's no perfect solution."

Researchers need to think about both client objectives and the respondent experience when designing surveys. All too often it is easy to focus too much on the former, and not enough on the latter. If the respondent experience is not a good one, then meeting client objectives will suffer in any case. It is vital that client language is translated into phrasing that the respondent audience will easily understand.

The aim should always be to use the language that allows respondents to fully understand the questions being asked. In some cases, points out Savanta executive vice-president Oliver Wright, assumptions should not be made about what that language is, and respondents should instead be given the choice of languages that are spoken in their country.

When translating surveys, a native speaker should always proofread them to ensure accuracy and that any complex terms or colloquialisms are translated correctly.

"Cognitive interviews in local languages can help ensure that questions are worded in a way that ensures full understanding across multi-country projects," remarks Wright. "In qualitative research, using native moderators or interviewers can help the research to be inclusive of different sub-groups of the target population.

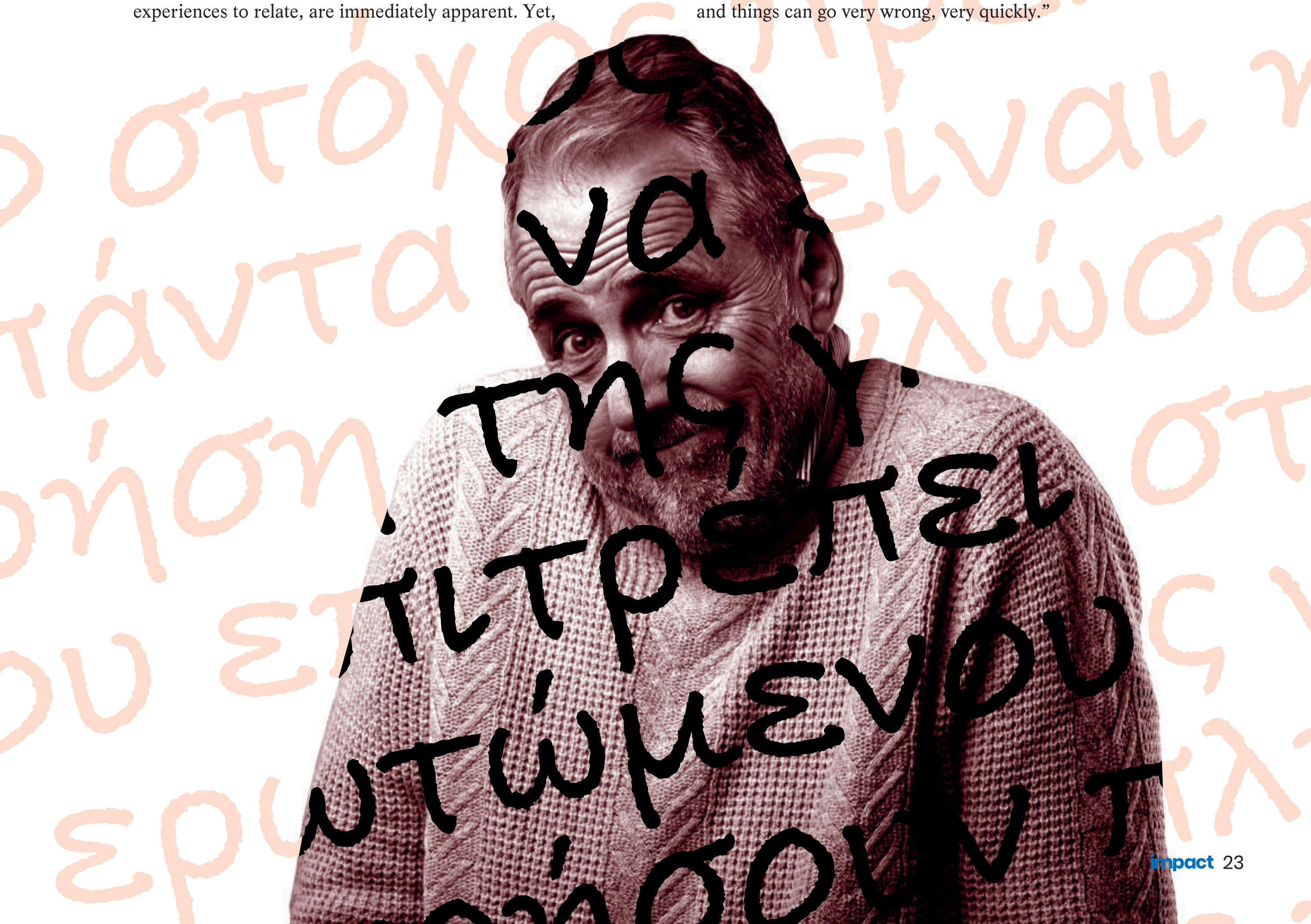
"When the research is targeted at hard-to-reach or vulnerable groups, it can be beneficial to use participatory techniques so that research subjects are involved in the design. This helps ensure that the language used is appropriate to the target group and their experiences." Savanta used such an approach for a project for the British Red Cross on the experiences of female asylum seekers.

The sensitivities and need for caution and thoroughness relating to work such as this, where the subjects may have difficult and even upsetting experiences to relate, are immediately apparent. Yet, in ostensibly less-sensitive areas – such as brand and consumer research – it is still important to tread with care. Researchers are continually under pressure to find ways to make research more cost-effective, quicker and easier, which may lead to shortcuts that are not necessarily helpful in the long run, and may, in fact, be detrimental.

"Translation is such a small cost comparatively. For global research, it should be the north star"

This can, says Charlotte Sykes, research director at DJS Research, lead British researchers to conduct qualitative research in other English-speaking markets around the world for reasons such as: "Because I know the project"; "It's cheaper for me to do it than get an agency involved"; and "It will be quicker to do it myself". Such temptations should be resisted, asserts Sykes, because of the "dichotomy between speaking the same language and speaking the same culture". In more than 10 years of researching internationally, she has learnt that the two are very different.

"As we all know, brand is complex," says Sykes. "And researching brand is extremely complex. Add to that additional layers of linguistic and cultural nuance, and things can go very wrong, very quickly."

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We may think we speak the same language as our English-speaking international neighbours, but do we really? It is surely impossible to decipher explicit and implicit associations for a brand without in-depth cultural context for each market. Sykes provides the example of Americans not knowing what HP Sauce is – arguably making it the perfect accompaniment to pork pies in the rich buffet of international misunderstandings.

In terms of advice, Sykes advocates getting in-market support and localising methods. Localisation should extend to data-collection tools and analysis, on the basis that there really is no such thing as plain English.

A good example of tool localisation comes from MMR Research Worldwide. According to its consumer experience director, Caroline Withers, it adapts its tools for the advanced nature of ecommerce in parts of Asia, while ensuring it reaches target consumers through appropriate and relevant channels in less-technologically developed markets, such as Africa.

"For example, for studies in Africa, our South Africa team adapt their research by looking to connect with consumers through familiar services such as WhatsApp, rather than strict quantitative research tools," says Withers. "This flexibility gains insights direct from consumers in a familiar context, without compromising on the research validity or reinventing the wheel, all at the same time."

"Our South Africa team looks to connect with consumers through services such as WhatsApp"

Market research needs to constantly evolve to capture actionable, appropriate learnings for businesses large and small. As globalisation continues apace, the industry must ensure regional and local customs are still researched, represented and understood. Withers explains that a dwindling in the "easy wins" of mass-market, international products means clients are increasingly looking to target specific consumer segments in specific regions, and throughout these focused campaigns, language is key to representing those target consumers' needs. As a result, the entire industry must look to connect with consumers across borders, to develop brands and offerings to delight people wherever they live and whatever language they speak.

The pitfalls of automated translation

Artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and robotic process automation (RPA) are commonplace today. Capabilities have come on in leaps and bounds and we often use such technology without a second thought. So, why not turn to Google Translate when working on international projects? What's the worst that could happen? Unengaging research, potential embarrassment, reputational damage and maybe even legal problems all spring to mind.

The obvious pitfall with machine translation is that, if you are not a native speaker of the language you are trying to capture, you simply don't know whether it's appropriate. Dullness, nonsense and offence can easily slip through the cracks when translation is done via the internet.

Gender is a particular minefield that is tricky to navigate with machine translation. Pronoun errors can irritate or offend, and it is worth bearing in mind that, in some countries, it may be illegal to be anything other than male or female. Familiarity with, and sensitivity to, local linguistic and cultural norms should not be underestimated.

There is a lot to recommend when it comes to using professional translators with expertise in research, but it's still possible to go wrong, even when following this route. Clients and research agencies sometimes expect mountains to be moved in an unfeasibly short span of time.

"Let's say I'm an agency that invests three weeks going backwards and forwards to my client to build this beautiful survey, written in English, that my client signs off on and thinks is wonderful," says Partington. "I spend hours programming it, making sure the routing is great, making sure it looks good on screen. I do all of that stuff and then give my translation agency two-and-a-half days to turn around 23 markets for a 20-minute interview. What's that actually saying about your global market? It says: we don't value you and the translation is a throwaway piece."

Those new to international research may not realise that keyboard layout may also sometimes pose problems. Even in countries as geographically close to the UK as France and Belgium, for instance, the AZERTY keyboard (rather than the QWERTY one we use here) is the standard. This can be a factor in online surveys in which participants are asked to use specific keys to answer questions or respond to an image. Needless to say, keyboard challenges are magnified when it comes to languages such as Mandarin Chinese, which have a character set that differs totally from the English alphabet.

Another factor to consider is how to approach 'right to left' languages such as Arabic, Hebrew and Urdu – or, indeed, languages where visualisation is particularly challenging. An example of the latter is Thai, which has a space at the beginning and end of a sentence, but no spacing between words, resulting in huge wraps of text lines. Such differences need to be factored into survey planning and design to minimise the risk of confusing participants. Imagine a 1-10 sliding scale. In a right-to-left language, it should be designed so that one is on the right and 10 on the left – the reverse of what we are used to (although experiments have been done on flipping the scale for 'left to right' readers to see if that boosts engagement).

Unsurprisingly, what are known as 'rare languages' present bigger challenges than widely spoken ones. Papiamento, Creole languages of the Dutch Caribbean that, combined, have fewer than 350,000 native speakers, fall into this category. Delivering on briefs encompassing rare languages requires a robust quality management framework, according to Partington – hence, Empower's ISO certification.

"We do a lot of validation in the supply chain. We need to assure ourselves that the external people we use are properly qualified, that they are who they say they are, and will be able to do what we need. For some languages, we don't have any capability internally to validate, so that means the process is not only to find a translator, but also to find somebody else of equal quality to check the work that has been carried out by the initial translator. I think when you're buying translation the question is not 'Will my translation be perfect?' The question is, 'Is the way that it is being managed something I can rely on and trust?'"

"Our job is to translate our clients' objectives and needs into questions that are easily understandable by their audience"

The participant alienation problem

It's understandably easy to offend, confuse or bore people through bad translation or a poor choice of words. However, participant alienation is an even greater worry when conducting an important piece of research into, let's say, a rare disease or condition among minority groups. In such instances, the participant pool from which you can draw may be small to begin with. Speaking to them inappropriately almost inevitably means you won't get the engagement you need to carry out the research. The project will fail and, significantly and detrimentally, the voice of that subgroup will not be heard.

The market research industry needs to think long and hard about participants and how to engage them when writing surveys. Priority is given to question numbers, length, opens and routing. In an ideal world, says Opinium's Endersby, all surveys would be given a final human check by a "non-researcher, with no category knowledge or skin in the project", who would answer questions such as: 'Do you understand what it is that we are asking'?

Clients are understandably passionate about their brand, their sector and their objectives, and often assume the same of respondents. What's more, the majority of people they communicate with on a day-to-day basis will be similarly engaged. At best, this can lead to ambiguous shorthand and, at worst, incomprehensible and mind-numbing jargon. Endersby defines the mark of a good researcher as the ability to combine a strong understanding of formal logic with genuine empathy – two very different skills. The goal is to be the voice of consumers, not only by reporting their views, but by understanding how to engage them with research in the first place.

"Our job is to translate our clients' objectives and needs into questions that are easily understandable by their audience," says Endersby. "This can often be a tricky balance, and when we are talking to participants about particularly technical things, we introduce a phase into our research where we cognitively test our questionnaires with a small number of the target audience before we launch fieldwork. This helps us sense-check questions, language and flow with people who are not research savvy and, potentially, not familiar with the client's internal language."

At the other end of the scale from being overly technical or jargon-heavy is the danger of patronising your audience by trying to mimic them – for instance, adopting slang terms when speaking to young people, which can be cringeworthy and counterproductive. “At best, you are dad dancing in a nightclub; at worst belittling the respondent and prejudicing their likely responses,” says Endersby.

Thinking about participants not only entails talking to them in a language they understand and won’t recoil from, but also aiding the analysis process by appreciating the context behind the responses they give. For example, customer satisfaction research typically uses the term ‘satisfied’ in some way. What does this truly mean? Does it mean the same to everyone – and what about the context?

“If I’m answering a survey about water, does ‘satisfied’ simply mean that ‘I turn my tap on and water comes out’, given that I might not have had any other contact with the water company,” ponders Mustard’s Wiseman. “Understanding the term ‘satisfied’ without the context of their broader experience, or their expectations, can make results more difficult to implement. After all, would consumers talk to their friends in such terms: ‘I’m really satisfied with the meal I’ve just eaten’, or would they be more likely to say ‘That was brilliant/terrible/awesome/rubbish/not as good as last time’.”

It should go without saying that an appreciation of the way people actually speak is a handy skill for a researcher. All the more so in an era of survey fatigue.

In the early days of the pandemic, when working from home was a novelty, some people were happy to complete surveys as a way of filling their time. But just as we have seen Zoom fatigue set in for those who feel their lives have become an endless series of video calls, many consumers have become fed up with completing surveys. For some, the disaffection may be sparked by a sense that surveys are an invasion of their privacy or spare time in a period when it has been a struggle to prevent work from encroaching too much on home life. Others, perhaps, have the impression that surveys are a bit lazy. After all, why should they, the consumer, make the effort to share their precious information and opinions?

Using snappier, more engaging and more relevant language certainly has a role to play in overcoming participant alienation. As a stakeholder group, participants are sometimes overlooked compared with the end audience for the results, and there's certainly an opportunity for that balance to be addressed. Whether by pushing back on 'adding just a couple more questions' requests from clients, challenging the use of internal language, or asking 'what are you going to do with the results from that question?', there are ways in which survey length and flow can be improved for participants.

"As consumers are digesting media in multiple formats today, with clinically proven decreasing levels of concentration, so market research must adapt to this new normal," says Withers. "Communicating clearly, flexibly and effectively is key to consumer engagement. We are constantly learning and adapting our survey language to be more personable and more like a normal conversation.

"We look to provide the human touch with video questions and feedback, as well as integrating AI technology and gaining more conversational responses via chatbots. All of these elements are important to boost engagement, as well as increase the depth and insight we learn from consumers by reaching out in a language and format that can truly connect with them."

Language can be a barrier to accessibility, and the onus is on the research industry to prevent that. Keeping cost per interview to a level that is reasonable and accessible is a big issue, with huge implications for those working in this field, and achieving it depends on engaging your participants right from the start. This, in turn, depends on using language that is clear, compelling and appropriate. In short, there is a very strong commercial argument for getting your language right.

The realities of an English-speaking research world

There are various estimates of our industry's global size, with most agreeing that around 15% comes from the UK and 45% from the US. This means an enormous chunk of the world's mono-market research is likely to be in English.

That might not raise any immediate alarm bells – until we take into account another set of percentages: 1.4% of the UK population does not speak English, and 8.6% of the US population does not have a firm grasp of the English language. In India, where there is global perception that English is widely spoken, that number shoots up to 90%.

If we extrapolate those statistics to countries less familiar to us, on the understanding that there is always a percentage of a country's population that does not speak its official language, we realise there are myriad unanswered questions in our industry.

What impact does the language of our studies have on our research? Are we alienating our participants? What is the effect on nationally representative samples?

In an ideal world, we make research accessible to all potential participants through our own research and translation. In reality, global researchers know all too well that this can be enormously resource-consuming.

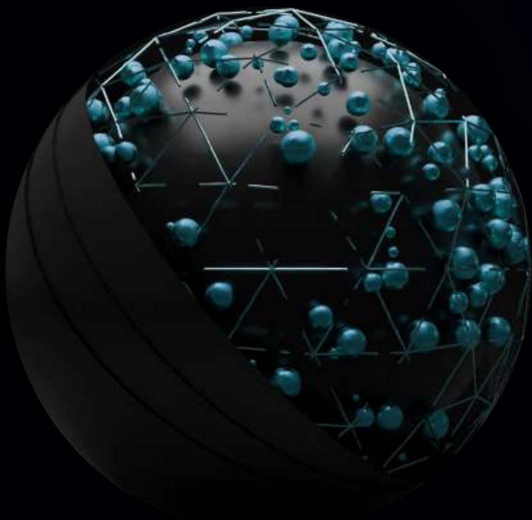
One solution that the global research industry keeps its eye on is machine translation (MT). If applied correctly, MT can be very successful for post-fieldwork response analysis thanks to developments in neural machine translation. However, it remains woefully lacking for survey translation – to the point of yielding engagement rates and response data that mean surveys may as well have been written in English.

So, as diversity, inclusivity and accessibility take their rightful place at the centre of industry conversations – and while machine translation continues to drag its heels – it has become clear that what we are sorely lacking in the insight industry is, ironically, research.

We have ever growing needs to understand, in tangible and measurable terms, the impact of approaching participants in a language other than their mother tongue.

From that point comes solutions that increase the value of hard-earned results – because our industry is only as good as the value of our data.

Ruth Partington, chief executive, Empower Translate



Building blocks

Rightmove is the UK's number one house-selling website and insight is increasingly helping it to maintain its position. Liam Kay **examines how the company is keeping abreast of market changes**

Buying a house is the single most important purchase you will make and is a daunting task for many, from first-time buyers to housing market veterans. It is a purchase fraught with difficulty, from finding the right home and putting in a successful offer, to gaining a mortgage and completing the sale – not to mention the multitude of costs associated with moving.

The challenges have been heightened in recent years, as a housing supply crisis has been compounded by an acceleration in the market following the end of the first Covid-19 lockdown in July 2020. At that time, a government holiday on stamp duty tempted many to take the plunge and change home. UK house prices rose by more than 10% in 2021, to an average of £254,822, according to data published in December by building society Nationwide. The increase was £24,000 higher than figures in 2020.

Those who have made a move in the past few years will probably have used property search website Rightmove, the UK's biggest housing advertiser, with databases containing details on more than four million people across the UK.

Abiola Oni, research manager at Rightmove, leads the company's insight function, sitting within its marketing department. "This entails being very clear about what the research plans for the year look like, bearing in mind the priorities for the business, and ensuring we are providing enough support, from an insight point of view, to enable good decision-making," she explains. "It keeps it really diverse and really interesting for us, as we are working on lots of different projects."

Riding two horses

The company has to tread a fine line in order to keep both of its sets of clients happy: its customers (ie estate agents and house sellers) and consumers (those buying homes).

"There is always that tension between what the customer wants and what the consumer wants," says Oni. "About 80% of the time they want the same thing, but at times there is tension between the two and that's where insight really shines."

The company swings between focusing on the customer and focusing on the consumer, says Oni. This can mean some years being unofficially designated a 'customer year', while others become a 'consumer year', with the work of the insights function part of that shift. Sometimes this is driven by market forces, with changes and permutations in the wider housing market dictating Rightmove's policies; at other times, it is part of a specific company strategy.

"During my 10 years at Rightmove, I have seen that cyclical move, from year of the customer to year of the consumer, and sometimes a bit of

"We are trying to get away from a culture of validation"

both," Oni says. "It definitely keeps the work interesting."

A House Price Index is also used, including the biggest sample of asking prices in the UK. Land Registry data has a three-month lag between a house sale and the data being available, but Rightmove can track asking prices on its website and examine general trends.

Data insight helps to inform the company's direction and the team is close to the senior decision-makers at Rightmove. "We can literally put time in people's diaries," Oni says. "People are very accessible and approachable."

The key, she explains, is being proactive in demonstrating how insights can help people's projects, but also pre-empting some of the issues on which the company is focused. "It is about influencing key decisions and providing a larger point of view," says Oni. "When you look at data, you always bring your bias to it. It is breaking out of that and bringing a more objective view of things."

Rightmove has a database of around four million movers, with the insights department initially a branch of the company's marketing work, focused on surveys for PR requirements. This then developed into using the database to answer questions, before opening up to qualitative research. Oni's role is to try to change perceptions of market research across the organisation.

"We are trying to get away from a culture of validation," she explains. "When people came to me with challenges, they already had in their minds what they wanted to do; they just wanted some evidence for that. By being more proactive, we get ahead of them having made their decisions and make sure they have the full picture – a clearer view of the implications.

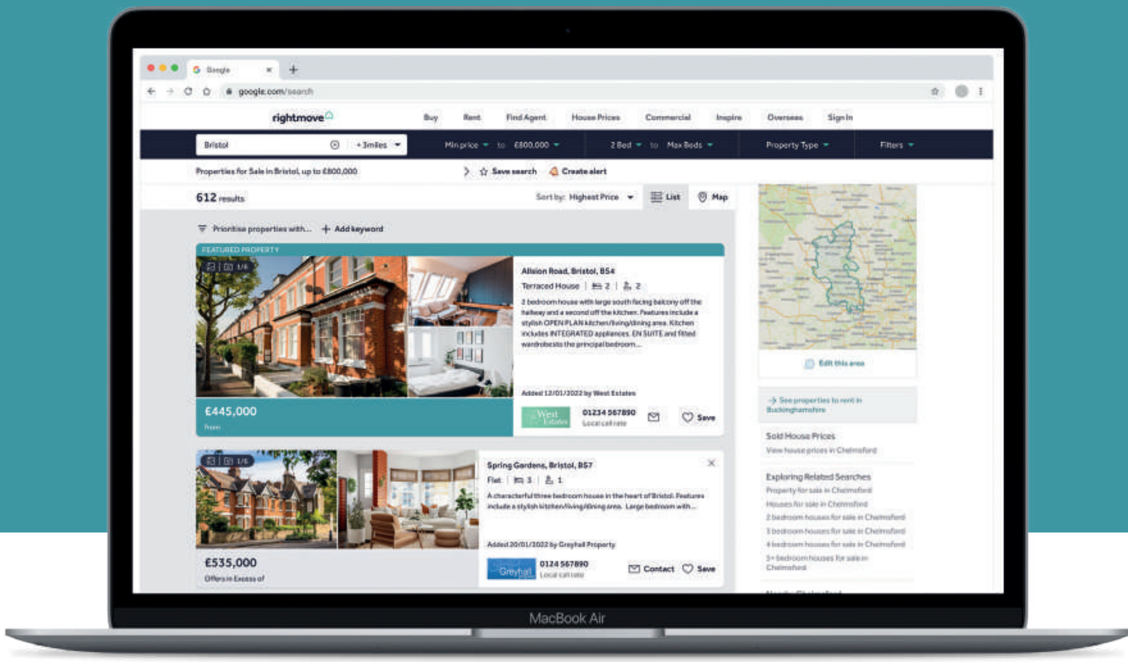
"People have targets and things they are being judged against. That is all they are thinking about. It is the insights professional's job to do and know more, so when you are having conversations you can guide them in the right way."

Home sweet home

For 2022, Rightmove's focus is less on what you could consider its bread and butter – purchasing a home – and more on the most transient part of the housing market: renting. The rental market has long been seen as the poor cousin of buying, with risks for renters over housing quality, rent increases and unscrupulous landlords. Agreeing a rental contract can be tense and complicated.

Rightmove has set a goal of making the renting process as easy as possible, targeting five-minute completion as a way of helping renters navigate the labyrinthine process.

"The renting process is a stressful, tiring one; in other countries, it tends to be much more streamlined," Oni says. "A lot of work is going into



understanding how we can smooth out that process, so, from going to look at a property on Rightmove to requesting, doing the referencing and getting the keys, happens in five minutes. That is the dream for us. Essentially, by setting a huge goal, we are trying to get to a point where the process is condensed."

To help with this goal, Rightmove has bought Van Mildert, a referencing and insurance provider for agents and landlords, which it rebranded to Rightmove Landlord last year. The hope is that this will streamline the referencing process, especially for people moving to the UK from overseas, as well as encouraging online bookings for viewings. "There is a bit of a stigma in being a renter over owning your own home and we are trying to reduce that," Oni says.

This focus comes amid a turbulent housing market after the pandemic. Lockdown in 2020, and the accompanying moratorium on house sales and purchases, resulted in demand skyrocketing, with a surge in prices once the housing market reopened later that year.

This was accompanied by a stamp-duty holiday and many house buyers decided to take advantage of the tax break. The market has 'run hot' ever since. "We saw a huge swell of demand, to the point where demand really has outstripped supply," observes Oni.

"People don't have time to consider the bigger picture"

"Normally the housing market has a seasonal trend – Januarys are very busy, then it dips, demand comes back around April, it dips again, you get the August/September boom, and then it dies down towards the end of the year. We are seeing a very different picture right now. It has been good from a demand point of view, but it is the stock and supply where our customers are really struggling."

The insights department at Rightmove has been tracking the fluctuations in the housing market and has three broad categories that cover its current workload. The first is 'thought leadership' – examining consumer trends and behaviour, particularly how people search for a property and when they complete their house move. This includes the 'happy at home index', which showcases the happiest areas of the UK, with Hexham, Northumberland, the most recent winner.

Oni explains that the research team's work enabled Rightmove to anticipate the housing surge post-lockdown, at a time when there were fears about what the state of the housing market could be during a major worldwide pandemic.

"Because we had access to a rich database of around four million home movers, we were able to predict it would be a booming house market, as there was a pent-up demand that we were able to identify," she says.

The second category of work is audience insights, working to better understand the needs of people moving home, including those who simply browse the Rightmove website without buying. A lot of the outsourced work is qualitative and companies include Behavioural Architects and Jigsaw on customer work, plus consumer work with Sparkler.

The third category is brand health tracking, including a business-to-business tracker and a business-to-consumer tracker, run by YouGov.

Rightmove also has a bespoke tracking system reliant on phone surveys, which Oni says gives more balanced, and less polarised, views from respondents.

The research has found that the emotional part of people's relationship with Rightmove was more important than the functional elements, such as providing exposure for property or tracking data.

"How they felt about the services we provide was driven by the emotional side of the relationship, such as whether they felt listened to, or whether we understood their business challenges," Oni says. "That has really guided us in turning the dial to focus more on the emotional aspect of the relationship."

Still, as Oni suggests, the focus is on making research more accessible, such as by providing yearly round-ups of the insights department's success, and targeting general research findings towards specific teams. It is all part of building a strong research culture at Rightmove.

"People focus on what they are supposed to deliver, as that's what they are incentivised to do. Sometimes they don't have the time to step back and consider the bigger picture," Oni says.

"We are moving away from being gatekeepers of knowledge – it is easy for people to run their own surveys or look into Google analytics. The value we bring is a holistic view of what the business cares about as a whole – that is something that can't be taken from us."

A deeper level

Most of Rightmove's website visitors are actively looking to buy or rent houses, but a significant proportion are keeping an eye on property and prices in their area. The firm had researched the differences between potential buyers and 'browsers' (buyers are more focused on prices, area and property descriptions, browsers on photos and floorplans) but wanted to go a step further. "We wanted to really understand what our user experience was like on a deeper level," explains Oni, "to know how we could optimise the site for more positive experiences."

Rightmove hired behavioural science firm Neuro-Insight to use its Steady State Topography (SST) tool to measure how the brain responds to different stimuli in real time. SST measures electrical activity in the brain and reports on six key metrics: memory, emotional intensity, general attention, visual attention, engagement, and approach/withdrawal.

The study found that browsers begin their journey in a mindset of 'inspiration seeking', where they aren't looking for specific information. This shows through low levels of engagement and memory, but higher levels of emotional intensity, general attention and visual attention.

Buyers have a mindset of looking for fact-based, structured and information-heavy content, which contributes to higher levels of memory and engagement, as the information on site has greater relevance. The research has informed Rightmove's website, helping it attract and retain buyers and browsers.

A warm welcome

With the global pandemic having wreaked havoc on the hospitality industry over the past two years, hotel operators need to understand more than ever exactly what it is their guests want. Editor Colette Doyle **talks to Warner Leisure Hotels' Jennifer McCormick to find out why its insight function is so vital to the company's future success**

Short-break specialist Warner Leisure Hotels is part of the Bourne Leisure group, which also operates Haven Hotels and Butlin's. The company currently has 14 hotels and coastal villas across the UK and is expected to open its 15th property, Heythrop Park in the Cotswolds, later this year. Situated on 440 acres of land next to Soho Farmhouse, the 300-room hotel will be Warner's largest. This is bound to accentuate the importance of the insight team, given that the hotelier needs to ensure a steady flow of satisfied guests to keep occupancy rates high – and a large part of that will be down to tapping into how existing and potential customers think.

Jennifer McCormick is head of analytics and insight at Warner Leisure, and her background means she is well equipped to deal with the challenges of her current role. For seven years she worked at Whitbread, the owner of budget hotel chain Premier Inn, as well as restaurant brands such as Beefeater, Brewers Fayre and Bar + Block. She describes her time there as "a fantastic experience". When she joined the company, it had 500 hotels; when she left, there were more than 900, it had expanded into Germany, and had launched a new brand called Hub by Premier Inn. Prior to that, McCormick was at Tesco for a couple of years as Clubcard marketing manager, having started her career as customer insight manager at Haven Hotels – so she has, in effect, come full circle.

Guest behaviour

McCormick's responsibilities sit within the company's marketing function, but she says it's important to flag up that it operates as a cross-functional team, providing analytics to a wide range of departments, including operations, proposition development, finance and sales. There are three individual strands to her role, she explains, the first of which is customer insight, where the team looks at market trends and competitor analysis. "As well as measuring the guest experience using feedback from the whole end-to-end journey, we help support projects with quantitative and qualitative research studies," McCormick notes.

The second strand is customer analytics; this is where McCormick's team will run data analysis, such as segmentations, to better understand the different kinds of guests who come to Warner. She elaborates: "We will endeavour to figure out their buying behaviour and the guest journey they're going on, and how they are using our product. We will also try to predict and model behaviour. We will spend quite a lot of time typically looking at what our guests have done previously – their past behaviour – and we will then use that to predict their future behaviour; that's always really interesting."

Studley Castle Hotel in Warwickshire

McCormick's team scrutinises, in some detail, the reasons that guests have for taking a short break or holiday. As an example, she alludes to how one guest might be feeling burnout at work: "In that case, they probably just want to go away for the weekend to relax and use the spa, and enjoy some quiet time. Whereas another type of guest might want to explore by visiting a different part of the country. What we do within our team is try to appreciate all the different reasons that a guest might have for staying with us, then that is used within our marketing strategy

"We try to close the loop, meaning that we might deliver a debrief and catch-up with those people a few weeks later, to find out what they have managed to achieve thanks to the information we delivered"

and planning to target them with personalised collateral specifically relevant to their needs."

The third component is post-stay customer experience, focusing on any contact with, and feedback from, guests after they have left the hotel – in a nutshell, "complaints and compliments" as McCormick terms it. "We manage the guidelines and principles for dealing with problems, and our refunds and compensation processes. We also measure satisfaction – to what extent we adequately resolved the complaints from our customers and how happy they are with the outcome," she notes. "We are continuously measuring that service delivery."

Closing the loop

More than 300 team members across the business have access to online dashboards, so they can look at the kind of feedback they have had from guests regarding their stay. Feedback can come in many forms, as McCormick explains: "It might be a case of a team member who a guest has acknowledged for providing exceptional service, or a complaint, as in some problem that a guest has encountered staying in a particular room". The findings are used in a variety of ways, including in the development of Warner's F&B proposition.

One thing McCormick is adamant about is creating actionable goals: "We don't just communicate the insights; we are avid believers in recommending actions to go with them and working with our stakeholders on those actions that they are able to take as a result. We try to close the loop, meaning that we might deliver a debrief and catch-up with those people a few weeks later, to find out what they have managed to achieve thanks to the information we delivered.

"That could, in turn, lead to even more insights, because colleagues often say something like, 'It's really helped me, but I have some gaps when it comes to developing a strategy for such and such a part'."

McCormick clearly relishes the opportunity to bring about positive

Cricket St Thomas Hotel in Somerset

commercial outcomes within the business: "I think that's why I like working client-side so much, because it's an ongoing process of communication – you get to see how the insight has spearheaded change and you get to work with the leaders who are implementing that change. I'm lucky that I work for a business that puts the customer at the heart of its decision-making."

Post-pandemic recovery

Almost all sectors of industry felt the impact of Covid-19, but hospitality bore the brunt of it, as McCormick acknowledges. "When the pandemic first started, all of our hotels obviously had to close down and we were in survival mode. But then, over time, as the country began to open up again, we have been focused on our recovery."

She identifies two main priorities that the company is focusing on in the wake of the pandemic, the first of which revolves around a key point that will be only too familiar to many hospitality operators.

"We have had a lot of staff shortages because some members of the team returned to live abroad, or they moved to other sectors that didn't have to shut down wholesale, the way hospitality did, such as retail," explains McCormick. Another related issue involves supply chain problems, which is down to an unholy combination of Brexit and coronavirus. This has presented the group with a considerable challenge: "Namely, how do we still offer the Warner experience while ensuring that our guests stay safe and healthy?"

Even more important is re-evaluating the company's customer segmentation and modelling. McCormick outlines the situation: "We built a lot of these prior to Covid and, obviously, consumer behaviour has changed considerably in the meantime.

"We've actually managed to attract quite a lot of new customers, made up primarily of people who would normally have gone on holiday abroad, but who have not been able to because of the restrictions and so have opted to take a short break within the UK. That has meant we have had to rebuild our

"When the pandemic started, our hotels had to close down and we were in survival mode. But as the country began to open up again, we have been focused on our recovery"

Thoresby Hall Hotel in Nottinghamshire

models and base these on the 'new normal', so to speak.

"From an analytics point of view, what we're facing currently is that something will change, and then all of our insight and our understanding will suddenly be out of date. With the Omicron variant, for instance, that had its own impact, meaning we had to go back out there and start from scratch, asking people how they felt about choosing to stay overnight in a hotel to find out how it had changed their buying behaviour."

Agency insight

McCormick has nothing but praise for the agencies that operate in the insight space: "The sheer amount of external research that has been made available from the likes of Walnut, Kantar and BVA BDRC – who have all compiled and published industry reports – has proved to be incredibly useful for us as part of the hospitality sector." In particular, Warner recently partnered with Realise Unlimited, the data science and analytics arm of the Unlimited group, on a study called *From concierge to CEO*.

As McCormick notes: "This was a project that spanned a couple of years and it started off very much through a research lens. We have a target market of around 5.5 million people in the UK, who are aged 45-plus and like to go away on adult-only short breaks. Our aim was to really unpick that and find out exactly what it was they were looking for – for example, who they are travelling with, what kinds of activities they are taking part in, and so on. This was conducted via around 12 focus groups across the UK; we spent a lot of time addressing those key questions through qualitative research and ended up understanding a great deal more about our target market and current customers."

The important thing to bear in mind, according to McCormick, is that this is a segmentation that will not only be used for marketing purposes ."This is a business tool that is embedded across all functions of the company. We can use the segmentation in various ways in the sense that, if you know why the guest has chosen to go on that particular holiday, you can better personalise their stay. That might be through providing them with extras, or upgrading their room because it's a special occasion, or being more personal in the way that you greet them when they arrive at the property."

Clearly, the collaboration with Realise was a successful one, as McCormick observes, referencing its holistic approach. "This is the first time I can say I've worked on a project that has truly blended research and analysis together," she says. "I felt the work that Realise did to support me was unique; I would say they brought a fresh and straightforward way of thinking [to the process], which I liked.

"That was the key ethos for us: we needed to keep it simple because this is something that will be used across all of our teams, so if we make the modelling too complicated, they're not going to buy into it."

Looking ahead to the rest of 2022, McCormick singles out one task: testing. "We built prediction models with Realise, so I'm really keen to start testing them and finding out how well they perform. Then I will aim to evolve those models even further, to make them more accurate," she remarks.

"Part of my plan for this year is to set up a cultural test-and-learn around the models, working with the marketing teams to understand how we can optimise them, thereby better personalising the experience for our guests."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The view from the city

Towards the top of every economic cycle, 'red flags' emerge that indicate an increasingly tenuous grasp between economic reality and inflated asset prices. In short, the net present value of money diminishes and future growing assets suddenly command stratospheric prices, based on highly optimistic expectations of future growth. This gap between value and growth is the eternal push/pull between present (cheap) value and future (expensive) growth. Until, that is, the spectre of rising inflation leads to a rotation from growth to value, where a bird in the bush is worth two in the hand.

Legal settlements are made for sums that seem beyond the dreams of avarice. For example, a Spanish court awarded former UBS banker Andrea Orcel €68m compensation for Santander reneging on an offer to become its next chief executive, while $105m was clawed back from Steve Easterbrook, the former CEO of McDonald's, for his failure to disclose the breaking of internal company rules on resignation.

Princess Haya of Jordan, meanwhile, received a £554m divorce settlement from her former husband, the ruler of Dubai. These big-ticket settlements endorse the mood in the public mind of limitless financial assets and a diminishing grasp of reality.

"Big-ticket settlements endorse the mood in the public mind of limitless financial assets and a diminishing grasp of reality"

In the background, there are often wild gyrations in markets, from cryptocurrency to developing market currencies. For example, cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum halved in December 2021, with a total of $1.3tn – or 6% of US economic output – vaporised, while emerging market currencies such as the Turkish lira (TRY) hit a low of TRY18.4/$1, a huge depreciation from the average of TRY7.0/$1 in 2020.

Meanwhile, Jim Anderson, a fêted investment manager who oversaw the greatest transfer of value in history from traditional businesses to the FAANGs, chose to leave the party early and retire from Baillie Gifford and the Scottish Mortgage Trust. Similarly, respected retail industry veterans such as Terry Leahy and Tom Hunter, early backers of The Hut Group, took their money off the table on its IPO, despite the company being marketed as the future of e-commerce.

The resounding message here is "it's as good as it gets". That's if anyone is listening while the party is in full swing.

The man on the Clapham omnibus has only just arrived at the party and he's determined to have a great time. Conveniently, along comes Robinhood with its 'meme stocks' and an IPO in July 2021 at $38 per share, which peaked at $85 in August and collapsed to $12 by January. With lots of free money from furlough payments and lots of free time from WFH, every betting man starts punting the market. After all, with lockdowns, the usual gambling and sporting events, from footie to horse racing and the dogs, have been absent. These new retail punters gravitate towards the go-go growth stocks and so-called Covid beneficiaries, those online businesses – such as Zoom for work, Peleton for workouts, Ocado for groceries and Netflix for entertainment – dominating in lockdown.

Inevitably, as the ugly spectre of inflation raises its head, The Fed and Bank of England start to pull away the punch bowl and, overnight, these stocks became Covid-casualties, with faltering share prices.

In response to the pandemic, The Fed provided a wall of liquidity to incentivise risk-taking behaviour in the markets. Ark Innovation ETF, the flagship fund of disruptive new technologies cheerleader Cathie Wood, skyrocketed more than 150% in 2020, vying with Elon Musk's SpaceX on a journey to Mars before duly collapsing to Earth last year.

Frenzied stock market activity is a sure sign of turbulent times ahead. The frenetic buying in late November 2021, with NASDAQ hitting daily record highs, was followed by furious volatility in late January. Wild market gyrations occur when there's a crisis afoot, as in the run-up to the 2008 financial crisis. To underscore the impending doom, financial results in early February caused ructions among the FAANGs: Meta recorded a $200bn loss in market capitalisation, the biggest in stock market history, while, in contrast, Amazon recorded the biggest gain of $250bn. The FAANGs have grown to represent 25% of the US market, yet Meta's share price collapsed by 20% like a penny stock. A cautionary tale of untrammelled greed and unrestrained capitalism coming home to roost.

Feeling fulfilled

Data analysis is being used to help women in business understand how to achieve real fulfilment through the workplace. Liam Kay **reports**

What does fulfilment mean to you in your career? For some, it is a good work-life balance; others cite career opportunities or personal growth. Higher pay is the holy grail for many, while some long for better social connections at work. One project, however, is using data from a global survey to identify the main 'personas' driving our ideas of work-based fulfilment.

The Female Lead is a charity that seeks to examine the factors that limit women's choices and fulfilment in society. It has launched the Female Fulfilment Finder, a survey generating data to examine what makes women feel genuinely happy. Edwina Dunn, co-founder of data science firm Dunnhumby and founder of The Female Lead, says the project was born out of the "realisation that women are put together as a single group and we know we're not all the same, we're not all born equal or treated equally". She adds: "That's where the idea came from – how we can understand not just what women are, but also what they want that makes them different from one another."

The Female Fulfilment Finder uses implicit research methods to uncover women's underlying desires and wishes, asking quickfire questions to elicit fast responses. On completing the survey, participants receive a 'persona' showing their emotional motivators and how fulfilled they feel in the five dimensions that the project has identified as being important to women's happiness: self, society, relationships, money and work.

"Many people want to make the world a better place for women and girls, but they don't get it right," says Dunn. "Maybe it is because we don't get to the right questions. One of the mantras we use is, 'You can't solve a problem until you understand it'. The best way to understand it is with data, evidence and logic."

More than 100,000 people have completed the survey so far and the data has helped identify 12 personas that offer a broad picture of the personalities that exist in the workplace, and what they crave to achieve fulfilment in their careers. The personas are: achiever; bon vivant; creator; crisis manager; entertainer; everyone's friend; influencer; investigator; knowledge seeker; mediator; peacemaker; and reformer.

The personas have allowed the Female Lead to tell a clear story using the data, to influence company policy in areas such as HR or career progression. They can also improve diversity of thought within a firm – for example, many businesses are overstocked with crisis managers, but underrepresented by other personas. The Female Fulfilment Finder is part of a shift in thinking to recognise the important roles all people play within a team, and to reduce bias towards particular personalities.

"I am interested in what people feel fulfilment is – when are they proud of themselves, happy, frustrated," explains Dunn. "We hear so much about the 'great resignation' and people not returning to their jobs or changing their jobs. Trying to understand what someone wants to get out of their job feels like the right question to be answering."

"Trying to understand what someone wants out of their job feels like the right question to be answering"

The data also enables a greater understanding of how people's needs and desires at work change according to their age and country. With age, the survey found that younger women care more about promotions, opportunities and salary, while this shifts as they get older towards benefits, senior leadership and pensions. There are differences spotted between countries, too – the US has a more results-driven culture, for example, while the UK is more innovation and knowledge-driven.

Dunn says the results of the research could provide a data-led approach to employee satisfaction, as companies realise fulfilment is measurable and strive to improve outcomes. "If you can prove you are raising the bar on employee satisfaction, it is measurable," she maintains. "It is not just an idea or a theory – it is practical and will help people get key performance indicators on diversity delivered."

On the same page

These days, you see a lot of companies throw around buzzwords such as 'data-driven' and 'customer-centric'. We know data-centric companies are more successful, so it's no surprise that it's something for which a lot of companies are aiming – and it seems they aren't doing too badly, either. An annual survey of leading global companies highlights this progress, with a huge 62% increase in companies appointing a chief data officer, or equivalent, over the past decade. Having said this, the report emphasises that it is too early to celebrate.

One of the main reasons people feel businesses struggle with achieving this idyllic state of data-centricity isn't technology – the tech is there, ready and waiting. It's the people: 91% of those surveyed claimed the culture, and people, in their organisations were the greatest challenge in becoming data-driven. Research by Realise Unlimited pinpoints the areas in which UK companies struggle: a lack of training, a lack of business understanding, and data teams not working closely enough with business teams, all make the list.

Working in insight, and in data specifically, we see these challenges every day in some form or another. Whether it's insight reports lacking the magical 'so what', or poorly articulated business challenges leaving too much room for interpretation, we've all struggled with the consequences of these typical situations.

"We need to ensure everyone is speaking the same language and that nothing gets lost in translation"

In my experience, one of the main issues underpinning all of this is communication – ensuring the key message is retained and understood across the entire lifespan of the project. For the communication between teams to be effective, we need to ensure everyone is speaking the same language and that nothing gets lost in translation.

I'm not, by any means, advocating that we should all become fluent in each other's professions. We can't expect market researchers to be expert copywriters, analysts to be expert marketeers, or insight teams to be product designers. Every profession has their own strength and that should be celebrated.

I am merely suggesting that we should all learn each other's lingo, so that we can talk to each other. The data and analytics industry, in general, has a lot of work to do to increase its understanding of wider business contexts. Similarly, wider business has a lot of work to do to finesse the shaping of a brief, ensuring it's grounded in the issue at hand and that the commercial context is communicated properly.

One of the first questions I always ask when I'm about to prepare a document for a new audience is 'Who are they?' We know it's essential to tailor your content to your audience, so it's essential to understand more about that audience. What do they know, what don't they know? Where do their interests lie? What are their goals and expectations, their hopes, questions, worries, hypotheses? What's their background – where have they come from?

More importantly, where are they going – what will they be doing next with the information you're about to give them? Do they want the nitty gritty of the data, or do they just want the overarching business solution?

Once you know who they are, you can work out what your aim is. What's the message you're trying to convey? How do you want your audience to react to your information? What do you want them to think and feel? More importantly, what do you want them to do as a result of speaking to you? What will they know that they didn't know before, and what do you want them to do about it?

Make sure you've given them the tools they need to jump right into those actions. The tools may be a detailed evidence pack with all the information on every technique used, your accuracy scores, your significance tests and your sample framework. It may be a one-page summary. It could even be a few bullet points – this is what you should do and why.

If you know who you're speaking to, what they want to know, what you want to tell them, your aim and theirs, it's a case of putting the pieces together. What is the most efficient way to convey your message to that audience? What potential barriers might you face in this information exchange and how can you overcome them?

Make sure you're speaking the same language so that the key message will be retained and understood across the entire customer journey, from inception through to delivery.

ON THE BEAT

Community policing is a tactic used in many developed nations, including the UK. But can its principles transfer successfully to less economically developed countries? Liam Kay **investigates**

Do you know your local police officer? Do you often see police patrolling your neighbourhood? If the answer is yes, then you are possibly the beneficiary of community policing strategies.

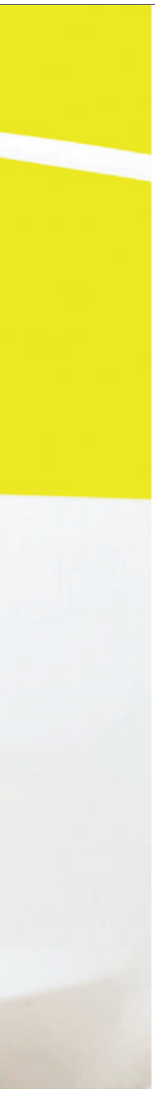
Community policing focuses on improving communication and collaboration between police and citizens, often using tactics such as increased frequency of beat patrols, decentralised decision-making, acting on public intelligence around crime, and community engagement programmes. The policy is used in many parts of the world including the UK, the US and across the European Union.

But how does community policing work in countries with higher crime rates and steeper levels of economic deprivation? Graeme Blair, assistant professor of political science at the University of California, Los Angeles, led a project examining how community policing strategies could work in less affluent nations, running six coordinated field experiments in Brazil, Colombia, Liberia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Uganda.

"We have very little evidence about whether community policing works in the wide variety of places using it now," Blair explains. "We were motivated by this evidence gap, and the fact that community policing is one of the main policy solutions to the current situation, in many countries, where citizens are demanding both a reduction in crime and accountability for police abuses. We wanted to know if it could meet the moment.

"We identified six police agencies in the global south that shared our interest in learning about whether and how community policing could reduce crime and rebuild trust in the police."

The team collaborated with the six police



agencies to implement locally appropriate community policing practices, carefully choosing the agencies and the areas covered to address any risks in encountering police abuse and poor practice. A randomised control trial was created, with areas assigned to be either a control group or have community policing practices implemented. The interventions covered 516 areas with a combined population of around nine million. A further 18,382 citizens and 874 police officers were surveyed, and crime data was examined.

Community policing is widely recognised as a successful strategy in many of the countries in which it has been adopted, particularly the UK and US. It is often cited as an effective way to build or rebuild trust in the police, especially in those communities where there is historical mistrust. When applied to the six countries in the study, however, there were no discernible improvements in levels of trust in the police.

“We think it sounds a note of caution for police agencies and citizens: community policing, as implemented in the global south, cannot, on its own, resolve the twin problems of crime and mistrust between citizens and police,” Blair says. “Broader structural reforms may be required for it to be effective.”

> **“Broader structural reforms may be required for community policing to be effective”**

The study identified that, despite a strong commitment from leadership in each of the six countries at the outset of the experiment, the police implemented the interventions unevenly and incompletely. There was no greater citizen cooperation with the police and, even more telling, no reduction in crime in any of the six countries during the experiment. The report says that “although citizens reported more frequent and robust exposure to the police in places where community policing was implemented, we have limited evidence of police action in response to citizen reports”.

The researchers highlighted three challenges that could have affected the success of community policing in the six nations: a lack of sustained buy-in from police leadership; the frequency at which police officers and leaders were rotated, undermining their ability to get to know the communities they policed; and a lack of resources to respond to citizens’ concerns.

The problem, as the research suggests, is seeing community policing as a ‘silver bullet’ – a cure, in and of itself, to the twin problems of police corruption and dwindling trust between citizens and the police. The study concluded that community policing neither leads to major improvements in the relationship between the public and police forces, nor reduces crime when used in isolation. The researchers muse that structural reforms could, instead, be needed to reduce crime and increase accountability. This is particularly an issue where constraints on resources are evident, as was the case in Liberia, Pakistan and Uganda. In study areas in Uganda, only 10% of police stations received a monthly fuel allowance, with an average of a single motorbike for transportation.

Forces also often struggled to prioritise tasks outside of officers’ usual remit, for a host of nation-specific reasons. In the Philippines, officers were instructed by senior leaders to focus on major crimes, such as murder, drugs and insurgency, rather than local issues raised by the public, while, in Pakistan, police could not legally respond to issues raised by citizens in discussions involving offences such as domestic abuse, harassment and financial misconduct.

Blair says that much of the problem is seeing community policing as a single solution, and taking what is essentially a US and UK-specific tactic outside of its intended context, with the hope of having the same impact.

“Future research – and experimentation by police and citizens – should explore whether better police accountability tools, and changes to officer incentives to respond to citizen concerns, can contribute to the effectiveness of incremental reforms such as community policing,” says Blair.

“We think police agencies should start to look beyond community policing in efforts to improve police-citizen relations. We should be sceptical of policy practices coming out of the US and the UK, as they are being exported to places that are located at some considerable distance from where they were initially tested.”

Blair et al, Community policing does not build citizen trust in police or reduce crime in the Global South,* Science *374, 1098 (2021)

Keeping up with the Joneses, not the Kardashians

In this post-pandemic era, the power centre of influence may have undergone a seismic shift. With so much working from home and home-schooling, plus limited leisure and travel in the past 18 months, our local communities have emerged far stronger, as people have not only got to know each other, but also relied on each other. Trust, closeness and communality have grown to mesh society together; they are key building blocks for driving social change.

Community-driven behaviour change such as this adds to existing knowledge of the science of behavioural change. Behavioural science has often suggested that it is authority figures – 'messengers' such as society's elites, role models, experts and leaders – who tend to do the heavy lifting when it comes to influencing behaviour.

Robert Cialdini, author of the bestselling book *Influence,* includes the authority effect as one of his six universal principles of persuasion – and many behaviour change campaigns have been centred on this assumption, the most recent being President Biden's initiative to counter vaccine hesitancy by calling on TikTok, Twitch and YouTube influencers to spread the word. The rise of social media has also popularised the idea that people can be influenced heavily by celebrity influencers and experts. Yet the pandemic has led many to reject, or be sceptical about, messages from leaders and experts, and may have weakened this impact.

Behavioural science acknowledges that generally knowing what other people 'like us' are doing will encourage us to conform, to do what they are doing. It's a concept known as descriptive social norms. Yet this only tends to be effective once the majority has already adopted a behaviour. Think of those now-ubiquitous comms telling you that four in five people have bought this, or travelled here, or paid for that.

In the early days of society starting to adopt a new, complex behaviour, however, the main influences may well be community-driven – not just people 'like' us, but people *near* us, *known* to us. Behaviours such as driving an electric car, eating less meat, eating a healthy diet, breastfeeding, or doing more exercise.

Social media losing influence

In recent years, people have been faithful to the belief that social media has been a big driver of change via influencers – remote individuals we might look up to, but have never actually met – as well as memes and posts going viral. This is based on the idea that people with a wide reach, a huge number of connections and who span multiple peer groups will have the greatest influence. In fact, recent findings on social media show that well-connected people with many contacts, whose reach spans multiple groups, are often not the most influential for spreading political messages and controversial news.

Rather, communication professor Damon Centola believes the real persuasion for more sticky behaviour change is driven and reinforced by multiple exposures with close peers with whom we interact regularly, such as family, friends, colleagues and neighbours, because they are similar to us and we trust them.

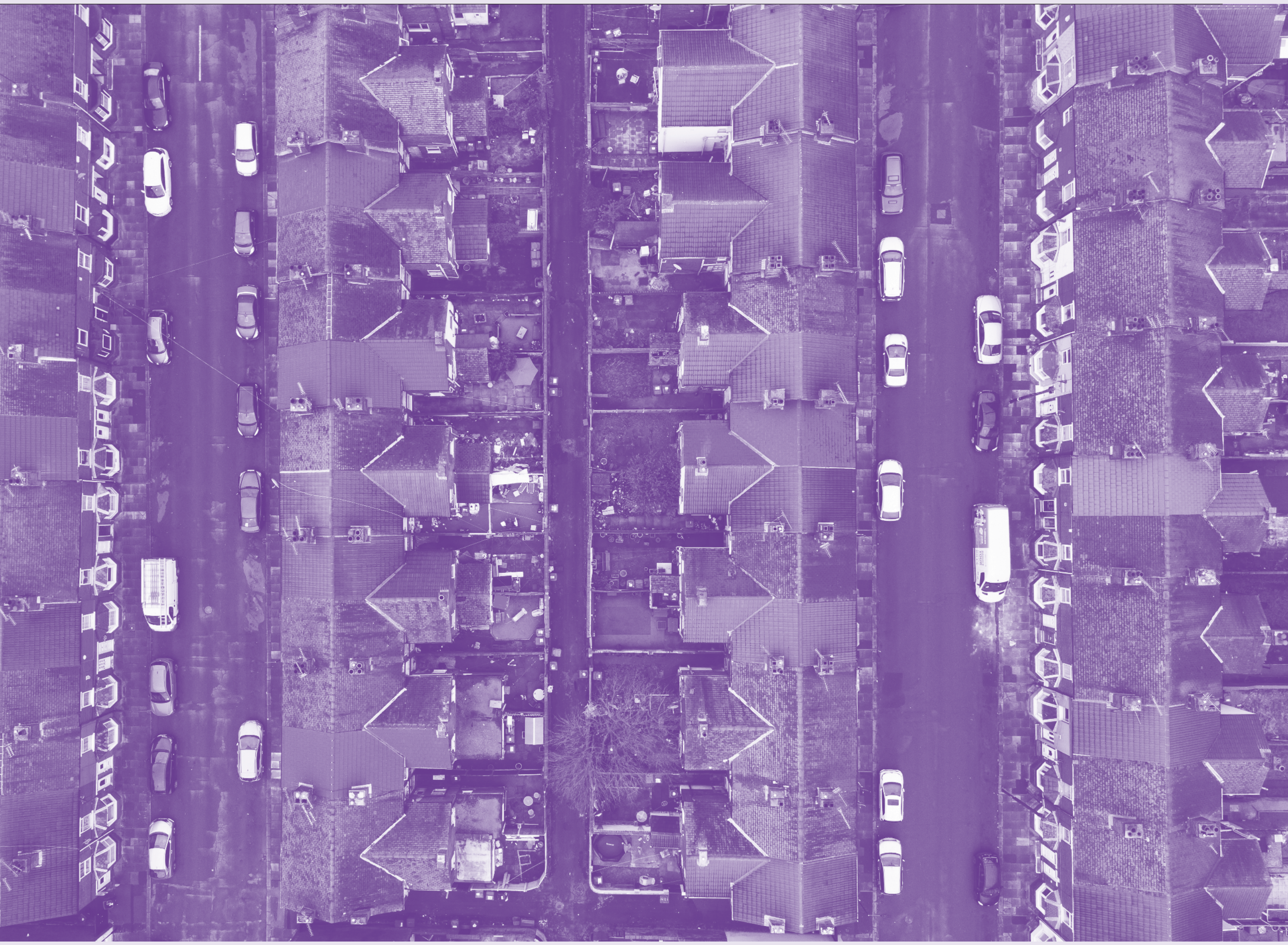
At a macro level, this means that, initially, there is cluster-based behavioural change, as, one by one, different peer groups adopt a new behaviour. A locally critical mass of people feed off each other's emotional energy and change their behaviour, and as that becomes visible to other groups, the behaviour spreads there, too. Although it may spread more slowly than a chunk of information going viral, it typically has a much more lasting impact.

Local neigbourhoods act as drivers of change

While word of mouth (chatting with close ties in our community) is likely to be an important factor, at an even more basic level, simply seeing behaviour change in our community seems to be significant, a concept known as spatial peer effects.

For example, a recent study using machine learning found that the main driver for the uptake of solar panels in Fresno, California, was being within 200m of another house with solar panels. Solar panels show up in geographical clusters on maps. The theory is, if our neighbours get solar panels, we see them, we might chat to them about their experience, and then we go and install our own. This supports previous research in Switzerland, Germany, and elsewhere in the US. Indeed, research in Switzerland found that visibility was a critical driver – the more visible the panels were, the more likely others would be to install them, too.

Local neighbourhoods may not be the only drivers of change for certain behaviours, such as electric vehicle purchases. A report by the National Center for Sustainable Transportation recently found not only neighbourhood-based patterns of adoption for plug-in electric vehicles, but workplace ones, too. Specifically, exposure to an electric vehicle (EV) within a

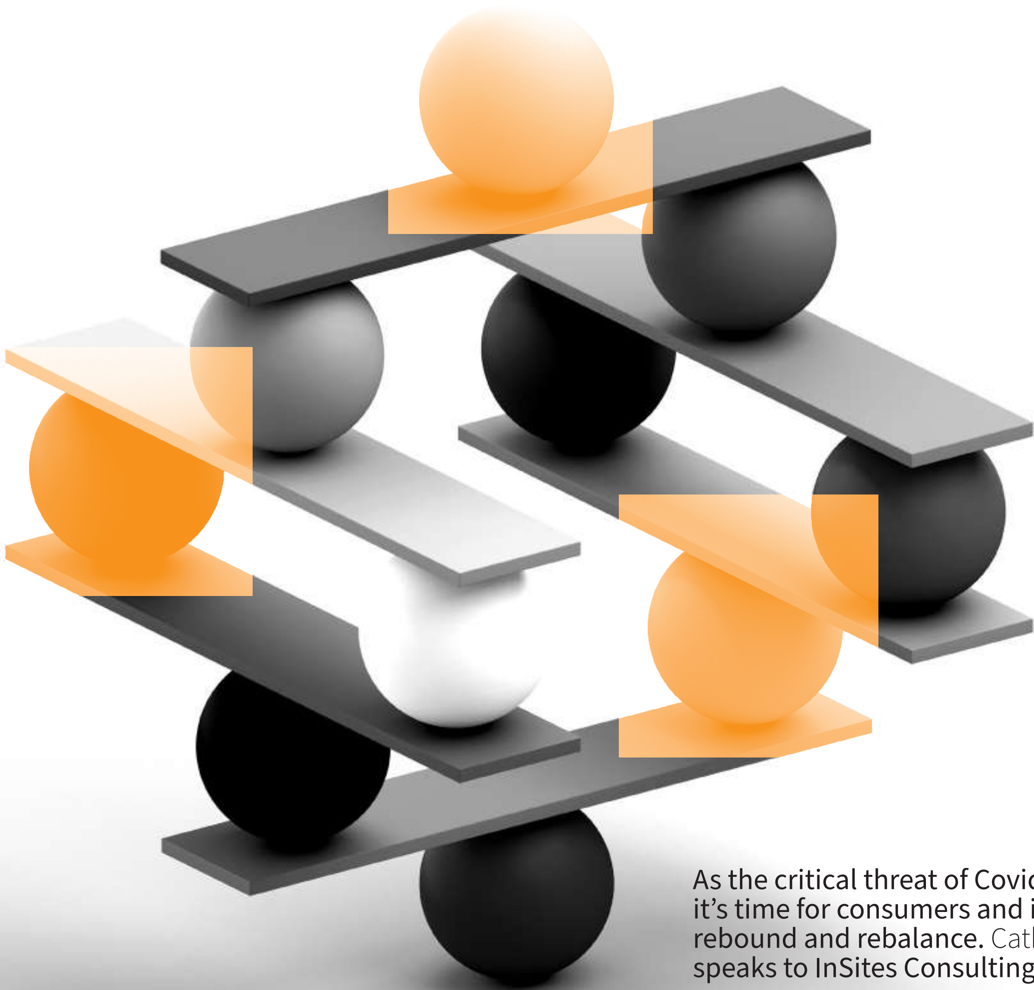


one-mile radius was associated with a 0.2% increase in EV sales. This was in a context where plug-in EV sales made up only 7.8% of new car sales, meaning EVs were relatively uncommon on Californian highways. Exposure to plug-in EVs was also associated with fewer hybrid vehicles, presumably as people prefer to choose a plug-in EV over a hybrid. This effect may also be influencing the UK market; by the end of 2020, electric vehicles made up more than 10% of all vehicle sales in the UK, which means they are becoming ever more visible in neighbourhoods.

Case studies of lower-tier Chinese cities (second-tier Hangzhou and third-tier Linyi) have also found that peer and neighbourhood influences, as well as a willingness to adopt new innovations, are significant factors driving EV adoption there.

Implications for research

- Researchers can explore clusters of peer groups to better understand forces of influence, such as which peers in a group are most influential and why, and how many exposures to new peer behaviours it takes for change to occur. How many times does someone have to come across a close contact adopting a new behaviour to make them adopt it too?
- What is the main driver in peer exposure? Is it simply that people see or hear of their peers adopting a new behaviour, or does it involve word-of-mouth type conversations with peers about their change in behaviour?
- If a behaviour change is visible, such as rooftop solar panel installation, researchers can conduct simple observational analysis to analyse possible cluster effects in the home, the workplace or other locations where people cluster together frequently.
- These peer effects suggest that while top-down influencers and authority figures may be good at spreading simple chunks of information and ideas, they may not be the most effective for shifting complex behaviours such as sustainable travel or getting children vaccinated. Local influencers – people at grassroots levels who are well integrated into communities and peer groups – could well have a more significant and sustainable impact.



As the critical threat of Covid-19 recedes, it's time for consumers and industries to rebound and rebalance. Catherine Turner speaks to InSites Consulting to find out more

Rebalancing act

Many of the trends in consumer behaviour witnessed over the past two years have been accelerated by the pandemic, leaving brands with a need to devise new thinking in terms of applying them to their business challenges. Understanding which culture shifts and emerging trends will shape customers, categories and competitors now and next is key.

According to a new report from InSites Consulting, 2021 should be defined as the year of "collective readjustment". Co-founder and future consumer expert Joeri Van den Bergh explains: "For some, this meant dramatic changes on a personal or professional level, while for others, small tweaks were made along the way. People sought to find a balance between the long and short term, and it is this duality, the balancing of purpose and pleasure, that we now seek to fulfil to achieve happiness."

The report was compiled from proprietary research conducted in November 2021 across 17 markets and 15,000 consumers. In collaboration with the agency's Illume Network of leading-edge consumers, it identifies and explores 10 trends that are shaping the 2022 consumer and their expectations towards brands.

Tapping into the trend of 'inclusive connectivity' – the desire for collaborative virtual spaces and initiatives that create a sense of belonging – InSites Consulting will host the MRS North Awards Showcase in Manchester (and online) on 16 June. The afternoon

InSites Consulting

marks the first time the MRS has held a social event in the region since September 2021.

Chairing the event is Paul Child, senior business director at InSites Consulting and MRS Awards judge. Of the event, Child says: “As our ways of connecting are diversifying both in the workplace and socially, accommodating everyone’s needs takes priority. Being apart physically should not impact anyone’s experience.

“With this in mind. we’re excited to welcome our friends, colleagues and clients in the north of England to join us in person for an exclusive event, featuring five MRS award-winning cases. Of course, being inclusive means accessibility for all, and we’ll therefore be broadcasting the event live across the rest of the UK and Europe.”

The event will feature presentations of five winning case studies from the MRS Awards 2021 that showcase some of the trends identified in the InSites Consulting report, *Consumer Trends 2022: Rebound and Rebalance*.

The five award-winning studies to be presented have been chosen for their collective desire to understand a myriad of consumers, some often hard to reach or even define.

Heriot-Watt University’s research, *Destitution in the UK,* is a prime example of a brand looking to solve problems for underserved causes by using innovative research to drive positive social change.

Created in partnership with Kantar Public and the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research, the project is a great example of a brand tapping into ‘actions for impact’, a trend that has arisen from consumers’ hyperawareness of the weaknesses in society’s systems and their uncertainty of where to start to fix them. Feeling powerless to impact broader issues such as climate change and inequality, consumers will seek to support solutions that directly impact those societal issues that also need attention.

Also linked to social impact is the ‘redefining normal’ trend. As consumers deepen their understanding of social justice, they are questioning those things that society has always presented to them as ‘normal’. Moving forward, InSites Consulting suggests consumers are tuning into products and services that represent our true reality.

Essity’s longstanding #Painstories project taps into this trend and the brand’s latest research – *Closing the gender pain gap*, examining what ‘pain’ means for women and presenting a more accurate portrayal of the complexities of life with a womb – is, it says, a great example of leveraging research to this end. The study was conducted by AMV BBDO and The Outsiders.

Also on the agenda is *Behind closed doors: Initiating a fundamental shift in banking design for families,* submitted by Nationwide Building Society and Lens. It explores how Nationwide has transformed the way it thinks about undertaking financial behavioural research and challenged assumptions and stereotypes regarding the reality of day-to-day money management and the extent to which families are stretched. According to the building society, money is about so much more than a transaction, entwined as it is with belief systems, culture, societal influences and emotions.

Feeding the imagination from Folk Research and Lurpak explores how tectonic shifts in nutritional understanding have prompted a range of new food trends and a realisation that Lurpak needed to update its understanding of its core consumer – food lovers. The insights will feed Lurpak’s advertising strategy for the next five years.

The fifth case study, *Communicating responsible gambling*, comes from Irrational Agency and The Gamesys Group. During lockdown, online gambling spiked across the UK: with people at home, some with difficult financial and family conditions, many responsible gamblers could easily find themselves becoming problem gamblers. It concluded that the gambling industry didn’t need new tools, but to look at problem gambling from a different perspective and reach those at risk earlier with a change in communications.

Headlining the event is InSites Consulting’s Van den Bergh, who will share the agency’s latest consumer study on generational insights. Eager to regain the freedoms lost during the global pandemic, Gen Z is ready to change the world, create new trends and shape future consumer behaviour. The question is: are brands ready and able to help them?

InSites Consulting has been supporting MRS events in and around Manchester for more than a decade (under the previous brand, Join the Dots), most notably with the Best of Impact series that sees highlights from the annual conference presented to a northern audience, an event also chaired by Child.

He says: “It is great to be able once again to reach research and insight professionals in the north and bring colleagues and friends together in real life after the challenges of the pandemic.

“We look forward to welcoming these incredible speakers, as well as, of course, a diverse audience, both in person and online.”

The MRS North Awards Showcase and party will be held in Manchester on 16 June. To be notified when the event opens for bookings, or for further information, please email networking@mrs.org.uk


PRODUCTS
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Research Fulfillment
THE COMPLETE SOLUTION
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Good advice

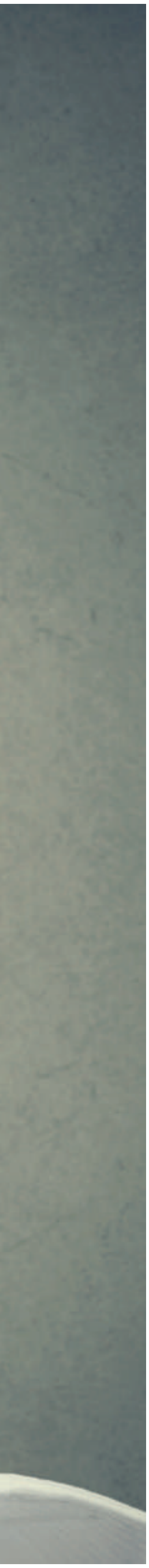
Mentoring, memorably described as "a brain to pick, an ear to listen and a push in the right direction", is a surefire way to fast-track your career to success. Colette Doyle hears how those participating in such schemes can reap the benefits not just professionally, but also personally

In business, mentoring has long been known as a way for the more experienced to pass on words of wisdom to those starting out. Now, it has evolved to become an important tool in the struggle to achieve diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.

Colour of Research (CORe) is an advocacy group for the inclusion of ethnic minority professionals in the market research industry, and launched the second wave of its mentorship programme last summer. One of its mentors, Rajdeep Chana, senior manager of business development at Lucid, says the scheme came about because people of colour in the industry felt there was a lack of mentors who shared their lived experiences. "By connecting research professionals who were struggling with issues around bias in their organisation, faced microaggressions and, in some cases, serious issues around discrimination, we felt that we could finally provide the support that had been lacking in the industry for too long," she says.

Nicole Duckworth, head of Europe at PRS In Vivo, recently joined the Market Research Society's (MRS's) mentoring scheme, and notes that, while it is generally accepted that inclusive teams are more productive and engaged – and that diverse teams outperform non-diverse ones – the challenge of unconscious bias has been known to undermine this. As she observes: "Mentoring provides the opportunity for individuals to explore, in a safe space, what may be hindering the creation of an inclusive workplace. It also harnesses the people in an organisation to learn and grow together, to share experiences and knowledge and create the desired culture."

Eva De Arriba Calero is the director for UK mid-market account sales development at American Express, and a mentor on the lead advisory panel



of Be the Business, a government-funded charity established to help small businesses improve their productivity. She remarks on how a mentoring scheme can have a positive impact on diversity and inclusion in the workplace by "being bold, and having the courage to challenge the way organisations attract and retain employees through improving their vision, mission and values, and encouraging a more open and diverse mindset".

Chana maintains that mentoring is vital to achieve a more diverse workforce – and she has the stats to prove it. "Mentoring can foster equality, it can increase retention of ethnic minority groups and drive greater engagement, leading to a successful thriving business," she says. "Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations found that mentoring programmes boosted minority representation at management level by 9%, to 24% (compared with -2% to 18% with other diversity initiatives). The same study found that mentoring schemes also improved promotion and retention rates for minorities and women – by 15% to 38% compared with non-mentored employees."

"Mentoring can foster equality, increase retention of ethnic minority groups, and drive engagement"

Of course, it is not only the issue of diversity and inclusion on which mentoring can make a positive impact, as Duckworth points out. "At a company level, mentoring programmes can have a significant impact on human interaction and are likely to lead to a sense of individual fulfilment through fostering a deeper understanding of one's colleagues. This understanding is bound to make the organisation a far more rewarding place to work, thereby increasing staff retention."

Mentoring also has its advantages when it comes to employee wellbeing, according to De Arriba Calero: "It can raise awareness among management of the various difficulties employees have experienced through the pandemic, as well as encouraging openness around mental health issues and how organisations can best support their teams."

Georgia Prorok, business development director at Pureprofile, believes that mentoring has helped her flourish in her role after her career was derailed by Covid-19. Prorok was nominated as an MRS Research Hero for her "spirit and positivity" in returning to work after being hospitalised in March 2020 with an extremely serious case of the disease that resulted in her, at one point, fall into a life-threatening coma. She participates in an informal mentoring programme with her boss, Pureprofile MD Tim Potter, and is enthusiastic about the benefits.

"From day one, Tim and I have had a mutual respect and an honest relationship where effective communication has been absolutely key," she relates. "Our work dynamic allows me to focus on what I am good at, but also recognise other areas that perhaps don't come as naturally to me, such as keeping up with administrative tasks. As a result, I have been able to progress within the company."

The benefits for mentees may be self-evident, but mentors have much to gain too, as Duckworth elaborates. "I welcome the chance to give something back and experience the joy of seeing someone succeed. Mentoring others promotes self-reflection on my own learning path – plus, meeting new people with different ways of thinking often provides a new perspective on challenges."

It's not just confined to professional benefits; mentoring can enhance your personal life too, as Prorok explains: "After leaving hospital, I had to enter a rehabilitation centre to learn how to walk and talk again. It was, without doubt, the most difficult time of my life. Tim allowed me to concentrate on getting better without having to worry about returning to work. Having that faith and encouragement helped me enormously."

For Chana, the link goes even deeper: "For our members, race is a part of our identity, so personal and professional become one when we are discussing the challenges that we face based on the colour of our skin."

So, what are the ultimate skills that all good mentors should possess? "I think having faith in the mentee to be able to learn and make decisions for themselves is fundamental to a successful mentorship," asserts Prorok.

Chana believes the key attribute for any mentor is their ability to listen, while Duckworth lists some essential traits: "There are many areas that are important in a mentoring relationship, but some of the principal ones are confidentiality, an agreed goal and transparency."

She concludes: "I have been privileged to have had some wonderful mentors who have had a significant impact on my career trajectory. I now feel in a position to repay that and support others in our industry."

Personal preference

Sexual orientation is separate and distinct from gender and gender identity. Gender identity is the way that an individual describes themselves and identifies with a gender category. Stonewall's Glossary of Terms defines sexual orientation as: "A person's sexual attraction to other people, or lack thereof." Along with romantic orientation, this forms a person's orientation identity. Stonewall uses the term 'orientation' as an umbrella term covering sexual and romantic orientations.

The Market Research Society (MRS)'s best practice recommendation is that, for research and data collection to be inclusive of the population, all relevant personal characteristics should be included. This ensures all participants are equally valued, and their opinions and attitudes are being gathered and represented.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR requires a legal basis for processing of personal data. Some personal data is categorised as 'special category data' and is subject to additional requirements when being collected. Data on sexual orientation is categorised as special category data. Special category data needs to be treated with greater care, as collecting and using it is more likely to interfere with an individual's fundamental rights or result in discrimination. This is part of the risk-based approach of the UK GDPR.

Researchers processing sexual orientation data as well as personal data will need to have a legal basis for the data being processed. When processing special category data, practitioners must have a lawful basis under article six of the GDPR in addition to meeting a special condition under article nine of the GDPR, but these grounds do not have to be linked. The MRS GDPR in brief no 10 – *Collection of ethnic data and other special category data* – provides guidance on what you need to do to meet these requirements and checklists to help identify what must be done to collect sensitive special category data, such as sexual orientation data, in accordance with GDPR.

The Equalities Act 2010 protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. It sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone.

It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of the following protected characteristics: age; gender reassignment; being married or in a civil partnership; being pregnant or on maternity leave; disability; race, including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation.

This ensures that individuals are protected from discrimination at work, in education, as a consumer, when using public services, when buying or renting property, and as a member or guest of a private club or association.

Practitioners must take reasonable steps to design projects collecting sexual orientation data to the specification or quality standards agreed with clients. This includes which characteristics and parameters are to be used when identifying participants' sexual orientation. Collection of sexual orientation questions needs to be appropriately tailored to the data collection tool.

"Researchers processing sexual orientation data as well as personal data will need to have a legal basis for the data being processed"

It's also important to bear in mind the GDPR principle of data minimisation: for special category data it is essential to make sure only the minimum amount of information is collected and retained. Plus, insights professionals must check whether the sexual orientation question is relevant in the context of data collection activity.

Sexual orientation may be very clear-cut for some participants, but others may prefer not to label themselves, and some might prefer not to disclose at all because they don't feel comfortable answering the questions. In some cases, answering such questions could be potentially harmful for participants because of cultural conflicts, including the admission of illegality in some countries. It is important to allow participants to self-describe and to opt out of answering sensitive, personal questions.

There is no one-size-fits-all question and response approach to collecting data about sexual orientation. There is a wide variety of ways to identify sexual orientation, so it can be a challenge to include enough options without making it too confusing for the participant.

Practitioners should consider the following when collecting sexual orientation data from participants:

- Provide adequate preamble/context before sexual orientation questions are asked: this is an example of a very sensitive question, so it is important that participants are pre-warned that this type of questioning is to be included.
- Be clear as to why sexual orientation data is being collected. One example is the 'Why do we ask this?' text alongside the sexual orientation question in the England and Wales Census 2021: Your answer helps your local community by allowing charities, public bodies, and local and central government to understand what services people might need. This information helps monitor equality between groups of people of different sexual orientation. Your answer will help public bodies to identify potential discrimination or social exclusion based on sexual orientation and work to stop it from happening.
- Include a write-in field for the 'Other' response option. This allows participants to report their sexual orientation rather than being classified as 'Other'. Encourage clients to consider the level of detail required: this is particularly important if collecting in-depth information about sexual orientation. The level of detail required for a project should be reviewed to ensure that it is appropriate, proportionate and balanced.
- Respect privacy of participants: ensure steps are taken to maintain confidentiality of responses and that these are conveyed to participants. People who reveal sexual orientation may be particularly concerned about the privacy and confidentiality of their responses. Finally, add a privacy notice: the inclusion of Special Category of Personal Data should be covered in this notice. Consider whether there should be a link to the privacy notice at the appropriate point in the questionnaire.
- Self-completion and online tools should, as a minimum, include an open field for participants to answer in a way that reflects their response if it does not fit in with any of the response options provided. Interviewer-aided techniques for collecting information need to build in a level of discretion and flexibility for interviewers, to ensure the questions are responsive and are handled sensitively.

MRS members and MRS company partners may contact codeline@mrs.org.uk for support and advice on the MRS Code of Conduct, Regulations and Guideline

The need to recruit and retain the best talent

I hope most of you who read this will agree that there is huge pleasure to be found in diversity – whether that is in our workplace, our friendship groups and interests, or even the food we eat.

The young researchers and apprentices Amanda Hammond, LaShanda Seaman, Fatima Mitha and Natalie Hobkirk, who bravely got to their feet to help us launch the MRS apprenticeship programme at Bafta in February, were not only a pleasure to listen to, they were also a lot better at public speaking than I would have been at a similar point in my career. The passion and commitment with which they spoke was a vivid illustration of how much we need young talent and why this programme is so important. We have 10 employers already signed up and we are hungry for more.

Bringing on diverse young talent will help us meet the challenges of innovation and reinvention, examples of which were so much in evidence at our annual conference, Impact 2022. More than that, the new ways of thinking, the removal of barriers, and the challenges to the status quo are all needed in order that we may continue to grow as a sector. The latest MRS Delphi Group report, *The Insight Alchemist*, launched at the MRS conference in March, laid out this challenge with some force. If you haven't caught up with this year's conference yet, it is available on demand on mrs.org.uk.

It is great to see optimism return to the sector as demand continues to increase. We know that this comes with a challenge – to ensure that the demand can be met with an appropriately skilled workforce. Like other sectors, such as advertising, research is under huge pressure when it comes to recruiting and retaining talent. Not only must we bring in new talent, but we must also retain those who are already working in the sector.

Our recent research, in partnership with Daughters of Sailors, suggests that there may be a long way to go in convincing talent that companies are committed to being the workplaces they claim they aspire to be. We all need to be ambassadors for this industry. For that to happen, we must become the best leaders and colleagues we can, helping and celebrating talent from the widest pool available.

Reinvention means capacity and capability building, of ourselves and our teams. Whether it is hearing the sort of speakers we had at Impact 2022 or taking up formal training, MRS is committed to delivering the best support available. Please make use of all that is on offer.

Finally, as we go to print, and as the economic indicators for research seem increasingly positive, I look forward to being out and about, and celebrating this amazing sector in person with as many of you as I possibly can.

Sector and MRS news

Apprenticeship launch

The Market Research Executive Apprenticeship was officially launched in February, at Bafta. With Seema Malhotra MP addressing the event, more than 70 employers, apprentices and sector representatives gathered to celebrate the new programme. Designed to attract and train school leavers aged 18 years or older, as well as to upskill employees already working within a research role, the apprenticeship standard has been created in collaboration with leading agencies and businesses from the public and private sectors.

Company Partner Wellbeing Space

In recognition of the needs of the research sector, which were highlighted by the Mental Wellbeing in Research survey 2021, MRS has launched a new Wellbeing Space, exclusively for employees of Accredited Company Partners. This can be accessed through the Company Partner benefits area of the MRS website.

Making the most of your membership

MRS membership shows your commitment to research excellence, connects you to a network of more than 4,000 experts and gives you access to a huge range of benefits.

Professional webinars

Learn in your lunchtime with our live webinars
As part of your membership package, you get access to 10 free professional webinars a year. Normally priced at £30, this benefit can save you £300 per year. Check out the 2022 programme, with sessions on talking about sustainability to customers, fusing research and AI, and understanding football fans. Webinars are an hour long, with the opportunity to ask the presenter questions during the live event. If you miss one, you can access all past webinars in ‘My Membership’, to view at any time.

Training and development

Give yourself the edge in 2022 with our expert training
MRS delivers the UK’s widest range of expert research training and development. As a member, you can enjoy up to 30% off each training programme – almost covering the cost of your annual membership if you take a course in 2022. Training this year includes a wider range of analytical and data tools, as well as storytelling, commercial and business skills. And, of course, there’s the usual range of traditional qualitative and quantitative courses for you and your teams to sign up to.

Membership mark

Demonstrate your professionalism with the special mark
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Diary dates

Professional webinars

Changing the channel
Explore the current challenges with digital and linear TV measurement, and how advertisers can reach and engage audiences in the right way.
29 April

Talking to customers about sustainability
Discover how brands can motivate consumers to change their behaviour around climate change with constructive messaging.
8 June

Unpicking sustainability
Explore the complex relationship between people's views on sustainability and their purchasing behaviour, and where to focus for green growth.
24 June

Training highlights

Gamification in market research
Understand and apply the innovative approach of gamification to transform your online survey from 'chore' to 'score', with this masterclass.
19 April

Influence and impact
This course covers the importance of emotional intelligence, the 'paradox of control', and developing rapport through non-verbal communication.
20 April

Professional webinars and speaker evenings are free for members.
For information on all MRS events go to
www.mrs.org.uk/events

All our courses and events are currently online and interactive

Survey sampling
Discover best practice in sampling methods, its importance, and how this can impact on the statistical validity of survey findings.
21 April

Behavioural design
Learn how to apply the latest behavioural science to design experiences, communications, products and services that work with the science of human behaviour.
22 April

Review and refresh surveys
Practical guidance on how to conduct a robust review of your quantitative surveys.
25 April

Semiotics made practical
Learn the basic theories and techniques of semiotics, and how it fits into the wider research process, along with hands-on analysis.
26 April

Introduction to behavioural economics
Gain insight into an accessible and robust model for understanding the basis of behaviour change and how to implement them.
27 April

Find the story in the data
Discover what comes before storytelling: how to take information such as research data and identify the key messages for telling a compelling story.
28 April

Online panels and communities
Find out about the software options and how to resource an online panel or community, both in-house and externally.
3 May

Narrative by numbers
This course offers simple rules of data-driven storytelling that help tell more purposeful stories with data and statistics at their heart.
4 May

Project management masterclass
The art of project management is brought to life with interactive exercises designed to equip you with the skills to run effective projects.
5 May

Data privacy in research
Understand the full range of data protection principles and concepts researchers need.
11 May

Bobby Duffy is professor of public policy and director of The Policy Institute at King's College London. Prior to joining King's, he was MD of public affairs at Ipsos and global director of the Ipsos Social Research Institute. His books include *The perils of perception: why we're wrong about nearly everything* and *Generations: does when you're born shape who you are?*

1 Why do people misinterpret societal realities?

The misleading or partial information we get from politicians, media and social media is important – not least because we now have an information system that pushes more of what we already believe at us, through unseen algorithms. We also have all sorts of biases and heuristics in how we think that can lead us astray. Politicians, the media and social media play on these to get more clicks or views, creating a system of delusion.

2 What does the current media focus on culture wars say about society?

We've seen an explosion of media discussion of culture wars in the UK. There are two interpretations of why: first, that it's a cynical top-down political and media tactic to emphasise and capitalise on division, given that conflict sells; or, it's a reflection of real concern about the speed and nature of culture change in the UK that was revealed and reinforced by the Brexit debate. Culture wars are not fractious disagreement about the issues – they are implacable conflict between tribes who have utterly opposing views about what is right and wrong about society. The US experience is not a path we want to follow.

3 How can we bridge the gaps between different sections of society?

What's very clear is that when people meet and interact there is much less division than the caricatures we see online, where the most extreme views are promoted. So, using more deliberative democracy approaches, such as citizen assemblies, and devolving power closer to the people affected are very important.

4 Is the split between generations overplayed?

Absolutely. There is always a generational war supposedly brewing over something if you believe the headlines, but the reality is that we have incredibly strong connections up and down the generations, given our key relationships are through families. This doesn't mean there's no tension between generations – that's natural and healthy to keep society moving forward. But, on whichever issue you look – from Covid to climate change to culture wars – the generations are not nearly as far apart as it's often made out.

5 What is the most startling commonly believed societal 'myth', in your opinion?

One I had to check and recheck when we did the study at Ipsos was the average guesses for how often young women have sex each month. Men think that, on average, women in their 20s are having sex 22 times a month, when the reality is five times. It's ridiculous, but also points to some pretty grim realities about how men see young women: men didn't guess nearly as high for other men and women also guessed much lower for other women.

6 What is the biggest public policy challenge that we face in the decade ahead?

It's hard to look past what the long-term impact of Covid-19 will be. What's clear is how the pandemic has ruthlessly exposed existing vulnerabilities, as those with the least resources or most fragile situations were hit hardest. We will also be feeling those effects for many years to come: this is a truly generation-shaping event, with some quite extraordinarily skewed impacts on areas such as mental health, where four in 10 young people were reporting common mental health disorder conditions.

7 How can researchers help bridge gaps between different sections of society?

I do think we have a vital role to play – firstly in measuring and understanding people well, and presenting their stories in a fair way. The research industry is part of the system that can lead to exaggerated and stereotypical portraits of people and division, and we need to resist that easy media coverage, or compelling – but simplistic – storytelling for our clients. Researchers are doing brilliant work to represent the nuance and complexity of society, and we need to keep doing that.

impact

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