

# IMPACT

ISSUE 11 OCT 2015

USING EVIDENCE & INSIGHT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

# SOCIAL STREAM

Rising to the challenge of  
interpreting social media  
data – 11-page special report



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# Money matters



**Jane Bainbridge**  
Editor

Can there be another industry sector in the UK where the divide between how much people care about the security and performance of a service - and the trust they have in the organisations providing that service - is as great as in the financial sector?

Whether we are princes or paupers, our mortgage and loan interest rates, the security of our savings, and just being able to access the money we deposit - when we need it - matter immensely. As Lorna Tilbian's column (p55) so starkly illustrates, however, the highs and lows of the world's financial markets are complex - sometimes quite abstruse for the individual. They can also be positively frightening, as anyone with savings in the Icelandic banks in 2008 - or with a Greek bank account this year - will testify.

While it may be unfair to blame all financial institutions for the maelstrom of the global economic crash, responsibility for the way banks treat their customers can most definitely be laid at their door.

Survey after survey point to low levels of customer trust in banks, yet the complexity of the market - or the feeling that they are all as bad as each other - results in considerable inertia, and little appetite for switching accounts.

PwC's research (p58) shows that financial services companies are faring the worst in terms of value from research. They struggle to link their research across their businesses, and fail to see how market research delivers value to their stakeholders. Are they doing poor research, not

paying attention to the findings - or just not caring because customers will stay anyway?

Moaning about the banking industry is like moaning about the weather - it might make you feel better, but it doesn't really alter anything. Change will come, however, and PwC found that financial services CEOs expect tech companies to be the ones to transform and disrupt the sector.

But perhaps the disruption can come from within. Jane Simms' excellent profile of Mark Mullen (p20) reveals a banker with the vision, and ability, to build a service around the customer.

Mullen's 'challenger' Atom bank - with its digital-only operation a central premise derived from consumer insight - has yet to launch, so the success of his banking revolution is still to be determined.

But there's no doubt this sector is in desperate need of creative brains and radical business development.

Research has been used at every point in the development of Atom's 'customer-in' model, so will that result in a service good enough to shake people out of their torpor?

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Simms, former editor of *Financial Director*, wrote the Mark Mullen, Atom bank profile on p20 as well as the BT feature on p38.

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### Rob Gray

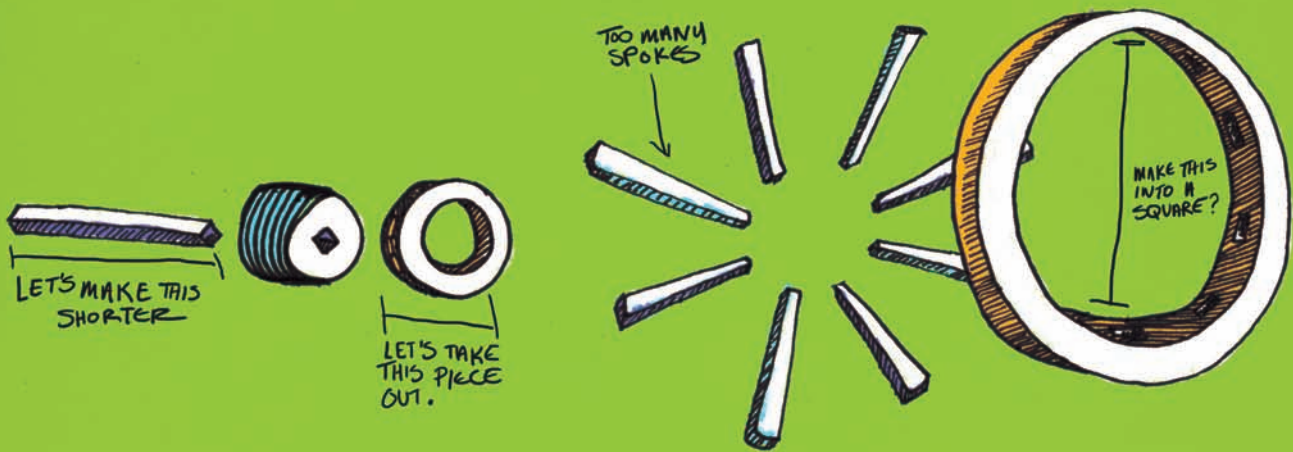


Gray is a marketing journalist and author. In his first feature for *Impact* he interviewed easyJet's insight director Lis Blair p44.

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# The few dictating to the many

What happens if you have a product that 90% of people are happy to eat or drink, but which 10% of people won't buy at all?

That, you might think, is perfectly simple. The product which the majority accepts will dominate in the marketplace, while the 10% will buy another, niche alternative.

And, sometimes, that is what happens. Look at a typical menu, for instance, and you'll mostly see that vegetarians (one in eight of the UK population) get a bum deal. They can only choose between one or two items for each course, and pay a high price, given the cost of ingredients.

But sometimes this is not what happens at all. Counterintuitively, when just a small percentage of people resolutely refuses to eat X, everyone ends up eating the X-free version. All drinks sold in the US are kosher, even though less than 2.5% of the US population are observant Jews. More and more of the meat sold in the UK is halal, even though Muslims make up only around 5% of the British population.

Most carnivores out for a meal will be annoyed if they aren't offered meat. But it isn't the same for non-kosher products. We gentiles and infidels either don't care – or don't know – when we are eating kosher or halal.

What exacerbates this effect is distribution – or, more generally, 'network effects'. It is much easier to distribute these products, even if they cost a little more to begin with. Because with many food products, distribution costs outweigh the cost of growing it.

I was first alerted to this issue on



**“When any kind of complexity effect is present, the shape of the market changes completely”**

academic Nassim Taleb's Facebook page in a debate about GM food. The paper Nassim had written arose from a conversation with physicist Serge Galam. The question asked was: what if a small, but stubborn, percentage of people refused to eat GM food, and – assuming honest labelling and provenance information – could this make it uneconomical?

Just as a few highly observant members of a religion can make many of a nation's foods kosher, so a relatively small number of anti-GM holdouts can render GM food uneconomic to sell.

I find the non-linear relationship here fascinating. It is further evidence that markets are complex

systems, and do not obey the simple equilibrium rules that we are all told to assume. It also raises an interesting point: I have always respected vegetarians, but got irritated when they neurotically worried about the tiniest ingredients of the things they bought. It now seems they may be very shrewd to do this. If it becomes advantageous to remove the small amounts of animal fat from a brand of biscuits, say, there will be knock-on effects encouraging fewer uses of animal products in the rest of the economy.

But, just as a few holdouts can change a product, there is also a concomitant rule: products that are universally acceptable will often be disproportionately successful – more so than better products that appeal to 90%. Pizza enjoys this effect: a very safe food option, not because it's wonderful but because nobody hates it. Wine has become the default alcoholic drink for any social event because a minority don't like beer, whereas almost anyone will tolerate wine. Only serving wine means you can host a party with only one type of glassware.

When any kind of complexity effect is present – whether driven by social copying, habituation or distribution – the shape of a market changes completely. This means that the nature of market research should be different too.

I remember seeing a recruitment brief for research into rail travel that specifically excluded 'rail rejectors' and thinking: "Surely those are the very people we should be talking to?" It seems I may have been right. ■

Rory Sutherland is vice-chairman, Ogilvy & Mather UK

**UK – p14**

Cultural and social mobility has made the world smaller than ever before, says Virginia Monk of Network Research. Attitudes and behaviours are blurring what were once clearly defined segments of the population. Could this be the death of traditional demographics?



# Global briefing

News, views and insight from around the world – from perceptions of Germany following the Greek crisis to how Filipino culture impacts internet use. Edited by **Bronwen Morgan**

**UK – p18**

The effectiveness of mass communication broadcasts during humanitarian crises depends upon the nature of the disaster. They often work best when combined with context-specific, localised information, as a report from BBC Media Action explains.





### Germany – p12

Germany's involvement in the Greek crisis stirred up negative sentiment on social media, but it hasn't dented the strength of its brand, says Edward Appleton of Happy Thinking People.



### Philippines – p16

In Filipino culture, 'utang na loob' is a phrase that encompasses the concept of financial and social debt obligations, and 'kapwa' refers to the lack of distinction between 'self' and 'other'. Jim Mott of Bamm Research discusses the implications of both on internet and social media use in the Philippines.



### Asia – p10

The establishment of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community – scheduled for the end of 2015 – will ensure the free flow of goods and services in the region. Noah Roychowdhury and Mei Rahtomo of Northstar discuss the implications for researchers.



## ASIA

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) plans to have a common market by the end of 2015.

**Noah Roychowdhury** and **Mei Rahtomo**, of Northstar – which established an ASEAN hub operating out of Indonesia earlier this year – discuss the impact this could have on business

**T**he Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a group of 10 countries that represents around 600m people. It was set up in 1967, in Bangkok, by Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, and these five have since been joined by Brunei, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar and Cambodia.

With 15 languages, around 1,000 dialects and multiple faiths, ASEAN is one of the most diverse cultural regions. By the end of 2015, it plans to establish a common market – the ASEAN Economic Community – which will ensure the free flow of goods, capital, services, investment and skilled labour.

There is hope in the region that this gesture of economic solidarity will signal to the wider world that the time has come for the ASEAN region to be recognised as a positive counterpoint to the slowing growth in China and India.

This hope was reflected in the July trip to the region by David Cameron, the UK Prime Minister. He is expected to push for progress on a free-trade deal between the European Union and ASEAN, which Downing Street believes could provide £3bn a year for the British economy. At the same time, however, there is an underlying anxiety about whether nations that have mostly viewed each other as economic adversaries can act together as one, credible economic zone.

According to the secretary-general of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in comments made earlier this year at the World Economic Forum in Davos, there are a number of economic issues that need to be addressed if the optimistic outlook for the region is to be realised.

For instance, to drive forward competitiveness, productivity and job creation, all the markets will



need to sustain strong productivity growth and commit to structural reforms in key sectors such as infrastructure, investment, education and green growth to drive forward job creation, productivity and competitiveness. They will also need to tackle poverty and concentrate on developing human capital.

Income disparities are still widespread, both within countries and between regions. For example, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita ranges from \$1,300 in Myanmar to more than \$48,000 in Singapore and Brunei.

Even within the OECD, there is recognition that the ASEAN Economic Community is one of the most ambitious programmes of

economic cooperation in the developing world, with huge potential gains.

Against the backdrop of this macro-economic context, research agency Northstar established an ASEAN hub operating out of Jakarta, Indonesia, in June. Mei Rahtomo, the hub's managing director, makes a number of operational observations that are relevant to working across the region:

### **Business positioning**

In Indonesia, the term 'market research' is legal and regulatory shorthand for data collection, and our initial legal guidance suggested this is true for most markets in the region. As a result, it has been critical



for organisations such as Northstar – that sit further along the analytical value chain – to emphasise the business consultancy dimension of our services. Defining the principal business position correctly in the licensing process is the cornerstone of a successful start-up.

### Internet challenges

Internet access is growing in the ASEAN region. According to the latest Internet Society report, the region’s web-connected population doubled from 81m in 2009 to 162m in 2013. But compared with the rest of the world (40% average penetration), developed economies (78%) and emerging economies (32%), ASEAN connectivity lags at 26%.

Furthermore, there is significant variation within the region, with Singapore boasting 73% internet penetration and Myanmar just 1%.

As a result, there is considerable nervousness over using internet-based approaches to data collection in the ASEAN region. Phone- and paper-based data collection will, therefore, continue to be part of the data collection mix in the future.

### Innovation delivery

There is a huge appetite across the ASEAN region for learning about innovative analytical approaches. The adoption of social science thinking (qualitatively) or the unlocking of implicit thinking – via quantitative neuroscience

approaches – have found a ready and willing multinational corporation (MNC) client audience across sectors.

There is an operational challenge in putting these innovative approaches into practice, however, as they are often constrained by internal MNC client guidelines and commissioning precedents.

We anticipate that the first wave of innovative practices to be adopted in the ASEAN region may be triggered by clients that are not traditional MNCs, but that operate across a limited number of markets in the region.

### Creating business success

Noah Roychowdhury, Northstar’s principal for ASEAN, believes that the formation of the economic community will have an impact on regional insight suppliers, with three distinct business challenges:

#### 1. Credibility

We anticipate that by the last quarter of 2018-19, there will be a growth of dashboard/tracker-type businesses that cater to the whole economic area. Suppliers who are positioned to take advantage of their scale or partnerships will be able to succeed in this new economic reality. Creating regional credibility will be key to future success.

#### 2. Commissioning

Singapore has, for the past 20 years, been the commissioning centre for regional MNC businesses. One of the principal factors that has shaped this is the regulatory ease of doing business from the city state. We anticipate that there will be a greater geographic dispersal of commissioning authority as a consequence of the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community. In time, the centre of gravity will shift to the largest markets in the region.

#### 3. Localisation

Unlike in China or India, the medium-term opportunities resulting from the ASEAN Economic Community will be best harvested by local and regional businesses. MNCs will follow the innovation pathways that are set up by more agile local/regional operators. This is already being borne out by our early project experience in Jakarta.

# Fearing the wurst

Despite negative sentiment across social media and criticism from leading economists and financial journalists, Germany's involvement in the Greek crisis has seemingly failed to dent the strength of its brand.  
By **Edward Appleton** of Happy Thinking People



**R**emember the Greek financial crisis? While the UK was less involved, it will probably stick in the mind of many Germans. Prominent economists – Paul Krugman, Joseph Stiglitz and Thomas Piketty – attacked Germany’s economic stance in many influential English language newspapers, including the *Financial Times*. Prominent *Guardian* journalists were equally vocal in attacking Germany. *The New York Times* in one headline suggested that Germany was ‘risking its reputation’.

Social media, notably Twitter, was awash with anti-German sentiment, with #boycottgermany trending strongly immediately after the agreement between Greece and its creditors.

Germany is an important global exporter, and in 2014 was the third-largest market research market in the world, according to Esomar. Equally it’s a market – or a country – that is often misunderstood.

Did the negativity accompanying the Greek bailout have any noticeable perceptual impact on brand Germany? Or was it just a pinprick from a vocal minority?

Happy Thinking People is a globally operating research and marketing consultancy with German roots. We took a pulse check across our key markets – Asia, South America and the US – to see to what extent, if any, perceptions of German-ness had suffered among our clients.

It hadn’t; the tenor of the feedback was that German-ness is an underlying cultural factor that is continually appreciated. Being well-organised, analytical, strategic in approach, reliable... clients are grateful for it, especially in areas of the world where things don’t necessarily run 100% smoothly or according to plan.

They even smile about it in a positive sense – it allows them to relax a little more – knowing that there’s a high(er) likelihood that things – recruitment, technical issues, timings, quotas, reporting, and so on – will work out operationally, but also that there will be a high overall sense of rigour and quality from start to finish.

The managing director of our office in Mumbai, Sabrina Schöder, a native German who has lived and worked in India for more than eight years and speaks good Hindi, puts it like this: “Clients are often glad to see me as a German as part of a project team, or at a de-brief. They like the fact that we say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ rather than ‘maybe’. We give clear, straightforward recommendations, rather than sitting on the fence.”

Which is not to say that German researchers can’t see grey zones, handle ambiguity or intercultural complexity – on the contrary.

With the complex question of German national pride (or a lack thereof), German market researchers may be better equipped to be great intercultural insight gatherers. Less identity baggage and fewer in-built cultural biases means slipping more easily into local habits and customs, getting closer to evidence and a better understanding of differing reactions, emotions and contexts.

We also looked at the question of provenance. Does ‘Made in Germany’ mean anything at all in a world of global sourcing when consumer preferences in many developed markets – often eco-sensitive – have shifted to local or regional rather than national?

Yes and no. Apple’s app store, for example, has recently created a section labelled ‘Made in Germany’ for 13 apps (at the last count) that it considers particularly cool. At the 2015

Gamescom – the world’s largest gaming trade fair – the German gaming federation decided for the

first time to present itself under a unified ‘Made in Germany’ motto and stand – to improve visibility – and compete more effectively with other gaming nation states.

So country provenance can work positively and, interestingly, in relatively new market segments.

Against this is a whole list of German brands that don’t need to, or wish to, trumpet ‘Made in Germany’ in their marketing or communications – for example BMW, Aldi and Müller. Who knows, or cares, in export markets where they come from, as long as the experience is world-class?

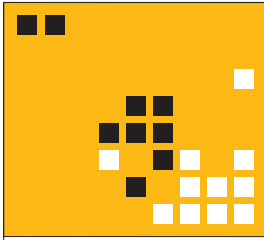
Finally, key economic indicators suggest an ongoing positive outlook for German industry.

The Ifo Business Climate Index – a monthly indicator of economic developments in Germany – was up slightly in August 2015 to 108.3, from 108 in July (2005 = 100). Export figures were also up (13.7% June 2015 v June 2014; 7% YTD June 2015/2014). Representative image data from 2014 – predating the Greek crisis – also contradict the social media/newspaper narrative: image data from the 2014 Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index saw Germany take the number one ‘best nation’ slot over 48 other developed/developing countries, knocking the US off pole position after five years’ dominance.

So, in response to Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman’s question “Who will trust Germany’s good intentions after this?” in *The New York Times* (July 2015), our suggested answer is: many people across the globe are continuing to do so, and voting with their wallet.

**Edward Appleton** is director of global marketing at Happy Thinking People





## Beyond demographics

In a world made smaller by cultural and social mobility, could we be facing the death of traditional demographics?  
By **Virginia Monk** of Network Research

**W**ith unprecedented cultural and social mobility, the world is smaller than it was 20, or even five years ago. Attitudes and behaviours blur what was once an easily segmented population, so it's no surprise that questions have been raised about traditional demographics and their suitability in this new environment.

Last year TrendWatching released a report claiming that 'people are constructing their own identities more freely than ever... consumption



patterns are no longer defined by traditional demographic segments such as age, gender, location, income, family status and more'. It's interesting, but how useful is it for marketing and insights teams? None of the chatter provides a legitimate alternative to traditional demographics, or any quantitative back-up for these assumptions.

We wanted to understand how this changing landscape could have an impact on clients from a quantitative standpoint, and validate the so-called 'death of demographics'. To do so we researched how consumers relate to some of the UK's most popular brands. The findings from these studies could influence the way businesses think about audiences, product development and marketing spend.

Our pilot study built a view of consumer attitudes to brands based on the rational and emotional components of brand relationships, encompassing 1,500 consumers, 60 of the UK's biggest brands and 12 categories. Outcomes from this informed the design of a second study to unpick what discriminating factors – attitudinally and demographically – influence propensity to choose and engage with brands. Speaking to a nationally representative group of 1,000 consumers about a subset of the 20 biggest brands, we tapped into the major influences in the UK, tracking attitudes about

environment, politics, family, community and technology, among other things. By comparing the ability of these factors to influence brand affinity with the traditional demographic approach, we found several implications for brands.

### Challenging the established

It's often thought by marketers that consumers in high-income bands are opinion leaders, so media placement is bought with that in mind. Our study suggested that people in higher-income bands actually appear less confident in making purchase decisions without seeking advice first; some 48% of respondents in this demographic said that they tended to ask advice before purchase – almost 10% higher than in other income category bands.

Among those on low incomes, we found an equal level of support for environmental issues compared with medium and higher income bands – 70% of respondents on a low income indicated that environmental aspects play an important role in purchasing, compared with 69% in both medium and high-income respondents. Traditionally this is thought by marketers to be a solely middle and upper-class trend. The research suggests that by targeting only the middle classes, environmentally-friendly brands are missing out on a potentially huge target market.

### Marketing impact

We've done a lot of work with TSB, so we understand its historic target market: the older, more financially-



conservative audience. Through our study it emerged that the bank is heavily favoured by early-adopters (58% are 'promoters'). This offers the bank the opportunity to think less conservatively about channel and product propositions and perhaps even to start targeting these groups to grow their market share.

British Airways, we found, tends to be viewed very positively among self-identifying fashion/trend followers (62% are promoters). This is different from the established demographic targets for BA, which are seen as the

establishment to Virgin's upstart, and to Easyjet's cheap and cheerful. This apparent propensity to purchase and recommend has obvious implications for this market and increasing brand tie-ins for BA sub-brands, such as CityFlyer.

Another brand that could be missing out on a potential market is the *Financial Times*. Generally the preserve of high income bands, *FT* readers can sometimes be thought

of as sitting in stuffy boardrooms in double-breasted suits, and the *FT* certainly targets its advertising towards this segment.

However, our study suggested that early-adopters and fashion-followers are far more likely to recommend the brand than those with high incomes. The brand is more likely to generate positive sentiment by focusing on an early adopter audience (of whom, 56% are promoters of the *FT*).

The key takeout for us is that although traditional demographics have their place, the modern consumer is too nuanced to be pigeon-holed into a single set of segments. Traditional demographics are not dead; they are still useful, but they now have a companion. Researchers and marketers need to work harder to understand their target audience.

Conducting more research in attitudinal segments for brands can have huge implications, opening up new markets and driving strategies to ensure maximum uplift in some surprising areas, many of which would have remained hidden with traditional demographic segmenting.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution. But next time someone frames your target audience with an age range and income band, ask for more.

**Virginia Monk** is managing director of Network Research

# PHILIPPINES

## Kapwa, the shared self and social media in the Philippines

Based on his experience of research in the Philippines, **Jim Mott** of BAMB discusses the idea that the internet is part of the day-to-day of local cultures, rather than an abstract, globalised experience

**C**yberspace – though a somewhat dated term – has come to define our understanding of the internet as a kind of placeless place that stands outside the rest of social life.

The idea is that when we access the internet, we are stepping into a globalised field of interactions that compresses both time and space in such a way as to make our actual geographical location irrelevant. Online interactions are therefore not considered real or, at least, are seen to be of a different order of reality.

Alongside this comes the idea of the ‘Panopticon in your pocket’ – digital media as a window through which they can observe and understand our behaviour. Everything can then be fed into big data algorithms, by which future dispositions, preferences and choices can be revealed.

This notion is as compelling for brands as it







The importance of *utang na loob* demands it.

At a deeper level, *utang na loob* gives us a window into another important term in understanding Filipino psychology: *kapwa*. *Kapwa* entered modern parlance via Virgilio Enriquez, the father of modern Filipino psychology, who used it to describe the notion of ‘a shared inner self’.

*Kapwa* implies a relationship where there is no easy distinction between ‘self’ and ‘other’, and speaks of an intention to care for others as for oneself; a recognition of an essential unity or oneness that exists between people.

Social media caters to precisely this desire for connection. The ability to share easily your innermost thoughts and mundane moments resonates powerfully with the notion of *kapwa*, and may offer some insight into the extraordinary uptake of the internet and social media in the Philippines.

Perhaps the most powerful expression of how *kapwa* relates to social media use came in the wake of Typhoon Ketsana in 2009. The typhoon, and the floods that followed, killed hundreds and left many parts of Manila underwater.

As the government declared a national emergency, the citizens took to social media to mobilise aid from friends and agencies at home and abroad. Stories, pictures, news, updates and immediate calls for help were all mediated via social media.

Far from tapping into something abstract, virtual or globalised, Filipinos were using social media as a natural extension and expression of their core values – the responsibility towards the shared self in times of emergency.

**Jim Mott** is associate director at BAMB

is sinister for users. But we don’t see it as entirely consistent with our own experiences in the field.

Rather than regarding cyberspace as a placeless place, we see the internet as entirely continuous with the social traditions and cultural nuances of particular locales. The Philippines, where we recently conducted research for HSBC on personal finance, is a particularly good example.

In part, this is because of the facts of internet use in the Philippines. Filipinos spend an average of 6.3 hours a day online, compared with a global average of 4.4. They are the most active in the world when it comes to social media use – spending 4.3 hours of their time online compared with an international average of 2.4 hours – and all of this despite having one of the slowest average net connection speeds at 2.5mbps. In essence, the Philippines is one of the most digitally active places on the planet.

Yet this activity does not stand apart from Filipino culture – instead it is best understood as entirely continuous with the values and social conditions that emerge from it.

Our window into this world was the term: *utang na loob*, meaning ‘debt of the inner self’. In terms of the finance research we were conducting, this was particularly relevant because it explained why people were more willing to borrow from banks than from friends.

Essentially, the social obligations of debt and owing a favour encompassed by *utang na loob* run much deeper in Filipino culture than they do in the West. The obligation is far more serious – definitely not to be taken lightly.

At a superficial level, this explains the importance of the internet in maintaining ties in a nation where remittance from the overseas workforce (mainly women employed in domestic labour) plays such an important role in the local economy.

Along with the personal and emotional benefits of maintaining frequent contact through social media, it also plays the dual function of enabling family members to demonstrate a continuing commitment to the debt that is owed for the money that is flowing back home.



Mass communication programming can be a vital tool in humanitarian crises and a report from BBC Media Action identifies when this type of intervention is most effective



# Emergency broadcast

**S**ince 1994, when the Rwandan genocide prompted the BBC World Service to set up a Kinyarwanda language service, the broadcaster has responded to 28 emergencies by providing critical information for those affected. And for the past 10 years, these have been organised through the BBC's international development charity, BBC Media Action.

In 2012, the BBC along with other media helped to establish the Communication for Disaster Affected Communities Network (CDAC), which has improved understanding of what communication support works best in these types of situations.

Theodora Hannides, research manager at BBC Media Action, has been exploring the role and effectiveness of humanitarian broadcasts in emergencies, and used insights from BBC Media Action's monitoring and evaluation of four case studies, to put together

a report on the subject. The four case studies investigated were: a Syrian refugee and Gaza Lifeline project, both in 2014; the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa in 2014/2015; and the Nepal earthquake response in 2015.

Hannides' report looks specifically at mass communication programming, where broadcasting can reach millions of people and inform them of what has happened, what to do and how to find people.

She points out that there are a number of challenges in researching crisis interventions, not least the logistical constraints and ethics of an emergency setting. For example: it's not ethical to set up a control group that does not receive aid.

Overall, the report identified six areas where communications have the most impact: connecting people with each other – which sometimes involved breaking down barriers between different groups; giving people a voice to air their concerns and share their experiences; improving discussion and dialogue; enhancing knowledge and learning; positively influencing attitudes; and encouraging and motivating people to act. Hannides points to how these six outcomes fit under five elements of psychosocial intervention: safety, connectedness, self and collective efficacy, calm, and hope.

So while mass media is effective in reaching large numbers of people with potentially

life-saving information across a range of topics, it is less effective at providing more context-specific, localised information, which people also need. Hence, a combination of mass media and local partnerships often works best. Information needs to be practical to be useful, and mass media is best for knowing what to do and how to protect yourself and your family.

Mass scale broadcasts are particularly effective at achieving psychosocial impacts, such as helping people feel connected to others going through the same crisis.

Finally, the evaluation found that crisis exacerbates and heightens existing issues, so people make choices about where to get their information based on access, quality, trust and the relevance of the content.

In emergency situations, information that can be trusted is of particular value, but that trust can be gained and lost easily. ■

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# The banking disruptor

**M**ark Mullen, CEO and co-founder of Atom, is nothing if not realistic about the climate into which he is about to launch the UK's first 'digital only' bank.

"Our insight and research tells us that customers, to a large extent, believe all banks are as bad as each other," says the affable Irishman, cheerfully. Successive scandals, punitive penalties and the gallons of taxpayers' money that has been pumped into the system have combined to create "the sort of inevitable sense that everyone has, or has had, their nose in the trough", Mullen adds.

"So I could sit here and say: 'I believe we should be fair and open and transparent and simple and moral and not do this and not do that' – but I don't for one moment think that customers necessarily give a damn.

"The only thing that really matters to customers today is good value. If you believe that all bankers are one step up from pond life, you may as well get as much out of them as you can and bugger the consequences. Customers have been trained brilliantly by the banking industry to believe that the only value a banker can offer them is 'a rate'."

Atom's low overheads – it has no branches and is based in Durham – means it can offer competitively-priced products. Its decision to be a purely digital bank, however, is the result of another key insight – that the most satisfied customers are those who have no face-to-face or phone contact with their bank. This may sound counterintuitive, says Mullen, but if you think about it – as he has for many years – "it is almost axiomatic".

If you're technologically and financially literate, it stands to reason that you'll trust yourself more than you'll trust a banker, he argues. "There's a population out there that has

Launched any new business is difficult, but **Mark Mullen** is doing it in a sector with its reputation in tatters and in which people are reluctant to switch providers. This atypical banker talks to *Jane Simms* about apps and appealing to millennials

been forced to become self-reliant. What's more, if you participate in creating your own experience, it is very difficult to blame someone else when you don't like it."

## Customer-in design

Mullen used to be CEO – and, before that, marketing director – of First Direct, which has an exemplary record on customer satisfaction and service, largely because of the friendly voices at the end of the phone. When you're building a bank from scratch, however, unencumbered by legacy systems and legacy thinking, you can design it 'customer in' rather than 'bank out' – ▶



“ There's a population that has been forced to become self-reliant. If you participate in creating your own experience, it is very difficult to blame someone else when you don't like it ”



▶ and you sense that Mullen has relished slaying sacred cows, despite his 25 years in the banking industry.

“Some people have tried to suggest that what we have been building at Atom is in some way compromised because it lacks a ‘human face’ – and I think ‘oh my goodness, it’s not compromised; this is better than the way banking works today,’” he says. PPI mis-selling, for example, was the result of people getting bonuses based on revenue or unit sales, he points out, “which is going to lead to the wrong customer outcomes”.

But what is the market for a wholly digital bank? How many people have the technological and financial literacy to manage their banking through apps on their smartphones and tablets, with recourse to a helpline only for technical support?

The main target market is the 18- to 34-year-old ‘millennial’ population, a segment that Mullen believes is “much over-used” by marketers. But while you have to be careful with such labels, which can be misleading, age is important in the banking industry “because people exhibit more of a propensity to try new things between the ages of 18 and 34 than they do subsequently, and that’s just a practical issue”. People in their mid-30s usually have a house, are married or in a long-term relationship, are likely to have a child, says Mullen, so their willingness to spend time moving bank accounts diminishes. “And by the time you get to 50,” he adds, “you’d rather pull out your own teeth than unpick your financial relationships and reconstruct them somewhere else.”

### Home comforts

Although so-called millennials have simpler financial needs, are more ready to experiment, and are more familiar with technology than older generations, “there is also a bunch of people, outside that segment, for whom digital banking makes an awful lot of sense,” Mullen continues. “It is so counterintuitive that someone in their 60s or 70s should have to get off their backside in the depths of winter and go to the high street to do their banking. If someone was prepared to support them to do it from the comfort of their own home, surely internet or mobile banking would be better for them?”

But how will Mullen and his team persuade anyone to switch to Atom when people are

more likely to change their partner than their current account? Once the bank’s up and running, he expects social media to do much of the work for him. “Millennials believe each other more than they believe people like me, or adverts – or even brands,” he says.

However, Mullen needs to build awareness of Atom and achieve cut-through in a crowded marketplace characterised by high spend – “I’m staggered by how much banks are spending on TV ads at the moment; it makes me want to set my hair on fire” – and schmaltzy messages; “they’re all telling parables – it’s just awful, like a John Lewis pastiche”.

### Traditional advertising

While Atom will “consider” the main broadcast advertising vehicles, Mullen is reluctant to spend too much money on them, not just because the bank can’t afford it, but also because he believes traditional advertising – particularly in banking – has lost much of its power.

“People have been lied to so often that they look very cynically at the adverts on the TV, and they do everything they can to avoid them,” he says. “The idea of being able to manipulate people through advertising is losing its currency – and that means you just have to be very good at what you do.”

Mullen was lured away from First Direct last year by Anthony Thomson, co-founder of Metro Bank, which became the first new high street bank in more than 100 years when it opened in 2010. The pair sensed the shift towards digital banking and considered developing a ‘tech-play’ business – building a front end and selling, or licensing, it to other banks. “We decided, instead, to go the whole hog and gain a banking licence,” says Mullen, “because that would give us control over the products we manufacture and the customer experience. Banking is a service industry, where things will go wrong, and if you outsource or mishandle those ‘moments of truth’ it could kill you.”

Atom’s team will create products that are understandable, and have clear and transparent pricing policies, “with no punitive fees or penalties, and no tricks”. What they won’t do is go on TV and claim to be ‘fair’: “customers will decide if we’re fair or not.”

They’re also planning to do things differently. “We should be easier to use than most banks, more engaging, more fun – and [the interface] should be beautiful. It should be crafted and look like someone has exhausted themselves ▶



CV  
MARK MULLEN

**2014:**

Resigns from First Direct to co-found Atom as CEO.

**2011:**

Takes over as chief executive of First Direct.

**2009:**

Becomes regional head of marketing, MENA, for HSBC Bank Middle East, working out of Dubai.

**2006:**

Becomes head of marketing at First Direct.

**2004:**

Becomes head of marketing communications for HSBC in the UK.

**2000:**

Joins HSBC in London to help develop and launch its business internet banking platform.

**1989:**

Joins Forward Trust Group, the finance house and leasing subsidiary of Midland Bank. Spends 10 years working in areas including personal finance, vehicle finance, asset finance and corporate strategy.

**Education:**

Trinity College, Dublin, history (1989); Warwick Business School, MBA (2001).



“ By the time you get to 50, you'd rather pull out your own teeth than unpick your financial relationships and construct them somewhere else ”



►sweating over the details. It will have serendipity at its heart, so it should surprise you – and it should be unbelievably intuitive.”

### Introverted industry

It could be Apple products Mullen’s describing, which is no surprise given his passion for the brand – “I’ve been a Macolyte for 23 years”. “Bank brands should compare themselves with the likes of Apple, because that’s the world our customers live in,” he insists. “If you don’t, then you don’t know how crap you are compared with the rest of their ‘brand family’, and you’re just not going to learn from anybody other than in your own industry.”

Mullen believes banking is not only introverted, but that it also recruits the wrong people – those who are motivated largely by the prospect of a good career with benefits, rather than people with “a single-minded purpose to help people achieve more in their lives”. He was no different, he admits. “I went into banking because I needed a job. I was £7,500 in debt. I

would find it very hard to describe eloquently what I did with my life up until Atom.”

There has been innovation, of course. Demutualisation was supposed to bring more choice to the market but, in the end, reduced it; the 10 building societies that became banks were bought by other banks, with the exception of Northern Rock, which collapsed spectacularly.

Around the same time, a rash of internet banks – Cahoot, IF, Smile, Egg – broke out. Some were quite successful, achieving up to 500,000 customers; some over-reached themselves and/or fell prey to misadventure; and the survivors were largely mothballed or cash-starved after the banking crisis forced a focus on core brands. The crisis also made banking unattractive to investors, until the advent of Metro Bank, with its branch-based, community banking model. Even First Direct, launched by HSBC in 1989 as a phone – and then also internet – bank, has never taken more than 2% market share. The bottom line is that ‘the big four’ – Barclays, HSBC, RBS and Lloyds



– still control 85% of the current accounts in the UK, and the average level of customer satisfaction struggles to get above 65%.

While the precedents for a new digital-only bank are not strong, what's different today is the technological landscape. "The convergence of faster connectivity and greater portability makes the 'direct' customer proposition much more meaningful. That's a massive barrier to entry removed," says Mullen.

Indeed, recent figures from the BBA, the trade association for the banking sector, show that mobile has overtaken branches and phones as customers' preferred way of interacting with their bank.

### Barriers removed

There are other barriers to entry, however, not least the fact that banks are expensive. "They consume capital and they don't make money in the short term," Mullen says. "Finding people who are willing to back you and to put patient money behind you is a challenge."

It's testimony to Mullen and his team that Atom has some very powerful backers, including investment fund manager Neil Woodford, venture capitalist Jon Moulton and former Goldman Sachs chief economist Jim O'Neill, as well as a number of regional investors.

In order to build a bank 'customer-in', Mullen and his team research everything to the nth degree. Early feedback showed that customers wanted a bank that was fundamentally better than all the others but, at the time of writing, Atom was in the middle of usability testing for the first version of its app – "and it's pretty clear we've gone too far".

Mullen explains: "There's a huge amount of positive reaction, because it is genuinely innovative. But then there's the 'I don't know that I'm comfortable with it', or 'I don't know that I would use it this way'."

This is not surprising, he says, given that the industry has spent hundreds of years telling people how to do their banking. "It's not easy to unlearn that conditioning, and we have to navigate around that. We're not going to give up on the things we believe in, but we're not going to ignore what our customers have told us. If you've taken the trouble to ask them what they think, you've got to listen to what they say."

In an app-based world, though, where everything is intuitive, you can't 'educate' people. "That's not how that environment works. People discover, so you have to design

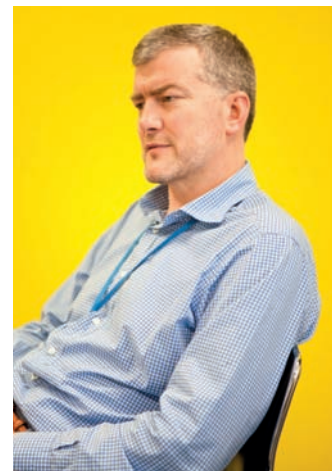
**“Banks consume capital and they don't make money in the short term. Finding people who are willing to put patient money behind you is a challenge”**

the app in a way that allows them to do that, or you're possibly going to miss them."

Mullen, ever the iconoclast, is not aiming for a particular share of the market with Atom. When pushed, he admits it would be "possible, but difficult" to achieve a 5% share (about three million customers) by 2020, but he is more concerned with building an outstanding brand reputation. "A bank doesn't have to be big, it doesn't have to be for everyone, and there are plenty of opportunities for new players," he says. "But I know, if we build the right business, it can be very big, because digital banking is becoming the dominant model by the day."

There can't be many career bankers with the energy, vision and determination to jack it all in and start something new, so Mullen is a rare bird. "But how many times was this bus going to come along? I thought I'd regret it if I didn't get on." And the sense of achievement, he adds, is unparalleled.

"When we started, we had nothing – not even a paper clip. Everything that is here we have built, and that's tremendously satisfying." ■



### HIS COLLEAGUES ON MULLEN

**Natalie Cowen, independent marketing consultant and former head of brand and communications at First Direct**

"I wasn't surprised that Mark left First Direct to set up something new. He lived and breathed the First Direct brand, and when he returned as chief executive he brought passion and belief back to the brand after a period when HSBC was trying to make it more 'HSBC-ish'. He's a very inspirational leader, but he doesn't fit the 'traditional' banker mould; he's very forward thinking and ahead of his time in many ways. He combines deep knowledge of the banking industry with a sense of fun and an exacting approach to getting the detail of the product and service absolutely right."

**Jon Moulton, founder of Better Capital**

"Why did we invest? Good people. Sensible use of modern technology. No baggage. Relatively sensible regulation."

**Anthony Thomson, chairman of Atom bank**

"Mark's a banker by background but, above all, he's a marketer, and is passionate about creating something better for the customer."



# BRIEF THINKING SO CULTURAL

Social media data can provide valuable insight into people's behaviour, and research agencies have the analytical skills to take a lead in interpreting this information stream, as long as they embrace the challenge. By **Tim Phillips**

**On 20 July 2013, a rumour started to spread in Indonesia that the vaccines used to immunise the country's children were causing autism.** While the public health impact of vaccine panics in Europe or the US is problematic, in a country such as Indonesia – where only 66% of children under two receive full basic immunisation and the vaccine dropout rate is already 23% – it is potentially catastrophic.

The rumours showed up on Twitter on the same day, at a time when the United Nations' Pulse Lab was helping Indonesia's ministry of health to monitor social media use by Indonesians. That's a significant stream of data: in 2013, Indonesia was the fifth most active country for Twitter use, with 29 million users, and Jakarta the most active city, with its residents creating 2.4% of all tweets. Social media use in Indonesia is arguably well enough developed for us to know more now about the network of social media users and influencers than we do about the state of public health in the country.

In addition to Indonesia, the UN Pulse Lab has been running pilots in New York and Kampala, Uganda.

The labs were set up five years ago as a special initiative of the UN secretary-general, and have published case studies of 20 data innovation projects.

The initiative was inspired by the global financial crisis; UN agencies wanted to react, but survey data available from the developing world was often three to five years old. The labs have found that global social media and mobile-phone use generate social data with important policy applications. Pulse projects have listened for views on teenage pregnancy in Uganda, or changes to fuel subsidies in El Salvador – often with results that contradict media coverage.

Many projects would be familiar to any social media department in the developed world – although not all. The Pulse Lab and Stellenbosch University are working together to create technology so that machines can listen to Ugandan radio, which functions as a social network in that country.

The Pulse Labs are relatively unsophisticated in terms of the technology used for many of their applications. They rely on what

Robert Kirkpatrick, director of UN Global Pulse, calls “data philanthropy” to do their work – yet they show the potential for small amounts of social data to allow us to re-imagine research.

In the developed world, researchers have a 10-year head start in using data. By September 2004, *American Demographics* magazine was reporting that “few concepts in recent memory have generated more interest among researchers than social networking software... sites like Friendster, LinkedIn, Orkut, Ryze and dozens of other similar competitors promise to humanise the impersonal internet”.

By May 2006, with Facebook just over two years old and Twitter available for only two months, Nielsen NetRatings was already picking up that 45% of internet users were active on a social network.

So, with this advantage, are market researchers doing all we can to use social media to innovate? Not everyone thinks so. Francesco D'Orazio, now vice-president of product at Pulsar, has a few more years experience as a social media researcher than most – he was



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► analysing large chunks of data from bulletin boards when still at university, in 1999. But he admits he finds the slow pace of innovation in social media research (it's slow to him, if not to you) "frustrating".

D'Orazio wants social data integrated with other analytics as standard, or social media listening trained to recognise images (see box, page 32). He's excited by the potential of the "internet of sound", and is collaborating with academics to see how far the technology can go. Yet he sees client applications restricted to public relations and parts of marketing, and black-box results treated with suspicion.

### Drinking from the firehose

Part of the problem is that social data may be pervasive – the data streams that Twitter, Instagram and others offer are called 'firehoses' for a reason – but it is not yet, and may never be, representative. So the techniques needed to use it to create insight are unfamiliar; processing the data to reduce bias is a start, but the results may require change to an organisation's decision-making process, to act quickly using less reliable data or build the data into an iterative learning process.

As Simeon Duckworth, global head of business planning at Mindshare (see box, page 31) points out, we need to become more comfortable with the idea that we don't know for sure. But we can't delay until we can build a model and populate it with data that gives us the levels of confidence we are comfortable with.

On the other hand, social data gives innovative clients a way to act quickly or to experiment and offers clues about what to look for in their survey-based research.

"It's the difference between being a statistician and a data scientist," says D'Orazio, "but, as yet, the data scientists are not well ingrained in many organisations."

Data scarcity, we are told, is an obsolete concept. Social data gives us an unprecedented abundance of data (there are 500m Tweets per day). The data tracks every waking moment; according to Lightspeed GMI, 34.9% of 18- to 24-year-olds in the UK check their social media even before getting out of bed. So what matters is the ability to separate the signal from the noise.

To do this, a large ecosystem of intermediaries has emerged, offering services, integration, analysis tools and data scrubbing. "Data is becoming democratised. Around 15 or 20 years ago, researchers were owners of insight because they created the data and held it. So collaboration will be the key to being successful using social data," explains Jake Steadman, director of

research, international, at Twitter.

His colleague Matt Taylor, head of research for Europe, believes that Twitter's firehose is "one of the biggest assets we have", because it represents a longitudinal data set, and a source of opinion that isn't limited by recall bias. Over the past two years, Twitter has started to concentrate on building an ecosystem of partners that can analyse the data and learn the best techniques to use it.

One obvious insight is that using the firehose blurs the line between listening and acting; between insight, customer service, marketing and loyalty. "Agility in acting on information is much more of a teaching point for research teams," Taylor says. "In the past, one of the biggest blocks to working with a

## #IPASOCIALWORKS MEASURING, NOT COUNTING

As the chair of the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising's (IPA) social media measurement steering group, responsible for the #IPASocialWorks joint initiative with The Marketing Society and the Market Research Society, Stephen Maher had the idea that best practice for measuring social media should be conveyed by peer-reviewed case studies. The committee has seen more than 200 so far. For every one that has made it through and onto the IPA website ([www.ipa.co.uk/page/IPA-Social-Works-cases](http://www.ipa.co.uk/page/IPA-Social-Works-cases)), nine have failed.

What's wrong with 90% of case studies? "Most of them failed because we couldn't see any causal relationship between the social data and the business goals," says Maher, who is also founder of the agency MBA. "We started this because we felt social media measurement was the future, but a lot of clients were asking: 'How do I measure the ROI?'"

Other organisations – for example, Amec – have tried to create a more formal framework ([www.social-media-measurement-framework.org](http://www.social-media-measurement-framework.org)), but Maher argues that social media measurement is evolving too fast for this to be a complete solution. "We are taking an iterative view. The organisations in the case studies have been through a process that isn't fully developed, or fully fledged yet."

He sees that there are elements of best practice that all social media measurement can adopt, but these aren't innovative. Concepts such as control cells have been borrowed from media planning and direct marketing – which found them in econometric theory. "These measures have been around for 30 or 40 years, so we have some way to go," Maher says.



Stephen Maher

The range of case studies shows how hard it is to impose a single framework: Iceland was trying to attract tourists after a volcano erupted; Cadbury wanted to test its Creme Egg media campaign; O2 wanted to communicate network outages better.

All have a layer of serious analysis, however. For example, to estimate the impact of Iceland's social media campaign, other potential drivers of tourism were eliminated – flight prices, exchange rates and weather patterns were put into the model. There was also an estimate of volumes had the campaign not occurred; counter-factual tourism volumes were forecast as part of the evaluation.

Maher is cautious over whether the industry has yet learned to 'measure, not count' social media's impact. "There are more attempts to prove effectiveness," he says, "but to do this you must start by stating what you are trying to achieve. Many of the case studies we see don't have that baked in."

*The short guide to measuring not counting* is published by the IPA (£25 for IPA members, £50 for non-members).



 **Data is becoming democratised. So collaboration will be the key to being successful using social data** 



**Agencies  
and clients  
need to move  
from being  
organisations  
that are slavish  
about numbers  
to being ones  
that have  
to live with  
ambiguity**





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► research department has been that it took eight weeks to get an answer. When you can identify an opportunity in minutes, research departments can be best placed to take advantage of it.”

Not all social data is easy to acquire, however, so there’s a danger of measuring what’s available – and that doesn’t suit every type of listening. An omission has been Facebook data, although that has now been partially solved by Facebook’s decision to make topic data available.

Data platform DataSift has been operating almost since the beginning – although, in 2007, it was TweetMeme. “It was the first company that was processing the Twitter firehose and identifying breaking news stories,” remembers Tim Barker, DataSift’s chief product officer. “We thought we were building a media site and we’d be having advertisers coming to us, but we actually got news companies

coming to us – such as the BBC and Dow Jones – saying, ‘how do we use this kind of thing?’”

These days, DataSift takes data from many of the world’s social networks, including WordPress, Tumblr, Google+ and Tencent Weibo. One notable absentee is Twitter, which makes its firehose available through competitor Gnip, which Twitter acquired in 2014. “We try to make sure that we can build an ecosystem, and that we partner with social networks so they can provide insights into their data – but we also need to be able to protect the identity of individuals,” says Barker.

DataSift has found a way to create access to aggregated Facebook topic data. While Twitter data has the advantage of being immediate and focused, Facebook’s advantage for researchers is that its conversations are semi-private, reducing the bias inherent in the way we present ourselves in public. Its user profile is also more representative and

international than those of other social platforms.

Pylon, DataSift’s Facebook data stream, aggregates the conversations, retaining demographic and location data to preserve privacy. So Facebook does its own analysis on posts by its 1.4bn subscribers to identify the product or topic, and releases data for all topics involving at least 100 people. It is not a firehose; these are not simple aggregated reports, but rather the feed intends to strike a balance between granularity and privacy.

“Things like which country or region you are in, what your age range is, what your gender is, are all part of the data set,” Barker says. “Those are standard foundations for anyone who wants to do market analysis. We often share differently with our own networks – with our friends [than in public].”

“Using this data removes one of the other criticisms of social media data: that it’s all simply about self-promotion.”

## WHAT IS RIGOROUS SOCIAL MEDIA MEASUREMENT?

“The issue is that people have been over-claiming,” says Simeon Duckworth, global head of business planning at Mindshare. He trained as an economist, so had to learn the econometrics that some of his peers prefer to skip. “Hilariously so in some cases. We worked with a company that worked on the World Cup and, obviously, if you’re going to predict social noise around the World Cup, that involves using social media to predict who’s going to win the World Cup. It’s ludicrous.”

Publicity stunts aside, social media measurement has a rigour problem. Partly, this stems from the construction of the sample. This is no different from the ‘biased sample’ problem in every other branch of statistics, and arguably more obvious.

The availability of numbers, however – and the excitement around social media – create more subtle cause-effect inferences, which are massively overstated in social media. Attribution is a well-known problem: “The claims beggar belief. Things like ‘Twitter

caused 5% of retail sales in the US’ – if anyone in management believed it was true, you’d basically be buying Twitter. It is just so easy to get attribution wrong because social media activity correlates with sales,” Duckworth says.

Often there is confusion between a leading indicator (A happens before B) and a causal relationship (A made B happen). Because those who engage with a brand’s social media choose to do so, they are clearly more likely to buy the brand than a random sample of people would be. If the analysis treats the group exposed to social media as a random sample, the selection bias overestimates the impact.

In 2012, Ayman Farahat, from Yahoo!, and Michael Bailey, from Stanford University’s department of economics, studied the impact of online marketing and calculated that selection bias led to an over-estimation of the effect of almost 1,000%. They analysed 18 campaigns; in most cases, selection bias was responsible for almost all of the attributed effect – and in four cases, it was

responsible for more than 100% of the uplift.

How should organisations react to such problems? Not by waiting for certainty, Duckworth says. Instead, treat social data as a noisy signal, not precise facts.

“Agencies and clients need to move from being organisations that are quite slavish about numbers, to being ones that have to live with ambiguity... it’s difficult to code this stuff and make it into decent data. You will always end up with something ambiguous,” he says.

Duckworth compares this type of decision-making to the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee’s deliberations. Despite having sophisticated econometric models, it makes decisions while acknowledging inevitable inconsistencies or gaps in its knowledge. This doesn’t mean its models are wrong – just that it can’t know everything quickly enough.

Bias can also be an advantage, Duckworth says. It may not be possible to attribute social media insight to an entire population, but



Simeon Duckworth

those who engage may be more likely to be open to engagement. “It’s biased data, but it may be representative data of the right group of people.”

Finally, presenting flawed insight might simply be a way to start an internal conversation. Is it better to measure badly than not at all? “I have some sympathy with that,” Duckworth says. “If you’re measuring in a biased way, at least you’re engaging the organisation.”



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► Then there's the challenge of measuring activity on LinkedIn, as a business to business (B2B) platform that has made the decision not to expose its data through an API. To listen to LinkedIn, you have to be part of the conversation, creating messages and contacts, and measuring the effectiveness of what you are doing.

Among the platforms that perform this type of evaluation, Oktopost positions itself squarely as a B2B marketing performance evaluation tool. The difference is that, in the business to consumer (B2C) world, a single post gets many likes or retweets, but attribution is hard to follow. B2B social activity is much more directed at funnelling interest from a pre-selected group.

"We want our users to align what they do to their sales KPIs," says Jen Gutman, client success manager at Oktopost, "so we give them the ability to track conversations through to lead generation."

While there is the ability to do aggregate reporting – for example, comparing the effectiveness of outbound messages to create click-throughs across LinkedIn,

Twitter, Facebook or other platforms – a dashboard such as Oktopost has a more granular reporting capability. This makes it possible to see exactly who has acted, what they did, which activities perform well, and what type of message suits each platform. For companies that want to track the effectiveness of a platform such as LinkedIn, however, reporting is often tracking the activity of fewer than 100 people.

### Responding to the challenge

"The industry has historically been quite risk averse and cautious about methodology, and that was probably the right way to behave in an era when robustness and data quality were supreme in client's minds," says Will Galgey, CEO of TNS in the UK. "But in an era when speed and agility are supreme, we have to be much more innovative in how we think about our approaches.

"We're an organisation that has historically been focused on survey-based research. The mantra that we have within the business today is: 'better surveys, better social, and better together'."

But are they? Galgey defends the place of the survey business that, he concedes, social has partly supplanted. "To size a particular opportunity, survey is still supreme. Also, with a survey, you are able to ask very focused questions about what it is you are trying to understand... but social media is always on. We can monitor change faster and we can spot changes earlier. Social might allow us to identify the trigger points at which something is changing. That's the point at which it makes sense to do a survey."

Smaller-scale, qualitative consultations can use social media, but – as Carol McNaughton Nicholls, a director at Truth, warns – this requires care and a regard for the ethics of research. Just because you can do it with social, doesn't mean you should.

McNaughton Nicholls has used social media as a way to create conversations in her work with The Samaritans. Investigating how to reduce suicide has led her to blend methods, but "when I use social media in research, there has to be a clear case for it – and there often is. ►

## SIX INNOVATIONS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

**Francesco D'Orazio, at Pulsar, picks areas in which he thinks widespread innovation should be occurring, but isn't yet**

### 1. Don't listen for keywords – listen to your target audience

Listening for keywords from the whole data set doesn't tell you what you should do. Defining a community helps to create a benchmark of expectation, so results are easier to translate into actions. During Baroness Thatcher's funeral, Pulsar used social media to create six samples by choice of newspaper as an experiment. A surprise result: *Sun* readers were among the most vocally critical of her. Analysing the full sample for critical sentiment wouldn't easily produce this type of insight. At Twitter, Taylor gives the example of an insurer that could listen to mentions of its brand name, but would be better served by listening to posts of people who have just bought a house.

### 2. Predictive behaviour rewards agility

Web-server activity allowed a concert-ticket

seller to predict demand for tickets a few hours ahead. Social activity allowed it to predict demand a few days ahead. If the company could adapt its behaviour swiftly enough to take account of the data, those additional hours have value.

### 3. Social, meet analytics

Many retailers use Google Analytics, and many also track their social data. Few integrate the two, because they live in different silos. But the reward for doing so is the start of a return on investment (ROI) model for social data.

### 4. Social, meet share prices

Are social trends leading indicators for share-price movements? The University of California built models that outperformed analysts three years ago, and traditional prediction markets also perform well. Yet

few companies supplement their stock forecasting with social data.

### 5. Social, meet loyalty data

The long-term problem of loyalty marketing is that the best data tells you only what the customer does in the store, or in partner stores. Making the join between a customer and their social media presence can give a public context that might help with segmentation, or even (provided it is done with care) adjust the offer to that customer.

### 6. The internet of images

According to Citrix, 63% of social media updates are images. How did Gatorade discover that teenagers liked it for breakfast? By analysing pictures on social media. But to do this, your application needs to learn what Gatorade looks like, and recognise breakfast when it sees it.





**The industry  
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► This, combined with reassurances and planning around the ethical implications, means that clients are comfortable. But it is important, as a researcher, that I can explain and reassure clients about the process and value,” she says.

“Where it is always problematic, I would say, is using social to research behaviour that may be illegal or harmful – and there is plenty of that available online, so it is possible. As researchers, we need a clear policy, agreed with clients, to mitigate risks of harm, just as we would face to face.”

McNaughton Nicholls also points out that, for some people, the ability to engage in social media – especially on anonymous platforms, such as Yik Yak – might be a way to uncover truthful feelings in qualitative research.

Galgey agrees that what should matter is the narrative, not the data-acquisition method – research

reporting based on a story, supported by the best available evidence. Few research agencies, however, are structured in this way. “Historically, the way the industry has been set up, we have people who focus on survey data, and that’s their expertise – or they focus on qualitative data. We need more people who are able to think in a data-agnostic way and identify different data sources that might help them to solve a client problem – and then have the skill of synthesis to be able to pull all of that together into one coherent story.”

Twitter’s Taylor agrees: “Decisions are not made by dashboards.”

Collecting the best evidence might mean measuring more than words in social media. Jamie Robinson, global research and insight director at the appropriately named agency We Are Social, has worked with brands such as Red Bull and Adidas on what he calls “social thinking”,

which adapts the method to the part of the community to be measured. He is currently experimenting with image recognition (is the brand there, and what else?), machine learning, and sentiment analysis influenced by emoji recognition – a confectionery client wanted to track if it was successfully spreading joy among a target group that often communicates emotions via emoji.

Robinson is hoping that someone will soon build a functioning technology to ‘watch’ YouTube by machine. But it’s not all rocket science – We Are Social also still tracks online forums. “They are often the most active for insight,” Robinson says. “Many clients switched off tracking them a year or so ago, but if you want to research mothers, for example – or users of electronic products – you find them there.”

Innovation doesn’t just have to be



## SOCIAL GAMING TO RESEARCH CLIMATE

We know less than you would think about what people believe and understand about climate change. Because it is a global problem, however – that will require international policy intervention, with potential costs measured in billions – local surveys or obsolete data are not a good evidence base for public opinion. Surveys such as the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) or the World Values Survey do provide cross-country results, says Sebastian Seebauer, a researcher at the University of Graz’s Wegener Center for Climate and Global Change, in Austria, but they are expensive, limited in scope and often take years to complete.

Could social media games help? Seebauer specialises in ‘serious games’ – the type in which we volunteer to categorise galaxies, or count people in an image, and the ‘wisdom of crowds’ produces answers as good as, or better than, single experts. He was interested in a Facebook climate-change game, developed by Media Watch, in

which players matched words to help train an expert system that was analysing newspaper reports about climate. They were motivated only by being told they were performing better or worse than other players, but achieved results equivalent to those from a panel of experts.

Seebauer’s idea was to mix questions on attitude to climate change with these game tasks, to create a survey element in Climate Quiz. This has many advantages: players tend to be truthful, and it is relatively easy to extract demographic data, and to correlate expressed opinions with performance in the game and, so, level of knowledge. His research showed that social media games quickly create a large data set – and that the social competition is a powerful motivator.

**Impact:** Why do ‘games with a purpose’ interest you, and how did you get involved in this project?

**SS:** Initially, I was interested in them mainly as an intervention

technique for motivating citizens to reduce their carbon footprint. I realised that the data could be used to monitor the progress of the intervention and as a measurement instrument for the social sciences. Methods from computer linguistics for extracting word valence and frequency from huge bodies of text seem quite coarse. Climate Quiz was an opportunity to establish the validity of data gained with a data-collection tool tailored to the specific topic.

**Impact:** Are there other applications of game-driven research that interest you?

**SS:** My motivation is to develop an intervention technique: so we can experiment with environmental education by means of quiz games; players competing against each other in saving energy; integrating smart electricity meters and smartphone geo-tracking of everyday trips in games.

**Impact:** Do you think the wider research community could apply



Sebastian Seebauer

this technique to hard-to-research social data?

**SS:** The basic principle of measuring knowledge from the gaming data of quiz games applies to any field. In German-speaking countries, there is an app called Quizduell, which covers a wide range of general knowledge. Any field of knowledge addressed in this game could be tracked as a population indicator; for example, you could build a game on healthy/unhealthy habits, and track the impact of an awareness campaign for healthy eating by monitoring the quiz scores.



# With a survey you ask very focused questions... but social media is always on. We can monitor change faster



built around how we find things out. Tiffany St James, founder of Transmute and a former head of social media for the UK government, emphasises that social media as a research tool is only one of many ways to embed social in a business. Establishing it as a tool for human resources, internal communications, direct sales and customer service can also be aligned to what the business needs.

“There are some measures that people ask for all the time – such as reach and effectiveness – and they are based on the traditional ways we would measure. But it gets interesting when we have to track that back to activity, to tie it to a campaign-specific objective,” St James says. “Or you can now find incredibly niche markets, and

identify the pleasure and pain points of those markets.”

### But what does it mean?

Despite D’Orazio’s misgivings about implementation, social has an oversupply of entrepreneurs and experimenters. For counting to become measuring, however, we have to know what the data means, and automated sentiment analysis hasn’t delivered reliable results in many cases.

A simple example that confounds keyword-based analysis is: saying you hate a TV programme is negative, but saying you hate the bad guy in the same programme is usually positive – the two Tweets will be virtually identical.

Historically, sentiment has been hard to identify beyond 60% or 70%

accuracy, which is not actionable and has led to social sentiment analysis being an indicator that may be calculated, put into the dashboard – and broadly ignored.

Crimson Hexagon claims its systems can reach 93% of the accuracy of a human when trained to recognise sentiment. O2 is one of its clients. “We’re producing feeds into the marketing planning process, so we’re having a say at the beginning of that process,” says Daryl West, insight lead at O2 Telefonica.

Crimson Hexagon offers some standardised expert system-based products, but not simplistic keyword or phrase analysis to attribute sentiment. “It’s good to be bad’ – Jaguar’s current message – would be a nightmare,” says Lili Osorio, the firm’s EMEA marketing manager. ▶



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► Instead, training the application with as few as 10 or 20 messages quickly lets a machine-learning algorithm identify irony, humour and sarcasm in the target material, and screens out the large proportion of messages that don't have useful sentiment. It creates a feed that can add early warning about changes in trackers such as NPS, or sit alongside other business KPIs.

Crimson Hexagon is adding the subject's contextual data to its analysis to help explain the causes of sentiment. In beta, there is also logo recognition, which, hopefully, will open up a new front in social media when we rediscover the phrase 'war for eyeballs'.

DataSift helps data users analyse sentiment using its just-launched VEDO Intent product, again providing some machine-learning capability by allowing non-specialists to train the application.

"What we have built with VEDO Intent is a way that a marketer or analyst could train an algorithm to classify data automatically," Barker says. "Because computers are stupid, but fast learners, it does that by having a human train it by example – to say, 'code this one to say it's a rant; this one means it's a rave; this one means it's a churn signal'."

The bigger search for meaning will be to use social media to solve two

important problems with some certainty: what just happened, and what will happen as a result.

At Demos, Carl Miller, co-founder and research director of the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media (CASM) has been working on the "big datafication of social life", collected as social media intelligence, or 'Socmint'. "This is trying to get a hold of those gritty social dynamics, processes, tipping points that lead to certain things happening," he says. "It might lead to revolution or public disorder. It might lead to lots of other things. Then the holy grail of Socmint – the thing that I'm asked by government more than anything else – can we use social media to predict events that will happen in the future?" The answer is, perhaps.

Demos has had success in predicting the weekly results of the *X Factor* using social media – which has limited wider value, but the methods are applicable to many problems. For example, to solve the problem of 'what happened', when we know something happened, but not what or where, Demos worked on dividing the Tweet stream into 'before' and 'after'. By finding words that are in the 'after' but not the 'before' – and vice versa – and using geolocation, it becomes a real-time source of intelligence.

Experimental work like this uses a coalition of skills; similarly, the work Francesco is doing on his Visual Social Media Lab project involves an art historian and a philosopher alongside researchers and programmers. Miller explains that he is part of a group that is "half policy researchers and social scientists, who talk a lot to government and large institutions. The other half are computer scientists, data scientists, visualisation experts and natural language processing experts. So CASM is both a technology lab and a policy hub."

In future, we will find much of the innovation in start-ups, data science houses and academia. Twitter, DataSift, Pulsar or Demos are now part of a wider coalition of experts. Research agencies have an important place, and this type of innovation will be a collaborative effort.

However, St James warns that creative, technology-aware problem-solvers are hard to find, and even harder to hold on to. "The really smart technology people don't want to work anywhere in particular; they want to solve problems – so what gets them excited is being presented with a real-world issue," she says, "Great developers think 'I want to find this out', knowing there wasn't a way to find it out before." ■

## HEARING THE CUSTOMER'S VOICE

No matter where they work, research teams have a common objective: to ensure the customer's voice is being heard and considered when a business is making a decision. This has given researchers unprecedented access to boardrooms across the world. Every day, research teams are standing up in front of CEOs and CFOs, and giving persuasive and powerful updates on brand health, customer satisfaction and new trends in markets.

It wasn't always easy to hear that voice; customers were quiet. If we wanted to listen to them,

we had to find a group of customers and ask them directly what they thought of our products or our advertising.

Now, customers are easier to listen to than ever before. Every day, more than 500 million Tweets are sent; more than half a billion expressions of likes, dislikes, opinions and thoughts are also made. This is the largest public library of consumer opinion ever amassed and opens up opportunities to understand, anticipate and meet customers' needs. The challenge is that many more people now have

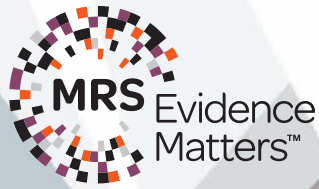
that exact job – it's not just the domain of the researcher.

Whereas everything from advertising measurement and brand tracking to proposition testing tends to sit with the research team, responsibility for analysing and reporting on social media is often scattered across a business. Sometimes the media agency owns it; sometimes brand managers are doing their own analysis; and sometimes tech platforms or media owners are reporting back on it themselves.

Research teams have a great opportunity to collaborate across

these parties, to innovate with social media data and combine it with existing research to uncover valuable insights – but time is short. Other teams and types of agencies are already using this data to find actionable insights about customers. This risks eroding researchers' treasured position as chief customer advocates. The time to start exploring what social media research means for you is now.

**By Olesya Moosman,  
head of research,  
Twitter UK**



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# Ringging the changes

BT has been applying 'big insight' to launch products such as BT Mobile, as **Zaid Al-Qassab**, its chief brand officer, explains to *Jane Simms*

Zaid Al-Qassab



**T**he world's oldest communications company, BT – which can trace its heritage back to The Electric Telegraph Company, incorporated in 1846 – is at an interesting stage in its development. The launch of BT Mobile in March took the company a step further away from its telecoms roots and turned it into a 'quad-play' provider of telecoms, broadband, mobile and pay TV.

If the proposed merger with mobile operator EE gets Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) clearance, BT will cement its position in the mobile market, while its new channel – BT Sport Europe, which went live in August – will do the same for its TV business.

Also in March this year, Zaid Al-Qassab, formerly managing director of Procter & Gamble's (P&G's) beauty and grooming division in the UK and Ireland, joined BT as chief brand officer, with responsibility for group marketing strategy and brands. So what can the man who spent 20 years overseeing very tangible FMCG brands such as Olay, Max Factor, Clairol, Wella and Gillette bring to a technology and telecoms business, where service delivery plays such a critical part in customers' experience and perception of the brand?

Actually, says Al-Qassab, the worlds of FMCG and telecoms are not so different, and the gap is narrowing in the digital era, with the rise of social media and direct online sales.

"Both FMCG and telecoms have an abundance of data – the main difference between them is the nature of their relationship with the end user," he says. "Telcos have an ongoing relationship with customers, so have a wealth of data about their use habits, their spend, the

products and packages they hold, their customer service history, viewing behaviour and so on.

"FMCG companies have an indirect relationship with consumers, so they place a greater emphasis on primary research to compensate for this deficiency, and are more dependent on retail partners for data."

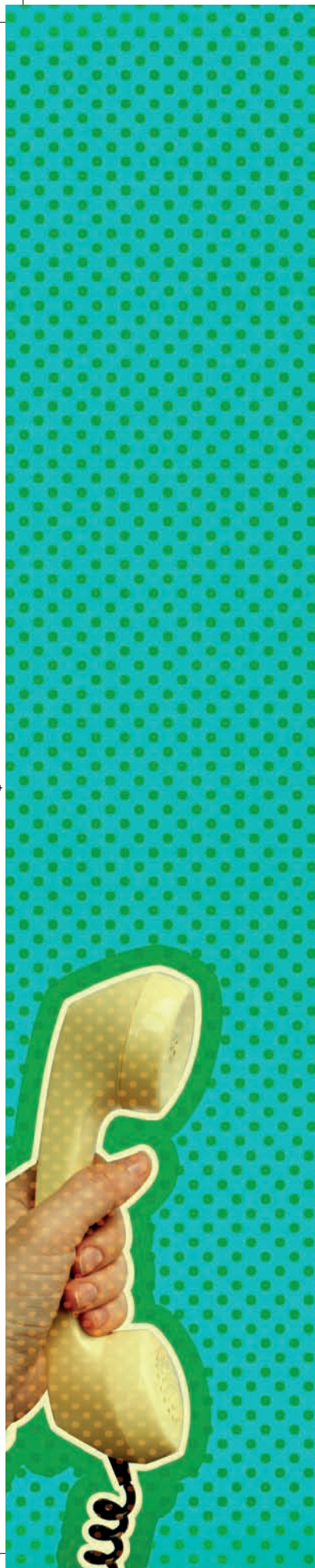
Even so, Al-Qassab suggests BT will increasingly use the kind of qualitative approaches to understanding its customers – and then creating, targeting and marketing products and services accordingly – that have long been standard in FMCG.

### Equal partners

"The FMCG world believes a combination of quant and qual is the route to differentiation and competitive advantage," he says. "So P&G, for example, is passionate about understanding its end users – how they make purchase decisions, the barriers to purchase, what motivates them to pay more, what influences them, and how they use products. They treat qualitative and quantitative data as equal partners because qualitative approaches often yield the best insight to change current behaviours – whereas quantitative data tends to tell you what's happening today."

By contrast, telecoms, which comes from an engineering background, has traditionally been strongly biased towards quantitative research – and this, as Al-Qassab points out, has to change.

"In the modern world, customers increasingly see products and services as 'generic', so we have to do more qualitative research to see how to differentiate what we do," he says. "Also, the telco world is only just beginning its journey ▶





► towards convergence; it has been structured around separate products – fixed line, mobile, TV and so on – and has had a very product-oriented approach to customers. In the converged world, those boundaries are more blurred; people want to do things on the move. So we need to use different forms of research and segmentation, based on habits and behaviour, using all sorts of different techniques, including psychographics.”

Al-Qassab believes most companies now have more data than they can cope with – that the term ‘big data’ is confusing, and can lead people down the wrong path. “It’s not how big your data is that matters, it’s what you do with it – and if you only focus on the size of your data, you run the risk of becoming data rich and insight poor,” he says.

### The what and the why

Al-Qassab prefers the term ‘smart data’, which he believes implies a focus on the quality and usefulness of data. “The collection and analysis of data is meaningful only when it is used to drive decision-making,” he points out. “But unless you understand the consumer mindset, there’s a danger that your data never becomes ‘smart’, so the real opportunity is in integrating data with consumer research to understand not only the ‘what’ but also the ‘why’. We don’t need big data; we need big insight.”

It was ‘big insight’ that led to the launch of BT Mobile. “That launch started not with the product or the commercials, but with a deep understanding of mobile users and their current habits and unfulfilled needs,” Al-Qassab says.

Insight work showed that while customers want the added-value services that mobile offers, they also want simple tariffs and to keep control of their bills. For this reason, BT Mobile comes with a capping facility – particularly useful when it’s teenagers you’re buying phones for – and a simple tariff structure.

BT Mobile gained 100,000 customers within four months of its launch, and exemplifies the progress the company has made on its





journey from what Al-Qassab describes as “a market-research focus” to “an insight focus”. “We’ve made great strides in synthesising quantitative and qualitative data to help solve problems,” he says. “Now we need to move toward that insight leading the commercial teams in new and exciting directions.”

Insight was at the heart of the entire BT Mobile proposition and operating model, including marketing, sales and service, and the commercials, says Al-Qassab. The insight team is also helping in “groundbreaking new areas for BT”, such as advising the commercial team on the value of recent sports-rights bids, including those of the UEFA Champions League games screened on BT Sport Europe since August.

Crucial to accelerating the progress from research to insight, and reaping commercial benefits as a result, is the ability of the insight team to ‘sell’ what it does to senior internal audiences. “We still feel we can do more to bring the business – and senior stakeholders in particular – closer to consumers,” explains Al-Qassab. Not that the top echelons have ignored consumers – far from it: “Customers are at the heart of what BT does,” he insists. “But as the world becomes more complex, and there are more and more demands on senior people, the insight team needs to get better at communicating with them, so they are really informed about the big new areas we’re exploring, to speed up decision-making.

“We’re looking at innovative ways of delivering insight – whether through consumer

immersion sessions, infographics, vox pops, microsites and so on – to ‘bring consumers to life’ for the organisation.”

While it was “big strategic and commercial factors” that underpinned BT’s proposed merger with EE, consumer insight indicates a synergy between the operations, Al-Qassab suggests. “We’ve seen the same trends emerge through multiple pieces of research and analysis. Consumers are spending more time online than ever before and they want the best connection, whether they are at home, in the office or on the move.

“They don’t make a distinction between home broadband and 4G – they just care about being connected, wherever they are, and they increasingly care about the content they can access.”

Having EE in the BT stable could bring other benefits too – not least in broadening BT’s appeal to a younger audience. BT has a long and solidly British heritage, and is perceived as reliable and trustworthy, factors that resonate strongly with older customers, says Al-Qassab. BT Sport is starting to change perceptions among younger audiences, but the proposed merger with EE could help.

“EE is just three years old and is seen as highly innovative,” he says. “It was the first mobile operator to launch 4G, it has products such as the Power Bar [a portable mobile phone charger] and it has a successful partnership with the Glastonbury festival, where it has offered free phone charging and wi-fi.”

### Useful complaints

Until the merger gets CMA approval, BT won’t make any statements about brand strategy. Rumour has it that the BT and EE brands will remain distinct, at least in the short term, but it will be interesting to see how the two are positioned against each other. Given that EE attracts a large number of complaints about a variety of different elements of its service, is there a danger that negative perceptions about EE might taint the BT brand?

Al-Qassab won’t comment on EE, but he says BT views complaints as “an excellent form of insight”. “We monitor and track them carefully, and send summaries to [CEO] Gavin Patterson and his team. Complaints are a really useful way to help evolve services and products.”

Broadband remains the cornerstone of the BT business. It is an intensely competitive market, with providers offering heavy discounts and

## USING INSIGHT TO ACCELERATE INNOVATION

BT Sport has been hailed as the fastest-ever launch of a new TV channel (12 months from idea inception to realisation) and it came out of Hothouse – a small team, and a methodology, within BT’s innovation division.

Matt Lawson, the company’s director of applied innovation, explains: “We introduced Hothouse about 12 years ago, as an agile software development methodology aimed at rapidly creating prototypes, but we saw the potential to expand its scope.”

Hothouse brings together everyone in the business who needs to be involved in developing a new product and service – engineers, coders, marketers, NPD, the CEO’s office, external partners, suppliers and customers.

“These are big events; we involve 60 to 90 people on average, but that can go up to 150 – and they typically run over three days,” says Lawson.

Attendees are split into cross-discipline teams of six to 10 people, which compete to produce the best solution to a given opportunity or problem. This might be to: develop a

prototype, proposition or business case; come up with an architectural design (how a new product or service might work with BT’s systems and processes); create a marketing plan; or a combination of all of these things.

The teams’ progress is judged each day by senior representatives from the parts of the business sponsoring the work – for example, John Petter, chief executive of BT’s consumer division, or Andrew Haworth, BT consumer strategy director for content, mobile and broadband – and by potential customers for the product or service. Each team delivers a *Dragons’ Den*-type pitch, and the judging panel gives feedback and awards points. The winning team’s solution goes on to be developed into a prototype.

Teams are encouraged to borrow ideas from each other, which means “you get a distillation of the best of everything”, says Lawson. The real beauty of the process, however, is that everyone who needs to be involved in the development of a product or service is involved, and



‘buys in’ at this stage. “It reduces to three days what would otherwise take six to nine months,” adds Lawson.

The launch of BT Sport required three Hothouses, and the team have also used it for industry clients, including to develop a cloud-based pharmaceutical product for a drugs company and a global logistics product.

BT’s insight and strategy teams run ‘teach-ins’ on the first morning of each Hothouse. These might include: what the market looks like for the proposed product or service; current players and offerings; the desired positioning of the new product or service; how it would play into BT’s strategy; and how it would work in terms of a competitor’s strategy.

▶ other incentives, such as tablet devices. In the first quarter of 2015, nearly one million customers switched broadband provider, although Al-Qassab won’t be drawn on how many switched to or from BT.

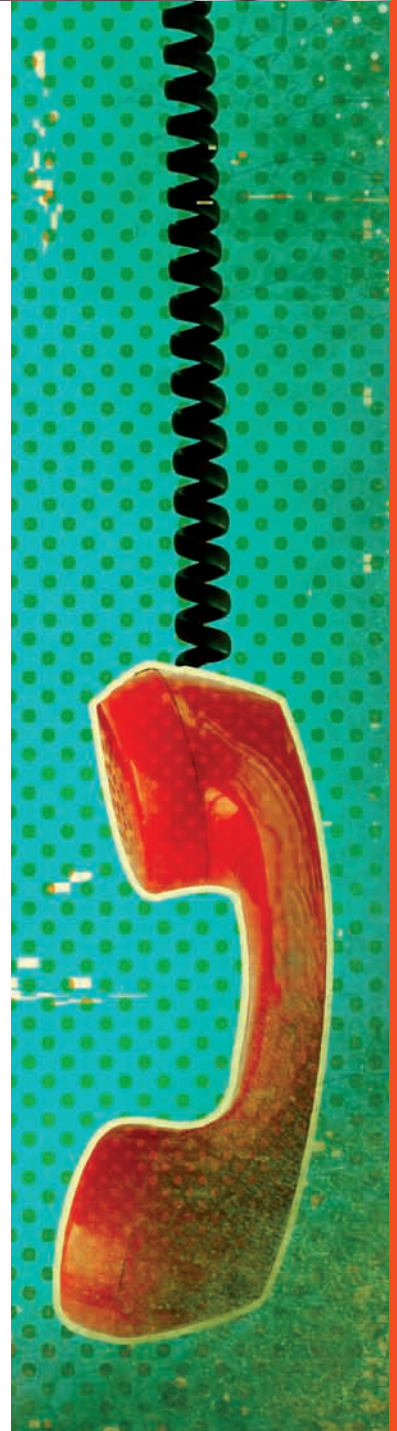
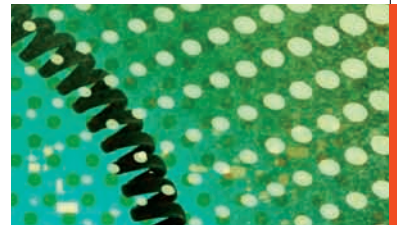
What he will say is that demand for landlines is increasing; at the time of writing, the number of landlines had increased for 17 quarters in a row, and Openreach had connected 215,000 new ones during the previous year.

Meanwhile, consumers spend more and more time online, and use multiple devices simultaneously, often wirelessly, which take up increasing amounts of bandwidth – yet their demands for speed, reliability and security are

growing too. This is driving strong demand for fibre broadband, which explains the recent finding by the telecoms regulator, Ofcom, that 90% of UK households have a landline.

Customers’ expectations of service are rising too, however, says Al-Qassab – “and we know that customers who leave for service reasons are much less likely to come back in future than those who leave for price reasons, so service is a key part of BT’s strategy”.

“We certainly aren’t complacent,” he adds. “We use Net Promoter Score and study the results forensically to understand what drives customer satisfaction and loyalty. That informs our business plans and priorities.” ■



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“ The brand values of ease and affordability are deeply ingrained and readily articulated; after all, the business is not called hardJet ”

# Flying high

From appealing to the business market to relieving points of stress during flying, market research is being used strategically by easyJet to improve performance, as its head of CRM and insight, **Lis Blair**, explains to *Rob Gray*

**B**udget airline easyJet has come a long way in its comparatively short, 20-year history. Even rival low-cost carrier Ryanair – still viewed as something of an upstart in certain quarters – is 10 years older.

The business, founded by entrepreneur Stelios Haji-loannou, began with only a pair of leased Boeing 737 aircraft, flying from Luton to two destinations: Glasgow and Edinburgh. Today, it is a listed company, carrying around 65 million passengers a year across Europe and generating £4.5bn in annual revenue. Its vivid orange and white brand colours enjoy massive recognition, and it has serious aspirations to become Europe's preferred short-haul airline, while sticking to the notion that travel should be easy and affordable.

These brand values are deeply ingrained and readily articulated; after all, the business is not called hardJet. Yet even for a company with such a familiar brand name and clear proposition, building business in the tough short-haul flights market presents enormous challenges. Clearly, understanding customer purchasing behaviour and motivation is fundamental to future success.

In charge of getting to the bottom of it all is Lis Blair, easyJet's head of CRM and insight, who joined the airline in 2012.

"There has always been this real appetite for customer insight [at easyJet]," she says. "Very quickly, I set about trying to put in place a framework to enable us to deliver against that,

and get our single, customer-view database sorted out internally. We also had to make sure we had the right agency partners to work with, so that we have the right data coming in day by day, week by week, month by month – to give us that total view."

Blair works closely with three agencies. Data-driven ad agency Havas Helia is responsible for database marketing and CRM, while easyJet partners with Join the Dots and Millward Brown on the market research side. Join the Dots runs the airline's customer community, while Millward Brown handles major tracking studies. All of the agencies are brought together for quarterly insight meetings to compare notes and sharpen up briefs.

## Customer feedback

EasyJet's online customer community features around 3,000 people – a mix of business and leisure travellers, drawn mainly from the UK, France, Italy and Switzerland. Each week they are sent an email asking for their input into a couple of research topics. Participants are incentivised with a monthly prize draw, but – as Join the Dots has established through research with Salford University – the main reason people want to provide feedback is to help improve the service they receive. Blair describes the community as a "brilliant bunch" of people who are very good at putting easyJet right.

"With some of the things being measured elsewhere, such as c-sat [customer satisfaction] and brand, we can go a bit deeper by using communities," says Join the Dots' senior research director Paul Child. "We're lucky enough to have some pretty good reach into the easyJet business in terms of different

**RIGHT** Lis Blair has had to think differently since moving to easyJet from banking, where there was more data. 'What financial services don't know about you, you could write on the back of a stamp.'

► stakeholders: customer experience, product teams and some of the operational guys place briefs with us."

For more than five years, the online customer community has proved to be a valuable tool for gauging passenger opinion, and it continues to grow, with the occasional tweak here and there. Blair has made more radical changes to other aspects of the research mix, however. Two major European tracking programmes – one for brand, the other covering customer satisfaction – were established at the beginning of 2013, when Millward Brown was brought in to replace GfK.

"We built our brand and our customer-satisfaction programmes to work together," explains Blair. "We have bridging questions between the two so we can create and understand that link between brand perceptions and experience – and, ultimately, company performance."

Brand research is conducted through Millward Brown's Lightspeed panel and concentrates, to a large degree, on how easyJet is perceived in the market. Comparisons are made between the perceptions of customers and non-customers.

The panel is also used for competitor benchmarking and advertising evaluation. At the heart of the programme is Millward Brown's Meaningfully Different framework for understanding brand equity.

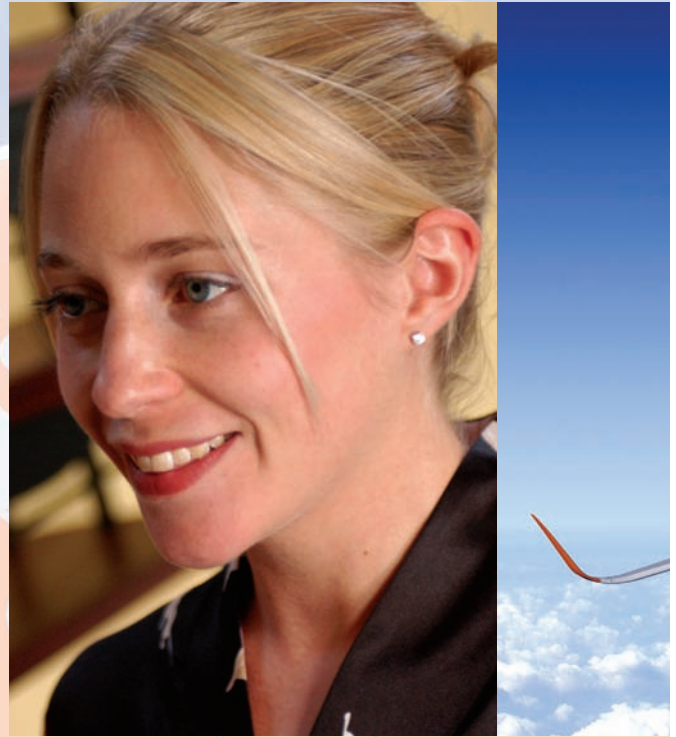
A thorough customer-satisfaction programme runs in tandem with the brand research. Every month, interviews are conducted with between 35,000 and 40,000 customers from across Europe, all contacted the day after travel. They are invited, via email, to take part in an online

**“ The airline keeps a weather eye on booking trends. Given the prevalence of smartphones and tablets, it's no surprise that mobile has become an increasingly significant booking channel ”**

survey with a view to benchmarking their experience across the different stages of their trip – from booking, to departure, flight, arrival and return journey, if

applicable. Verbatim comments are captured along the way.

"Information is reported back regularly via online dashboards and is widely used across the organisation to monitor overall company performance, but also at a more granular level," says Blair. "Our base managers [the easyJet operational heads at each airport], for example, will be living and breathing that data to



understand how they are performing, and how they compare to other similar bases."

The intention is to make the data as actionable as possible, giving base managers the information they need to address any service-delivery problems. Base managers can filter information using a graphical user interface (GUI) reporting dashboard to hone in on particular issues of concern – for instance, bag-drop comments over the previous week, or feedback from passengers travelling with children. Needless to say, Blair and the central customer team also have access to this data.

### Queue times

A couple of years ago, the data pointed to increasing queue times at Gatwick. This was no small matter because Gatwick is easyJet's most significant base, serving more than 100 routes. Moreover, the airline is by far Gatwick's biggest customer, flying 41% of all passengers from the airport.

There was a potential for reputational damage, as a large number of passengers were being affected. The airline quickly set to work,



## CV LIS BLAIR

**2012 – present**  
Head of CRM and insight, easyJet

**2008 – 2012**  
Marketing consultant; clients included Barclaycard, Audi, VW Group, Rapier London, Millward Brown, Belu

**2005 – 2007**  
Head of marketing research, Barclays

**2004 – 2005**  
Head of CRM delivery, Barclays

therefore, on understanding customer tolerance levels, gaining insight into the point at which time spent queuing became a 'dissatisfier'. It also looked closely at the Gatwick performance data to pinpoint the causes of the problem.

"As we have a lot of passengers going through Gatwick, we have a lot of sample data," says Blair. "We could look almost hour by hour during the day: when are we seeing peaks and troughs in queue length and, therefore, customer satisfaction? We used that to work with Gatwick and the staff there to say, actually, we have issues around breakfast time, lunchtime and teatime – so how do we make sure we have the right staffing levels to coincide with that?"

An example of how easyJet integrates insight across the organisation is the annual path analysis, conducted to understand the relationships and relative importance of each part of the customer journey in driving overall satisfaction. This has enabled the airline to build what Blair calls a "what-if tool" – essentially, it is a modelling tool that helps determine which elements of the journey should be prioritised for improvement to deliver the biggest impact on overall satisfaction. This is then used when working with colleagues in operations to determine the focus for the coming months and set targets for improvement.

Even though Gatwick is now, by far, easyJet's biggest operational base, its headquarters are still at Luton Airport. In 2006, the business upsized to Hangar 89, a 1970s building formerly occupied by Britannia/TUI, which was modernised and repainted in hard-to-miss easyJet orange – travellers frequently mistake the building for a departure terminal. Plane-cabin chairs provide the seating in the heavily branded reception area, while the upstairs meeting room – in which Blair and I talk – is, for the most part, typical of a standard office building. Apart, that is, from two aircraft windows at the back of the room that offer views into the vast easyJet maintenance hangar, a space big enough to house three planes from the fleet at any one time.

### Data challenges

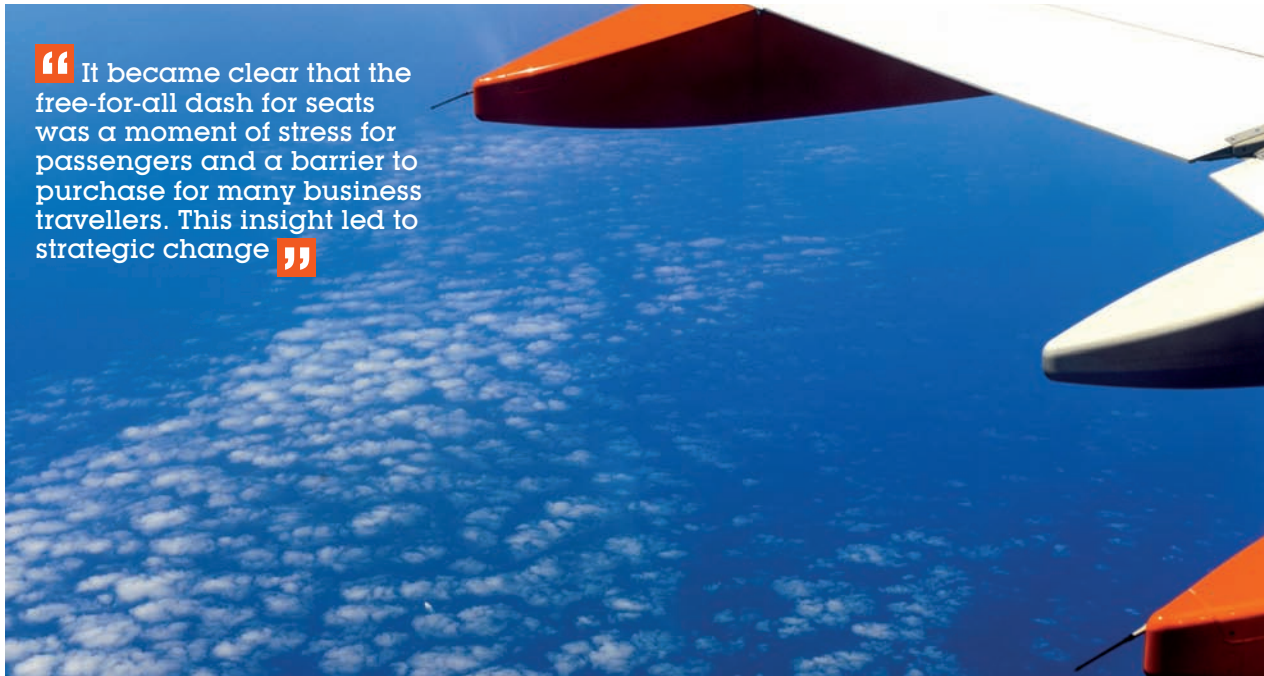
It's all quite a change from Barclays, where Blair cut her teeth. For a start, easyJet is a far leaner organisation. Blair has one research manager for the whole of Europe, and three people in CRM – the same as she had for just one customer segment at Barclays.

So how does easyJet compare with life at a financial services colossus? "Wherever you go you've got the same challenges with data – challenges with pulling it together, with agency management and all the bits and pieces that come with that," says Blair.

"In terms of the big differences, and what I've learned and really enjoyed at easyJet, it's how to think differently about stuff. At Barclays, we had huge budgets; a huge team; masses of customer data. What financial services don't know about you, you could write on the back of a stamp. Come to easyJet, and there is a lot less that we know. We can infer some things from our data to help with targeted marketing, but you just have to think harder and smarter."

The biggest revelation for Blair on making the move into the airline sector was the complexity of the customer-buying decision around flights. Price, times, brand and location all come into play, with the relative importance of each factor dialled up or down depending on customer segment, the reason for travel and so on.

Of course, the airline keeps a weather eye on booking trends, from party size to choice of destination. Given the prevalence of smartphones and tablets, it's no surprise that mobile has become an increasingly significant booking channel. EasyJet has developed a well-regarded app, which has been downloaded



“ It became clear that the free-for-all dash for seats was a moment of stress for passengers and a barrier to purchase for many business travellers. This insight led to strategic change ”

by more than 10m people, and use of mobile boarding passes is growing.

The airline is also trialling push messaging via the app at Gatwick – for example, notifying departing passengers when their gate is open and directing arriving passengers towards the appropriate luggage carousel.

### Strategic change

For many years, easyJet was a ‘free seating’ airline; however, it became apparent that the free-for-all dash for seats – referred to unofficially as ‘the scrum’ – was a moment of stress for passengers, and a barrier to purchase for many business travellers. This insight led to strategic change, and allocated seating was introduced in 2012.

The change not only boosted customer satisfaction with the boarding process, but it also cleared the way for the airline to improve its position in the business market. In 2014, easyJet upped sales of its business-focused flexi fare by 48% and increased its managed business – where it has a contractual relationship with corporate customers – by 10%. The 2014 ‘White Rabbit’ TV advertising campaign, which boasted that easyJet was more punctual across Europe than British Airways, focused on the customer benefit of on-time arrival – which research had indicated was of immense importance to a business audience.

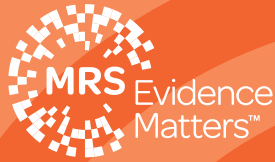
“EasyJet is very dynamic and it acts on insight to make positive change to the business and to its customers,” says Millward Brown group account director Nic Short. “Hearing the customer voice and acting on it extends right up to the most senior levels. CEO Carolyn McCall is a recipient of all the insight and it’s discussed at board meetings.

“It’s a joy to work with because you’re not delivering something that’s going to sit on a shelf. Perhaps more than any client I’ve worked with, easyJet looks to amplify insight. By linking different sources of insight together, it takes it even further.”

To that end, easyJet is working with Millward Brown on gathering insight into the relationship between employee engagement and customer satisfaction. The project seeks to identify the extent to which staff satisfaction influences the nature of interactions with customers and, by extension, the overall customer experience.

Blair is keen to make the point that the company board considers research and customer insight to be a strategic asset. There’s a lot of hard work going into making sure that the ‘easy’ part of the airline’s name rings true among its customers. ■





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# Ministry of Numbers



CV  
ALEX AIKEN

**2013 – present**  
Executive director,  
Government  
Communications

**2000 – 2013**  
Director of  
communications &  
strategy

**1998 – 2000**  
Deputy director,  
Conservative Party

**1992 – 1997**  
Press office,  
Conservative Party  
(1992-95: press  
officer; 1995-97: chief  
press officer; 1997-99:  
head of news)

**Education:**  
BSc, economics,  
London School of  
Economics and  
Political Science

**Alex Aiken**, executive director for Government Communications, is such a firm believer in the value of evaluation that he has installed physical walls of data in every government department. By *Bronwen Morgan*

**C**ommunications is one of the four main levers of government,” says Alex Aiken, executive director for Government Communications. “A government can legislate; it can regulate; it can impose taxation; and it can communicate.”

This sentiment was reflected two years ago when communications was recognised as one of 10 functional professions within the Civil Service – there are 25 professions in total – and the Government Communication Service (GCS) was founded, with Aiken at its head.

The GCS’s role is to support communicators in delivering the government’s policy priorities, and their success is evaluated against the annual Communications Plan.

Aiken takes evaluation very seriously. He is such a firm believer in its value that he describes it as “the foundation stone of the professional credibility that gives communicators a right to speak at the top decision-making level in an organisation”.

While some may think of communications as a creative pursuit, Aiken’s focus on measurement manifests itself in his own, unique method of drilling home the importance of numbers.

One of the first things Aiken did when he took up his role two years ago was to ensure that every government department had a ‘performance hub’: a physical wall of data – printed on A3 paper – with outputs that run from the GCS’s performance framework.

This framework incorporates strategic priorities and divides communications objectives into input, output, outtake and outcome metrics. These are made up of financial and non-financial data.

The performance hubs display information ranging from media coverage (both quantity and sentiment), social media coverage and the

progress of campaigns, as well as factors such as the number of people employed by the department and other management data. Aiken and his team at the Cabinet Office review their data at the beginning of each month, when the new numbers come in.

Having it physically displayed, Aiken says, is a deliberate ploy to keep these measures front of mind. “I was at the Department for Transport earlier this week,” he adds, “and they have displayed their objectives so the team can see, every day, the big things they are doing over the year: the objectives writ large, literally, and the data on whether they are meeting them. It’s a nudge to prioritising data and evaluation.”

## Changing behaviour

Aiken says he has probably been influenced to use this ‘nudging’ behaviour by his involvement with the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) – also known as the Nudge Unit – which is now a social-purpose company partly owned by the Cabinet Office, employees, and innovation charity Nesta.

BIT draws on ideas from behavioural science literature to work with government departments, public bodies and charities on making public services more cost-effective and easier for citizens to use.

It also works to improve outcomes by “introducing a more realistic model of human behaviour to policy” and “enabling people to make better choices for themselves”.

The way this thinking is put to use ranges from the straightforward to the complicated, Aiken explains.

“There are some very complex arguments that you can make around this, as well as some very simple ones. As agencies that do large amounts of correspondence – such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HM Revenue & Pensions (HMRC) –

**RIGHT:** A poster from The GREAT Britain campaign to promote the UK abroad. Up to 100 GREAT events take place around the world every month

# FILM IS GREAT

## BRITAIN



Filmed in historic UK locations, *Suffragette* follows the British women whose fight for equality inspired the world. For iconic talent both on and off camera, choose the UK.

*Suffragette*  
Carey Mulligan, Actress

[gov.uk/ukti](http://gov.uk/ukti)





The GREAT Britain campaign aims to boost the country's trade and tourism

► Customs (HMRC) – have found that putting ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ in letters and other correspondence ups the engagement rate, and gets you more answers that you need from the public.

“On a one-million letter mail out, even if you only get a 2% response rather than a 1% response, that’s a large number of additional responses.”

Back to Aiken’s walls of data. Since he put them in place – most departments have now had them for about 18 months – he has found, on his twice-yearly visits to each team, that some have moved them on, independently, to digital dashboards.

The team at HMRC, he explains, has coded its own digital-reporting tool, while other teams have borrowed from the market to create real-time dashboards.

He has championed these dashboards as part of his team’s strategy of “pushing forward on every front” and getting early adopters to encourage other teams.

“I was always clear that we had to go to real-time digital dashboards rather than paper-based hubs, but I have been really encouraged by the way people have taken this on – on their own – and developed them,” Aiken says.

### Targeted campaigns

Other strands to this ‘pushing forward’ strategy include the creation of a government trading desk, at media buyers Carat, to enable programmatic buying. This is part of communicator Aiken’s desire to create more targeted campaigns based on people’s history and interests. And it all comes back to

## COMMUNICATING SUCCESSFULLY

**Example:** The GREAT Britain Campaign, from Cabinet Office/ No 10, UK Trade and Investment, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, VisitBritain and the British Council.

Aiken highlights this as one of the most successful government campaigns in recent years. "It's a great campaign, as a National Audit Office report told us a couple of months ago."

**Objective:** To deliver increased levels of trade, investment, tourism and high-quality students coming to the UK, leading to a measureable impact of at least £1bn over three to five years and the creation of more than 10,000 direct jobs for the UK economy.

**Approach:** Unifying the international growth promotion efforts of 17 government departments and organisations under a single brand. Focused on 13 priority markets, pan-market activities are run in 144 countries. Up to 100 GREAT events and programmes take place every

month, including trade missions and tourism campaigns.

The campaign draws on partnerships with businesses and high-profile individuals – David Beckham offered his image rights for free for a period – to multiply impact and reach new audiences.

**Outcome:** Economic return (anticipated and actual) of £1.2bn – Aiken says expenditure was around £100k – from its activities since 2012. It is currently delivering a further estimated £500m. It has also reportedly changed customer behaviour in key overseas markets, increasing audience interest in trading, investing, studying in or visiting the UK by between 10% and 16%.

**Example:** Ebola, from the Department of Health, Public Health England, NHS England, Department for International Development, Cabinet Office and Ministry of Defence.

**Objective:** To reassure the public about the low risk of Ebola

transmission, inform NHS staff about what to do in the event of a case, and build support for the UK's work to tackle Ebola in west Africa.

**Approach:** An integrated public information campaign, a workforce communications plan to reassure staff, and a major digital and media PR push to minimise public concern. This included using leading clinicians as spokespeople, distributing information leaflets and posters for use in hospitals and GP surgeries, and posting up-to-date Ebola content on NHS Choices and on Gov.uk.

**Outcome:** A 19% decrease in the proportion of people believing Ebola was a significant or moderate threat to the UK; and a 5% rise in the proportion of people believing the government was doing enough to support international efforts. Ninety per cent of clinical staff were confident about how to respond to a potential Ebola case; 80% of NHS staff felt confident the local system would be able to respond effectively to an Ebola case.

his determination to ensure both effectiveness and efficiency.

"When you had £1bn to spend on government communications [the figure Aiken claims was spent in 2010 under the Labour government] you'd just buy a load of TV advertising and hope that some of it hit the audience. But when you have got £500m, you have to be more targeted."

An example of the targeting the team has employed is a campaign aimed at recruiting Royal Naval Engineers. "We worked out that it was better to target students in universities with engineering faculties – preferably near the sea – with apps that allowed them to play games about being an engineer in the Royal Navy, than it is to use the adverts either side of the 10 o'clock news," says Aiken.

"It's common sense driven by fracturing

audiences," he adds. "There was a time when the 10 o'clock news was 'it' – and it still has many millions of viewers – but there was a time when it would have made sense to do broadsheet and television advertising.

"Audiences are fracturing, so that's a driver; money is less available than it was – that's a driver, too; and the other is that tech is advancing so quickly. That's where the government trading desk comes in, so we can target people more accurately."

Another element of the focus on targeting – as revealed in the latest Government Communications Plan, released in July of this year – is the upcoming creation of a cross-government insight network. This is intended to share knowledge and ideas for communicating with specific audiences, and follows a dedicated audience insight function being established. The ▶



► insight function helps to commission audience research and monitors communications trends to share best practice on audience insight.

It was launched as part of the GCS Improvement Plan, a multi-phased programme that is currently in its third phase.

### Expert help

As part of his bid to ensure best practice, Aiken makes use of outside experts – ranging from eBay and Google to the The John Madejski Centre for Reputation at the Henley Business School (University of Reading), and Westminster Council – to maintain standards and keep developing communications. He chairs the Evaluation Council that brings in the experts to conduct communications capability reviews, to test the effectiveness and efficiency of communications in government departments and agencies.

There have been 50 reviews, Aiken reveals, each with three reviewers, so a total of 150 external experts have been involved.

“I firmly believe that it’s your government as well as my government, and bringing in external challenge has been critical to raising standards,” he says.

A piece of GCS literature – *7 Trends in leading-edge communications* – released in April of this year, features case studies from brands such as John Lewis and Birds Eye, as well

as from government campaigns, to highlight how the private sector is addressing some of the key trends, including storytelling, shareable content and emotional connection.

The value of this external influence is clear, but are civil servants subject to different pressures to prove the worth of communications spending, compared with those in the private sector? Aiken doesn’t believe so.

“Being able to demonstrate the worth of any public spending is absolutely part of being a public servant. It’s professionally important to me as a government communicator.

“But the UK government spends £700bn a year and communications spend is £500m, which is a tiny part of that. I’d argue it’s an important part but, in a sense, public interest will be more on the cost of a £160m defence equipment budget, or the progress of big projects such as universal credit. So I’m sure there’s a degree of interest, but for me it’s more about our professional effectiveness.”

This constant striving for excellence and professionalism runs deep and his summation of what that entails is sage advice for anyone in the business.

“It is a mixture of using best professional judgement, a canon of established knowledge about the practice of communications, and evidence – numbers – about what has worked and what has not worked.” ■

Targeted campaigns have been used to recruit Royal Navy engineers

# The highs and lows of the economic cycle

After industry consolidation, the biggest impact on the media sector's performance over the past 30 years has been the economic cycle. Being caught at the top of the cycle – with too much debt or financial gearing in an operationally geared business – has led to much of the consolidation and many takeovers in the sector.

In the real world, the cycle very much reflects supply and demand – economic principles that began with the Romans but, in the stock market, it is manifested in fear and greed – human emotions that are far more difficult to predict and control.

Looking back, simplistically, the recovery from the recession of the early '80s started in 1981 with six years of uninterrupted growth that fuelled the confidence of small companies like WPP and Blue Arrow to make their audacious bids for Wall Street giants like J Walter Thompson and Manpower. An inevitable market correction followed, with the crash of October '87, which prompted the Fed and the Bank of England to rein back interest rates enabling the market to bounce back by Christmas.

This induced the mad 'Yuppy years' of '87-'89, which paved the way for the long recession of the early '90s. It was not until after the election of Bill Clinton in the US and our ejection from the ERM in October 1992 – providing a fillip in both countries – that markets, and the media sector, finally rebounded and three years of recession ended.

Advertising is a sensitive barometer of growth and market sentiment because it outpaces rising and falling GDP – just as it outperforms rising markets and underperforms falling markets – driven as it is by corporate



**“In the real world the cycle reflects supply and demand”**

profitability and consumer spend. So WPP's bid for Ogilvy in '89 marked the peak of the cycle, and its debt/equity swap in '92, the trough.

The cycle repeated itself from 1992 to '98 with six years of recovery that culminated in the Far Eastern currency crisis, Russia defaulting, and the collapse of LTCM in 1998. This again prompted the central banks to cut interest rates dramatically, which stoked the dotcom mania of '98-'00. This bubble began to deflate gently in March 2000 with Nasdaq peaking, but burst spectacularly in September 2001 with 9/11, heralding three years of recession.

The next recovery started in 2003 with the so-called 'Baghdad bounce', following the invasion of Iraq. But this cycle was half the length of the previous two, which could perhaps be explained by globalisation and the internet

'coming of age' combining to make the world a faster and smaller place. Three years (instead of six) of debt-fuelled recovery to 2006 were followed by one year (instead of two) of irrational exuberance to 2007, and 18 months (instead of three years) of recession, from the fall of Northern Rock in September 2007 to Barclays Bank passing its stress test in March 2009.

Since the global financial crisis of 2008, the world's major central banks – the Fed, BoE, ECB and BoJ – have not only cut and held interest rates to near-zero since March 2009, but also printed – in the case of the US and UK – and are printing – Japan and Eurozone – trillions in so-called QE to offset the mountains of debt in the post-Lehman world.

Despite six years of relatively slow recovery, the Fed was poised to raise interest rates in September 2015, but the Chinese stock market crisis – where green investors in Shanghai triggered black boxes in New York – means that interest rates are likely to stay lower for longer. Just as the blunt tool of monetary policy was the response to the great crash of 1987 and the Far Eastern/Russian/Long-Term Capital Management crises of 1998, it will most likely be the response to the current slowdown in the world's second-largest economy. If so, this will lay the foundations for the last stage of the cycle – the irrational exuberance that will mark the peak with huge (often value-destroying) mergers and acquisitions deals as at the other peaks – WPP/Ogilvy in 1989, Time Warner/AOL in 2000 and RBS/ABN Amro in 2007. ■

**Lorna Tilbian is executive PLC director and head of media at Numis Securities**

# INSIDE INSIGHT

IMPACT HAD AN EXCLUSIVE BRIEFING ON PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM MILLWARD BROWN VERMEER'S *INSIGHTS2020* RESEARCH, WHICH LOOKED AT HOW SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES USE INSIGHTS. **BRONWEN MORGAN** OUTLINES THE KEY THEMES

It is rare, nowadays, to speak to any marketer who doesn't talk about 'putting the customer at the heart of the business'. But if this isn't merely business jargon, how widespread is the practice in reality – and how is it best achieved?

Millward Brown Vermeer, the marketing consultancy of Millward Brown – alongside Esomar, Kantar, Korn Ferry, the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) and a diverse client board – designed a study to address these questions, among others. *Insights2020* covers 67 countries and explores how the most successful businesses are using insights to their advantage, as well as producing frameworks and guidelines for other brands to do the same.

Qualitative interviews were carried out with more than 300 innovators, opinion leaders, business leaders and practitioners (chief marketing officers and consumer marketing insight leaders) worldwide. The results will eventually incorporate findings from a quantitative survey with 5,000 functional specialists.

Amanda Phillips, head of UK marketing at Millward Brown, gave *Impact* an exclusive pre-briefing on the key themes emerging from the qualitative interviews.

## BROAD FUNCTION

One of the most prominent themes, says Phillips, is that the role of the insight leader within the company is broader and more prominent than ever before. This is evident in many ways, not least the structure of the teams; while most insight leaders report into marketing departments,

many also have a 'dotted line' to vice-presidents – and, often, the CEO. "Having previously been tucked under the wing of the CMO, they're now being borrowed by the rest of the organisation," says Phillips.

Some organisations have reportedly split the insight and analytics function, with insight still sitting within marketing, but analytics located centrally. Phillips puts this down to an emerging 'customer data democracy': all facets of the business recognise the value of data and want direct access. But there is still some disagreement about the best way for this to happen.

"Having a marriage between insights and analytics – looking at quant customer data with the qual and quant customer insight data – seems to make sense to get the whole picture," says Phillips. "For everyone to pull out what they need, perhaps there's a need to centralise the function. But if analytics is no longer under the insight director's guidance, they are not shaping the way they're getting heard and analysed.

"There's a mid-point in there somewhere – everyone needs access to this, but how best is that democracy allowed to happen?"

Because the insight function is now so high-profile – and researchers are dealing with so many departments within the business – the job has become as much about storytelling as anything else.

"It's not just about making it 'Janet and John'," says Phillips. "[Researchers] have to frame [data] in such a way that



it's inspiring and compelling, and means that people absolutely have to go back into their respective departments and change things for the better, no matter how painful it is."

The other key change to the insight function, says Phillips, is that it seems to be more forward-looking than before. Interviewees agreed that whereas, before, their job was about looking back at the previous year and judging how well they had done, now it is all about looking ahead. "Insight leaders need one foot in the innovation camp," she says.

### TALENT AND CAPABILITY

*Insights2020* seems to indicate that the greater demands of the job mean researchers now require a wider skillset. A scientific approach is needed to understand the data, while an arts approach is needed to weave the story. They also need confidence and charisma to develop a presence, as well as leadership and inspiration skills.

While having cross-skilled insight teams could address this need for a wide range of requirements, there are some concerns about where the researchers of tomorrow are going to come from.

"One of the big questions I got asked, that I didn't know how to answer, was: 'Where are we going to grow this talent of the future?'," says Phillips. "If the traditional training is about 'math men', where does the 'ad men' training come from, in terms of storytelling, leadership and change

management? Are we training our talent of the future to be not just great analysts, but great leaders?"

"Insight leaders used to be able to tell you where they poached their people from, but now it's not so clear. It's a real industry issue – we're only as good as the people. The machines can only do so much."

### FUTURE-PROOFING

Many discussions about the future focused on the topic of real-time data, which extends to social media insights: interviewees recognised the value of it, but many were wary of the dangers of it leading to snap decisions. The consensus was that – while it's important to keep a finger on the pulse – real-time data has a rawness to it, so it's vital to remain objective and consider the long-term view, as well as the quick snapshots.

"Access to real-time data shouldn't lead to 'slot-machine management', where every time you pull a handle a new set of items comes up and you decide to focus on those," says Phillips. "You still need to contextualise that within wider business. But, on the other hand, if you don't have real-time data, you risk sleeping while Rome burns."

More widely, the preliminary findings of the *Insights2020* research are that the future represents a challenging and exciting time both for clients in this industry and for the agency partners supporting them. What's more, the demand for access to analytics is testament to the perceived power of insight.

"The customer-centric business is not just rhetoric," says Phillips. "Insights are informing and being a catalyst for change in all areas." ■

# IS THERE A RESEARCH DEFICIT?

CHIEF EXECS DO NOT ALWAYS SEE MARKET RESEARCH AS GOOD VALUE. **ALISON BLAIR** SHARES SOME OF THE FINDINGS FROM PwC'S STUDY

**T**he market research industry contributes more than £3bn annually to the UK economy, but how does this translate in terms of real value? During 2015, PwC has been asking the organisations that commission market research what 'value' their spend delivers.

Our initial findings show a huge disparity across individual organisations between the best practice – where research is an investment that leads to improved business performance (for instance, value) – and the worst – where research can be seen as simply a cost burden.

We surveyed 183 C-suite executives across the UK (online, in May 2015) producing data on the scale of the problem. What distinguishes those who get value from research and those who are not exploiting its full potential was further revealed by in-depth interviews.

In this age of big data, most forward-thinking organisations are not only relying on market research as a source of insight, but are also mining rich internal information sources, including data generated by systems and business processes, databases of customer and employee records, product information, internal and external communications.

Too often, different functions within a business fail to cooperate and share their data. The silo tendency results in the fully-rounded picture having no chance to emerge. Information is held at many points within an organisation, so knowledge is disconnected and fragmented. At its worst, this can lead to research being duplicated for different departments, adding cost wastage to the loss of value.

Less than a quarter of C-suite executives in our sample were confident that their research programmes were clearly linked across their business. Financial services companies seem to be struggling most in terms of research alignment, while those in the consumer services/FMCG sector were more likely to have joined-up research programmes.

We suggest a key variable is whether strategy drives research or research drives strategy.

In the former case, the research is often commissioned to justify the decisions taken. So, it may be undertaken late in the process and be perceived as holding things up. Senior decision-makers are not fully involved in the process and are only interested in the one-line 'answer'. Top line is prioritised and a high proportion of the research may never fully see the light of day. As a result, research gets a reputation for being slow and cumbersome.

Where research drives strategy, the company builds a customer intuition. A deep understanding of customers' needs and values leads to better decision-making. In this case, the research has happened in a timely way before decisions are required; there is more confidence within the organisation and less need to 'check things' before going to market. Research gets the reputation of being

central to the business and is at everyone's fingertips.

Only 20% of C-suite executives in the UK felt that research findings always meet the needs of stakeholders and only a quarter design their research in conjunction with them.

Notable differences emerge when we look at the experience across industries, with financial services (FS) companies once again struggling to deliver 'value' to business stakeholders.

There are still instances where research is being used to fill out a scorecard rather than to provide value; less than a quarter felt their research always provided real business insight. This can lead to large, expensive surveys being conducted to drive a number of KPIs on a dashboard. Where these link to performance-related bonuses, there is greater reluctance to change and the metrics become increasingly detached from business and market realities. This diverts attention from current trends and from anticipating the future. It can lead to measuring old customer habits just as new habits make the old ones irrelevant.

Organisations measure what they can measure (and have always measured) and this means they often miss the change that is all around. Failing to research the future inevitably opens a door to inefficiency, disruptive technologies and new competitors.

This sentiment is re-enforced by PwC's most recent annual global



CEO survey, which found more than half of CEOs (56%) expecting to compete with companies and competitors in new industries over the next three years. CEOs in the FS sector, particularly, anticipated technology competitors using research and customer insight from other industries to disrupt and transform the sector.

Yet, less than a third of C-suite executives in our survey said they consistently review and update research programmes based on business need. Those in consumer services/FMCG and in public sector organisations were most likely to say that they review and update their research programmes based on business needs (38% and 36% respectively).

We are equally frustrated when we hear senior business people talking about research being slow and cumbersome, complaining that it is not actionable and ultimately questioning the money spent. Given the high spend on market research in the UK, one of our most staggering findings was that only 6% of C-suite executives always take action as a result of the research undertaken. What are they using to drive strategy and why spend valuable budget if they are not going to take action on the back of it?

Financial services companies were most disappointed – 93% felt that their expectations had not been fully met in terms of the value research had brought to their organisation.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE MARKET RESEARCH INDUSTRY?

We asked C-suite executives to consider the future given their current experiences and the value they get from research. We posed various options around the support they felt their business needed. Overall, half would consider bringing in expert advisers to assess their research programmes and almost a third would consider outsourcing the function entirely.

Some interesting findings emerge by sector – financial services companies are most comfortable in maintaining the status quo, despite existing research not

delivering against stakeholder needs – only one-third would bring in experts and less than one-fifth see outsourcing their research function as an option. Is this illustrative of their poor view of market research professionals, or symptomatic of the highly regulated and consolidated environment in which they operate?

It is the technology, media and telco sector that is most likely to look for support in evidence-based improvements – almost two-thirds would consider using advisers to assess what they are doing, and almost half would consider outsourcing the research entirely.

There is a significant opportunity, if not a duty of care, to illustrate real value delivered by insight; to restore the reputation of market research; and to promote best practice that is more than delivering data and populating scorecards, instead working with clients to use the data to drive business performance. ■

**Alison Blair** is director of Research to Insight (r2i), PwC

# SEARCHING FOR THE NEW

RESEARCH CAN BE VITAL FOR THE SUCCESS OF A NEW PRODUCT, AND UNDERSTANDING WHY NPD FAILS CAN BE AS IMPORTANT AS UNDERSTANDING WHY IT SUCCEEDS, SAYS ENGAGE RESEARCH'S **LYNDSAY PECK**

Innovation is the lifeblood of business; it's what drives the constant evolution – and, in some cases, revolution – that is the hallmark of the world's most successful brands. These brands begin by identifying the problem their customers most need to solve by taking the time to do their homework.

Indeed, the brands that are most committed to thinking big and bold are generally those that are even better at doing the groundwork. Take Virgin, for example, and the way it has diversified since it began life as a record label; or Lego, which has moved beyond being a simple toy to being licensed by many major movies (that's without even considering its own movie), and offering retailer exclusives and consumer engagement via its theme parks.

These are companies that consider the wider context, draw their inspiration from other industries and categories, look closely at their competitors and what they are focusing on, and then use this knowledge to differentiate their own approach. They explore the context in which their product functions and look for sometimes adjacent innovations, which may be harder for others to replicate over the short to medium term.

Many of the most successful innovators seek to understand consumers at the very first stage of innovation. This may be the point at which they look at their category – or an adjoining category – to understand the areas that could be ripe for innovation, where the consumer may be experiencing problems or frustrations. They will learn how people use the brands in the category in their everyday lives, and how they, as innovators, could make things better.

This stage will probably be a qualitative exploration. Once they have developed a list of perhaps 10 (or more) viable ideas, they will use quantitative screening methods to try to understand the scale of the idea. As launch moves closer, a more concrete volumetric can be used to predict potential sales volume under various marketing scenarios.

These are the companies that recognise the value of building integrated, multidisciplinary teams, where marketers and brand strategists sit alongside R&D, product development, engineers and finance experts. This is truly a case of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Some companies, of course, have always had separate innovation teams that work very well – but when, culturally, that has not been the case, creating a new team just to innovate rarely works.

We have noticed how, often, discrete innovation teams can start off isolated and become more so, and rarely seem to deliver on their early promise. This is because innovation isn't just about the product. The most successful companies consider the whole process: the set up – which might be the profit model or the processes; the offering itself – the product or service; and, of course, the delivery – the brand, the channel, the customer experience.

There's another reason for the success of a multidisciplinary approach – innovation that works across a number of areas is less easy to copy. A change to a product, or to technology, is relatively easy to replicate, but if these are combined with changes to processes and delivery, the impact is likely to be greater and longer lasting. Examples include offers that help build a habit (for example, fridge packs) or encourage frequency of purchase, or developments that build on trends



that are going to be long term, not a short-term fad. You can be second to market and still do well if you bring brand strength and a superior offer.

Understanding why new products fail is often as important as understanding why they succeed. We have trawled through the company archives and come up with a number of common reasons why NPD founders:

- Plans on the ground don't match the plans on paper. This could be because advertising is less effective or extensive than expected; distribution is not as wide as planned; or because the plans were unrealistic to begin with.
- The product's in-store position wasn't ideal. This could be a retailer issue, or something as simple as the packaging being too tall to fit on the middle shelves, so only being able to go on the top ones – which can be tricky for a new product that needs visibility. Nearly all in-store issues can be resolved before the product hits the shelves.
- The product doesn't suit an obvious occasion, or the concept is sufficiently unusual that it proves hard to get consumers to

understand it. Habit breeds frequency – for example, breakfast biscuits have worked well because the product states the occasion when they are to be used, thereby creating a new habit.

- The product doesn't live up to its promise – the taste, size or packaging just doesn't deliver.



- The product simply isn't different enough from what's currently out there, and somebody else has already captured your target market by the time you hit the shelves.

- The price/value equation doesn't work with this particular product offering. The brand is too optimistic about its ability to command a price premium, often regardless of what the research may have said.

- The name or name change you opted for isn't well received – Coco Crispies soon went back to being Coco Pops.

- Your target audience can't find the product – or at least not in the obvious place in-store. Perhaps the branding isn't clear enough, or the packaging hidden – an issue that may seem small in research, but which becomes a much bigger deal in the real world.



- The product is just too complicated for people to get their heads around. They don't feel they need it in their lives. If it is not a good idea in research, it's unlikely to become one in the market.

In our 10 years at Engage, we have researched more than a thousand new ideas – an average of 100 per year – and only 40 of these in total made it to market. Here's the real standout figure, however; only 20% are no longer on the market – which is the reverse of the oft-repeated figure that 80% of all new product launches fail. Innovation projects can be fraught with obstacles, politics and stress. Research should help make that path easier. ■

**Lyndsay Peck** is director at Engage Research



EEG headsets could transform the way we communicate with each other, allowing us to share sensory and emotional experiences

THE WAY WE INTERACT WITH TECHNOLOGY HAS EVOLVED FROM TWISTING DIALS AND PRESSING BUTTONS TO TOUCH SCREENS AND MOTION SENSORS. IS CONTROLLING TECH WITH OUR MINDS THE NEXT STAGE? BY **BRONWEN MORGAN**

“One day, I believe we’ll be able to send full, rich thoughts to each other directly, using technology. You’ll just be able to think of something and your friends will immediately be able to experience it too, if you’d like.”

This may sound like a far-fetched idea dreamed up by a child with an active imagination, but it becomes harder to dismiss as fantasy when you learn that this is the prophecy of Mark Zuckerberg. The Facebook CEO made his prediction during a recent online Q&A session, when he was asked about Facebook’s focus for the future.

Zuckerberg said the site was looking to improve on a number of trends in human communication. “People are gaining the power to share in richer and richer ways. We used to just share in text and, now, we post mainly with photos,” he said.

“In the future, video will be even more important than photos. Then, immersive experiences – such as virtual reality – will become the norm; and, after that, we’ll have the power to share our full sensory and emotional experience with people whenever we’d like.”

Although portable devices give people the power to communicate more frequently, we only use them periodically throughout the day, Zuckerberg continued. He believes that technology offering augmented reality will soon be worn all the time, and that this could lead to us, ultimately, being able to communicate via thoughts.

Zuckerberg isn’t alone in thinking along these lines. A recent campaign by MoneySuperMarket encouraged drivers to ‘use their heads’ and compete to win the experience of driving a mind-controlled electric car.

The price-comparison website teamed up with Splendid Communications and creative agency Kerve Design to fit out a car with wireless technology. Drivers were trained on special software using an electroencephalography (EEG) headset with 16 sensor pads that measured brain activity.

The software assigned brain activity to certain functions – learning each user’s ‘unique mental topography’ – and sent a radio frequency signal to a robot inside the car, which turned the wheel and pressed on the accelerator and the brake.

The BBC has also been investigating ‘telepathy tech’. The broadcaster has trialled technology that could allow people with limited or no mobility to



The BBC has trialed a device that lets viewers use their brainwaves to select programmes

access its on-demand iPlayer TV service, using just their brain power.

"We're always keeping an eye out for how we can innovate using new technologies," says Cyrus Saihan, head of business development at the BBC. "We saw that there was some new, relatively low-cost tech available that allowed you to control electronic devices – at quite a basic level – by measuring the brain's activity."

Saihan's team invested in a brainwave-reading headset – bought online for around £100 – and started working with This Place, a UK-based user-experience company. Together, they developed an interface between the headset and a tablet – effectively, a very experimental internal prototype version of iPlayer.

The headset, Saihan explains, has one small sensor that sits on a user's forehead, with another on a clip that attaches to one of their earlobes. These sensors measure electrical activity in the brain; certain types of electrical activity correspond with different moods, which means brainwaves associated with concentration and relaxation can be differentiated.

"We gave users the option to select either [concentration or relaxation] as the control mechanism," Saihan says.

"If they selected relaxation, the headset monitored the level of relaxation that they were experiencing. When that relaxation reached a certain threshold – when there was enough of those types of brainwaves – a message was sent from the headset to the device, telling it to perform an action. In this case, it was to launch the application.

"Users were then presented with five of the most popular TV shows at that point in time. Each was highlighted for 10 seconds at a time and when the user wanted to watch a particular programme, they would relax when that show was highlighted. Again, when their level of relaxation reached a certain level, the device would open up that programme and enable them to watch it.

"You've gone from a situation where you've turned the app on and now you're watching a particular programme, just by using your brainwaves."

The project, Saihan says, was just a "toe in the water", to give colleagues at the BBC – as well as the wider industry – an idea of what might be possible in terms of improving the accessibility of content and of developing new user interfaces.

"It's the kind of thing that you would think is just impossible – it seems so 'out there'," Saihan says. "Even though it's at a basic level at the moment, the fact that you can make these kind of basic applications work is still quite interesting.

"At the rate technology changes, who knows what might happen in 10, 20 or 30 years' time. Our children might be using these things in the way we use keyboards." ■

# HOW THE INTERNET OF THINGS WILL RESHAPE CONSUMER INSIGHTS

CONNECTED DEVICES IN THE HOME AND OFFICE COULD CHANGE THE WAY DATA ON CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR IS COLLECTED. MARKET RESEARCHERS NEED TO BE READY FOR THIS CHALLENGE, SAYS 20/20 RESEARCH'S ISAAC ROGERS

**M**uch of the market research industry's foundation is built upon the simple task of documenting consumer behaviour. To an outsider looking in, researchers must appear obsessed over seemingly benign statistical variations in the number of times certain types of people say they shop for toothpaste each year, or how many times a viewer believes he's seen a specific TV car ad. Every year, researchers collect mountains of survey responses and countless hours of focus group transcripts every year that painstakingly document the reported consumer behaviours of millions of people around the world.

The trouble is... the majority of that market research data is collected from a somewhat inaccurate source – other human beings. Until now, researchers had to rely on participant recall for most of their behavioural data, because we had no better mechanism by which to gather this information.

Today, we are entering a new phase in the internet age that will exponentially increase the quantity and quality of data that market researchers can gather from consumers. The Internet of Things (IoT) – this new chapter in technology – is defined by the explosion in internet-connected devices entering our homes and offices.

As the cost of wireless technology has plummeted and the availability of 'always on' internet access has spread across the globe, a new breed of internet-accessible devices is coming online, bringing a whole new dimension of connectivity to our lives. These 'things' that can now connect to the internet by themselves range from smart thermostats that can monitor your home's temperature and automatically adjust use, to smart appliances that turn on and off as you enter a room.

Here are just five examples of IoT that will reshape a researcher's world:

## 1 A more complete picture of consumer behaviour

One of the most heralded connected devices of 2015 has been the Apple Watch, a smart watch that is the most powerful of the wearables class of connected gadgets. Wearables like the Apple Watch, FitBit and others can passively monitor our biometrics – things like heart rate, perspiration and motion – silently reporting that data back to online services that reveal our pace per mile on this morning's run, or what percentage of the day you were sitting versus standing. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, wearables are monitoring a person's movement and location. And, by combining all of these new data points, we'll know more about our consumer's actual experiences than ever before.

This treasure trove of data will fuel an entirely new understanding of how our consumers actually live their lives. For instance, for an upcoming healthy living project, one of our clients has asked respondents to send their activity profile from their fitness wearable for a two-week period. Without asking the respondents to keep a daily diary, we will have a more accurate picture of each respondent's movements and exercise throughout the day.

As researchers dive deeper into these devices' capabilities, we will plug into these powerful sensors to gather critical marketing feedback. Soon, we will tap into the heart rate monitor on the Apple Watch while consumers are watching a TV show; marketers will be able to remotely gather real-time biometric feedback about which parts of the show are exciting viewers the most, and the motion accelerometer will tell us the precise point at which respondents are getting off the couch and getting a snack from the kitchen.

## 2 Micro ratings

Sometimes the simplest innovations are the most profound. Take the Amazon Dash – this IoT device, released in July, might revolutionise how consumers purchase products. Amazon Dash is a button-based buying service – literally. Amazon has created more than a dozen variations of tiny, three-inch long, wi-fi-enabled, battery-powered 'buttons' linked to your online shopping cart. These buttons are tied to specific products; you place the buttons around your home, near your kitchen or bath, and when you run out of a given product, a press of the corresponding branded button will automatically order that item from your history. A day or two later, your stock of paper towels or laundry detergent is replenished. Along with Amazon Dash, other companies, like the Swedish firm Flic, are creating wireless, battery-powered buttons to perform a variety of internet-connected tasks around your home and office.

It doesn't take much imagination to envision an instant rating button for market research. What if we sent out





disposable, battery-powered action buttons for our respondents, labelled to perform a set of tasks? Perhaps one version of our research buttons have icons for 'happy, sad, confused', and we tell respondents to stick the device on their fridge for a two-week period. Each time the respondent opens the fridge, they must rate how they feel about the selection they just made. If the respondent gives us three 'thumbs down' in a row, a survey hits their inbox asking about the types of products they wish they had to eat. If they hit the 'question mark', a researcher delivers a text message to their phone about their food choices and why they experience confusion in the kitchen.

If this concept seems many years off, consider the fact that within 45 days of the product's launch, a new dad has already reprogrammed his Amazon Dash button to record the exact time of day he changes his newborn's nappies.

### 3 Respondents starting to 'poke' us back

One of the overarching themes of the IoT and wearables is the immediacy these devices bring to our lives. I can instantly order more orange juice, without even picking up my phone. I can automatically track motion and activity without even stopping to 'tell' my device to do it. As the IoT comes to market research, it will usher in the ability for our respondents to send us behavioural data or product feedback as it happens. No consumer memory will be needed.

Much of our industry is built around post-event data collection. From surveys to focus groups, we are asking respondents to recall their experiences to us days or weeks after these events occurred. With the IoT, we can turn this model around and put researchers in touch with participants right at the moment of experience. Imagine a product-use study where respondents touch an app on their Apple Watch just before they go shopping? A message is broadcast to a researcher's desk and, if they are available, they conduct a quick smartphone interview with the respondent. If no researcher is ready, a self-ethnographic set of survey questions is sent to their device and they document their shopping trip for later analysis.

### 4 Yes, even in the developing world

Because of the low cost and fewer technical requirements of many of these new IoT devices, researchers will be able to field studies in developing markets and begin collecting emerging consumer behaviour data that has never been documented before. Simple, low-cost sensors inside a consumer's home could give new insights that

shine a light on unique ways a certain group behaves at home. Audio sensors that pick up voices could document what a day in the life of a rural African family looks like. A motion sensor attached to the door of a store in India could measure foot traffic. We could begin to piece together critical marketing data in developing markets and highlight cultural differences without the need for the expensive infrastructure used in Europe and North America.

### 5 New data will require new thinking

The IoT opens up massive new possibilities for researchers to gather critical consumer behavioural data without relying on that faulty record-keeper, the human. We will soon tap into these smart, connected devices and allow consumers to share their everyday experiences with us directly – no recall required.

The bigger question for our industry is how quickly we will recognise the power of these new tools and how effectively we can capitalise on the insights they could generate. ■

**Isaac Rogers is chief innovation officer for 20|20 Research**

# EYES ON THE ROAD



DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY HAS ALLOWED CARS TO BECOME MORE 'CONNECTED' BUT THIS CAN ALSO LEAD TO DRIVER DISTRACTIONS, SO RESEARCH INTO HOW DRIVERS RESPOND IS VITAL. BY JANE BAINBRIDGE

**A**s car manufacturers incorporate more technologies into their vehicles, and connected cars are changing the in-vehicle driver experience, it has become vital to test how drivers are affected, and to balance the conflicting interests of those wanting not only to be connected, but also to stay safe.

Germany-based market research agency Eye Square has been working with car brands such as Hyundai to develop means of tracking drivers' reactions with the help of implicit research techniques. The particular challenge has been to combine multiple methods, to get a more in-depth understanding of how connected technology impacts on driver safety and awareness.

The implicit methods used include: eye tracking; facial emotion analysis; and physiological measures through electroencephalography (EEG), where brain activity shows a driver's emotional state, and electrodermal activity (EA) that indicates arousal.

The in-car environment presents researchers with considerable physical constraints and any wearable devices mustn't impede the driver.

"Driving is our primary task and then we have secondary and tertiary tasks. The primary task must have the highest security measures. Eye tracking is the most obtrusive one, as you wear those devices on your face," says Philipp Leppert, partner and COO, Eye Square.

"It is important that there are no cables. The eye tracker we use now is light and has no restrictions in the peripheral vision. We see a lot on the left and right where we are very sensitive to movement so, even though drivers are looking straight ahead, they have almost 180-degree vision," he says.

Through eye tracking, the average share of dwell time on any given area within the car – as well as through the windscreen – can be determined.

Facial expressions are also used as an implicit measure by looking at variations on two major muscles – one between the eyes and one at the mouth – to differentiate between smiling or frowning. "It's an automatic detector of your valence – positive or negative", says Leppert. However, interpretation must be done with care as a negative response could mean frustration or concentration, or maybe the driver was just blinded by the sun.

Similarly skin conductance is a very sensitive measure of arousal. "It could either be stress, or positive because you're driving fast and it's fun", says Leppert. "It gives us a second-by-second indication of stimuli but also a long-term curve to see how your body reacts to the whole situation."

To ensure there's a control, all the neuro and implicit measures are also recorded for the driver in a non-tested part of the journey. These are the baseline recordings Eye Square does in every car with every person because each individual has different physiological levels.

The overall connected car driving experience can be measured by combining the implicit methods with the physical ones – such as which button a driver pressed – and all the readings must be synchronised.

"It's quite demanding for our analysis team. Firstly, readings are recorded separately, but they are all synchronised with the same atomic clock and then aggregated; the camera can tell you where the car was and what the situation was. We build sequences in driving – these may be tasks such as 'please drive to destination X' – and then we make sure the people are communicating with the car, such as having to programme the sat nav.

"These are situations where we objectively rate the situation on how cognitively demanding the primary task is. So if it's demanding – driving fast for instance – the attention shouldn't be diverted from the road, whereas if they are waiting at a red light, it's OK to look at the radio," explains Leppert. ■



What people think,  
feel and do.

07

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# STRATEGIC POSTING

IT'S NOT JUST WHAT PEOPLE SAY IN ONLINE REVIEWS THAT'S INTERESTING – IT'S THEIR ABILITY TO SELECT THE BEST PLACES TO POST, TO REACH THE RIGHT AUDIENCES, AS RESEARCHERS HAVE DISCOVERED.

BY JANE BAINBRIDGE

Online reviews can be powerful tools – a useful source of advice for prospective buyers and for brands; either valuable endorsement or damaging product review, depending on the content.

But research by Yu-Jen Chen, from Lingnan University in Hong Kong, and Amna Kirmani, at the University of Maryland, in the US, suggests that consumers act as intuitive media planners when they choose where to post their reviews and recommendations, assessing the extent to which they can achieve their specific goals when reaching online audiences.

While previous research has looked at what people say in online reviews, Chen and Kirmani looked at where people have said it, using the Persuasion Knowledge Model.

“The Persuasion Knowledge Model proposes that people have knowledge about how others may attempt to persuade us. For example, when a salesperson keeps telling you that each and every clothing item fits you nicely, you may recognise that this is not true – that she is saying so because she wants you to buy something,” explains Chen. “The consumer, as a persuasion target, uses the persuasion knowledge to infer the motive of the salesperson, the persuasion agent.”

The model also suggests that people know “how to persuade others”, which is the viewpoint the authors take in their paper. Common posting motives identified are persuasion and affiliation.

“Generally speaking, posters have a persuasion goal,” says Chen. Because of this goal, people may focus on how to make their post more effective, so finding the right audience – for example, a forum – requires thought-through posting.

“What is the right audience for them? We argue that, when posting positive brand messages, choosing an online forum where the audience is more open to persuasion, and not loyal to a specific brand, is more effective. In contrast, when posting negative brand messages, choosing the forum designated to the brand is more effective because the information could be unexpected and counter-attitudinal – which, later, generates more interest for discussion and possible attitude change,” adds Chen.

In contrast, affiliation motives occur when posters want to build social connections with other people. “To reach this goal, they need to identify others similar to themselves, to maximise the chance of making friends. Therefore, we may observe that affiliation-motivated people tend to post on a website where people are sharing a similar background – for example, brand interest,” says Chen.

The researchers carried out three experiments to show the different posting patterns under the two motives, as well as the mediating role of message effectiveness under the persuasion motive.

In the first study, 53 undergraduate students were asked to imagine they had just bought a Dell Inspiron 15 laptop. They read a short description of the product specification and were then given a valence manipulation that described their product experience – one positive, one negative. The students were then asked to imagine they wanted to share their experience by posting a message on an online discussion forum. The positive valence group were told their goal was to choose a

website so that purchase decisions would be affected by their post, while the negative valence group were told their objective was to dissuade others from purchasing. They were given two forum options: Dell Review and Computer Review.

“For people with a persuasion motive, the decision of where to post is affected by message valence – for example, positive or negative experience. When they have a choice between a brand-general forum (such as a camera forum) and a brand-specific forum (for instance, Canon forum), positive experience leads to a tendency to post to a brand-general forum [whereas negative leads to brand-specific],” says Chen.

“Such a decision is in line with people’s belief about message effectiveness. That is – after inferring audience interest, diversity, brand loyalty and openness to persuasion – posters will find that a positive post is more effective on a brand-general forum, while a negative post is more effective on a brand-specific forum. We confirmed these inferences made by consumers in a second study.

“Study 3 further compared posting behaviour between those with a persuasion motive and those with an affiliation motive. We found that their posting decisions are predicted by different factors. For example, while persuasion-motivated posters considered message valence, affiliation-motivated posters focused on audience similarity. That is, they believe they are more likely to build up a friendship with people who share similar brand interest. For them, message valence is not that important,” adds Chen.

So posters are not randomly finding online outlets to voice their opinion but, rather, are choosing websites where they think they can attain their specific goal – and different factors are at play depending on the posting goal.

“The reason that these factors are important is because people are using persuasion knowledge – including target knowledge – to assess the effectiveness of reaching their goal,” says Chen.

### WHAT FURTHER RESEARCH NEEDS TO BE DONE?

“I think there could be two different ways to explore [this subject],” says Chen.

“First, we still have little understanding about how consumers choose different online websites to share information. Although this research, conceptually, classified forums into two types, there are plenty of ways for grouping websites or forums. In different contexts, what will determine consumers’ posting decisions?”

“Second, I think there is a need to investigate the role of persuasion knowledge in the context of online posting. Persuasion knowledge has been applied mostly to the situation when consumers are the persuasion target instead of the persuasion agent. As consumers can easily share their experience online, the use of persuasion knowledge is inevitable – but when, why, and how is the knowledge being used? I think the area requires some future work.”

The article *Posting strategically: The consumer as an online media planner*, by Yu-Jen Chen and Amna Kirmani, was first published in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 2015. ■

# BRAND ARROGANCE

BRANDS DISPLAYING SUPERIORITY MAY REFLECT HIGH STATUS AND QUALITY, BUT COULD POSE A THREAT TO SOME CONSUMERS' SELF-PERCEPTIONS. BY JANE BAINBRIDGE

**M**arketing directors invest considerable resource into making their brands appealing. In some cases, this involves the communication of arrogance – displaying superiority, perhaps by disparaging others. While this can heighten the impression of a brand's status and quality, it can also lead to negative connotations, such as hubris.

Two researchers from Israel – Nira Munichor, from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Yael Steinhart, from Tel Aviv University – have carried out a series of experiments to determine

if consumers with self-threat (an experience that calls into question a person's favourable view of themselves) avoid arrogant brands; also, whether those who do avoid these types of brands, end up feeling better about themselves as a consequence.

The trigger for exploring this subject was the personal experience of one researcher who felt good when saying no to an arrogant person.

"We thought it might be interesting to explore whether saying no to arrogant brands makes consumers feel as good about themselves – and, more generally, what causes consumers to say no, rather than yes, to arrogant brands. A review of the existing literature revealed that arrogance is an understudied trait," says Munichor.

Initially, the pair looked at the literature on pride and narcissistic behaviour, which dealt with arrogance as a by-product. "It suggested that arrogance may have positive and negative facets. On the positive side, the association between arrogance and pride suggests that arrogance, like pride, may function as a signal of high social status and personal influence. On the negative side, excessive self-enhancement is considered narcissistic," says Munichor. "We thought that consumers may attribute high quality and high status to arrogant brands, and simultaneously may be put off by them."

Munichor and Steinhart then introduced the concept of how self-threat may have an impact on a person's response to an arrogant brand. 'Prior self-threat' refers to consumers who felt under self-threat before they were exposed to an arrogant brand – as opposed to a threat created by the arrogant brand. These people may feel powerless or lacking in self-esteem.

"Seeking experiences that protect or enhance the self, and avoiding experiences that may threaten it, guide consumers' decision-making and behaviour, including the pursuit of products and brands," adds Munichor.



"Self-threatened consumers are more susceptible to the threat inherent in arrogance and are, therefore, more likely to feel inferior in the presence of arrogant brand communications. This feeling may drive a tendency to avoid arrogant brands."

The researchers carried out six studies in all, using fictitious and actual arrogant brands, each designed to test their predictions on the interplay between brand arrogance and self-threat.

For example, one task manipulated the extent to which participants felt prior self-threat. They were then asked to describe what a sense of lack of control meant to them (for threatened-self condition group) and what a sense of control meant to them (non-threatened-self condition).

In a follow-up task, all participants were read a scenario depicting a fictitious high-quality smartphone brand. The researchers measured the effect of self-threat on product evaluations before the participants were exposed to the slogan.

"The first studies showed that, in a variety of settings, consumers whose self is a *priori* threatened are less likely than consumers who are not threatened to choose an arrogant brand over an alternative," says Munichor. "A third study examined the underlying process that drives self-threatened consumers to 'say no to the glow' of an arrogant brand by demonstrating that that sense of inferiority triggers the effect of self-threat on arrogant brand avoidance. It also shows that arrogant brand avoidance restores self-perceptions.

"[Another study] shows that when self-perceptions receive a boost prior to brand exposure, avoidance of arrogant brands declines."

So avoiding arrogant brands actually helps people restore their self-perceptions and they report an increase in feelings of self-worth.

In terms of future research, the authors think investigating possible carry-over effects of arrogant-brand avoidance on subsequent decisions – such as how long those effects might last and whether they might vary depending on previous decisions – should be a focus.

Also, a study could be done on how different personality traits, motivations and personal statuses influence the relationship between self-perceptions and consumers' decisions on arrogant brands.

"Finally, future research could explore whether, and how, marketers can design communications to convey the positive connotations of arrogance while simultaneously enhancing consumers' feelings of self-worth [to prevent brand avoidance]," says Munichor.

Indeed, for brand marketers the current findings suggest that – while adopting an arrogant image may attract some consumers – it is likely to repel others. "So the decision to employ arrogance as a marketing tool should be taken with caution," adds Munichor.

"Perhaps marketing communications that simultaneously strengthen potential buyers' self-perceptions and convey an arrogant message about the brand [such as L'Oréal's 'Because I'm worth it'] can minimise the negative connotations of brand arrogance, leaving the stage clear for the positive connotations.

"On the other hand, though, marketers may want to use arrogant brand communications intentionally, as a retention tactic, to boost the self-perceptions of their current customers, as well as to target a specific audience of potential new consumers."

*Saying no to the glow: When consumers avoid arrogant brands, by Nira Munichor and Yael Steinhart, first appeared in the Journal of Consumer Psychology.* ■

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# ACTION STATIONS

CHIME'S **CAROLINE BATES** EXPLAINS HER EXTENSIVE STUDY OF MARKET RESEARCH CAREERS, AND CALLS FOR ACTION FROM THE INDUSTRY TO IMPROVE GRADUATE RECRUITMENT

Only one in 10 UK market researchers makes a conscious choice to enter the profession, so – for the vast majority – it's not an active, long-term career choice. This is something we've heard expressed a lot over the years, but the starkness of the statistic suggests we are facing a future talent crisis.

As an industry, we are missing out on a huge swathe of talented, bright graduates because they simply don't know what we do – or even that we exist – or have a very outdated view of what market research has to offer.

This study was prompted by a conversation I had a couple of years ago with Liz Norman, from ENI – one of the large recruitment consultancies – about the state of careers in our industry.

We saw some major recruitment challenges because the industry needed to attract people with an increasingly diverse set of skills, including top-level analysis to distil strategic insight from a varied range of data sources, plus technical and management skills to process complex projects.

We had also observed that, year on year, fewer official research and insight graduate schemes were being run, resulting in a shortage of talented mid-level professionals.



With these challenges in mind, I scoped a research project and, over the past two years, Chime Insight & Engagement and ENI have undertaken a comprehensive piece of work, in the UK and internationally, to explore these issues.

We have used a range of techniques, from a quant survey (817 respondents) of Market Research Society (MRS) and Esomar members, to in-depth interviews, deliberative-style workshops, and groups. Participants have been recruited with the help and support of the MRS, Esomar, R-Net (MRS's young researcher network), Fringe Factory, Aura and the Insight Management Academy (IMA).

## WHAT INSIGHTS HAVE WE UNCOVERED?

Researchers love working in an industry where they get to make a difference, and often do so very early in their careers – something that does not happen in competing professions such as accountancy and law.

Variety is the key to making work in the research industry so enjoyable. Innovation also plays a strong role; we confirmed that researchers really love working in an industry where they can explore ideas, keep abreast of new developments, and feel like they are constantly evolving and learning. It's worth saying, however, that some still feel we are too slow to react to change. Having interesting projects to work on was

another solid winner, while satisfaction at having made a tangible contribution to a business was also in the top four reasons why researchers love their role.

This all paints quite a rosy picture of how people feel about a career in our industry – so it’s important to balance that with what we uncovered about why researchers didn’t enjoy their job. Here, the most prevalent theme was a lack of recognition and respect.

This was particularly strong among client-side researchers, where there was a strong feeling that clients and stakeholders do not understand their work. Related to this was a sense of being under-valued, and that their expertise was not being recognised by their peers and organisation.

A belief that clients didn’t want to pay adequately for good work drove frustration on the agency side, as did internal politics and the feeling that their work lacked impact.

This is a major issue for the research profession, because this lack of recognition diminished people’s sense of pride when they told others what they did for a living. It also affects the respect we can generate from stakeholders, clients and other departments – as well as the recognition we get from the world at large. In fact, we found – time and time again – that researchers placed more emphasis on internal recognition from employers than the level of their salary.

As only 10% of people joining our industry in the UK did so as an active choice – 53% ‘fell into’ it – stories of how this happened were one of the most common conversations we had. This, for me, is one of the most striking findings from the project – and, when measured globally, the figure is even higher, at 64%.

If research and insight isn’t your first choice of career, there’s a high chance you’ll continue to have aspirations of doing something else, particularly when you consider many are slightly embarrassed by the industry. Interview candidates going through our own graduate recruitment process can often talk more about PR and advertising than the insight job for which they are applying.

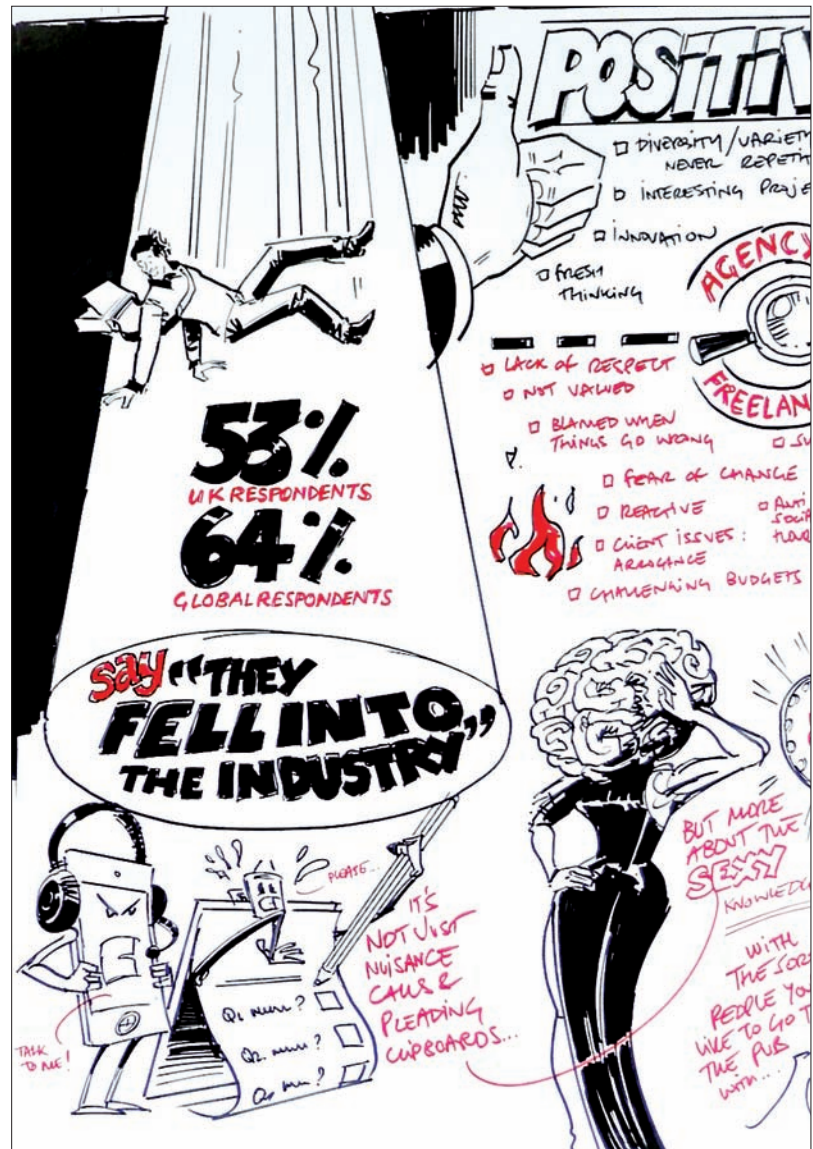
In the course of this project, we had many conversations about the dinner-party scenario, when you are asked what you do for a living, with many saying they often told white lies to explain their jobs. We even had a dating couple that had done this, only for both to be outed as researchers, and not working in advertising.

We know there are many people out there with exactly the skills we need who will not simply fall into our industry; do we really want to miss out on this talent? Something more needs to be done. Even if we don’t manage to attract them into research yet, today’s graduates are the business leaders of the future, so providing them with better knowledge of the industry will help build respect and

understanding for the future.

Given that we are not promoting our industry to new entrants, it’s perhaps no surprise that we haven’t created a clear story for the general public either – and 43% of people in our industry claim that the public doesn’t have an accurate picture of what we do. So now is the time for action to be taken.

Throughout the project, a number of potential next steps to help address the challenges have shone out at us. At the MRS conference, we asked delegates to prioritise where they saw the need for focus. Among their suggestions were:



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- ▶ ■ University roadshows 23%
- Careers ambassadors 19%
- Mentoring 10%
- Invest in greater publicity 10%
- Schools roadshows 8%

Many people regard getting our message across, in a compelling and positive way, as key to attracting new talent and reminding those in the industry what an exciting and vibrant career it is. This is where you all have a role to play. The industry bodies are supportive, but there's only so much they can do with limited time and budgets. So professionals in the industry must take on a bit of the responsibility.

As one of the outputs of the project, we have created a short story about research that can be delivered to undergraduates, school-leavers or anyone else considering a career in the industry.

We produced the story using input from a range of people, from members of the IMA to R-Netters. Now we need as many presenters as possible to tell our story. It involves giving up a day of your time to connect with a university – ideally one you attended, to create a personal connection. The MRS is coordinating a big push on this, so we're calling for volunteers. With the new academic year under way, it's the perfect time to start. If you feel you can contribute in other ways, too, do get in touch.

For more details on the project, visit: [www.researching-a-career-blogspot.co.uk](http://www.researching-a-career-blogspot.co.uk) or MRS page [www.mrs.org.uk/careers/graduate\\_roadshows](http://www.mrs.org.uk/careers/graduate_roadshows)

Finally, a simple, low-effort way to get involved is to share your career stories or highlights through hashtags #allinonejob #insightstories so we can spread the word on how exciting a career in insight and research can be. ■

**Caroline Bates** is director, Insight & Engagement Group, Chime Communications

## THE JOB MARKET

### DO YOU FEEL LIKE A FRAUD?

Imposter syndrome can affect anyone, no matter how successful they are, but there are ways of identifying and managing it so that its effects can be minimised, says Sinead Hasson.



The importance of a positive self-image should not be underestimated. It contributes to the success of our professionals within the market research and insight field, and reassures our employers that their new recruits have the desired attributes and attitudes. What if, deep down, you 'just don't feel right', however, and despite enjoying success and professional recognition, you suffer from chronic feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt?

'Imposter syndrome' has been around for centuries, but its impact on the modern workplace is now becoming evident. It can affect all professionals, with sufferers of this little-talked-about psychological phenomenon unable to internalise their career accomplishments. Various research on the syndrome indicates that 40-70% of successful people consider themselves intellectual frauds, despite external evidence of their competence.

Market research professionals are not immune. Imposter syndrome can affect them as it would anyone else, potentially impacting important relationships with colleagues and clients. Sufferers are less likely to push to lead a project or ask for a promotion, for example; indeed, they may be more likely to resign in favour of building their career elsewhere because of the misplaced feeling that 'it's easier to move on than to challenge the status quo'. This can be a costly reality for employers.

While there is evidence that the majority of sufferers are women – Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg and comedian Tina Fey are high-profile people who have talked publicly about the syndrome – it would be naïve to think men are immune. After a lively debate at a recent Women in Research (WiRe) event, it was agreed that this problem limits career

“ Research on imposter syndrome indicates that 40-70% of successful people consider themselves intellectual frauds, despite external evidence of their competence ”

development for both sexes. So now we know what 'imposter syndrome' is, who is likely to suffer the potential impacts of this condition, and what can we do to minimise its effects?

**Awareness** is the most important factor in limiting the impact of imposter syndrome. Recognition that you are affected by it enables you to manage your thoughts and limit its undesirable effects. Negative self-talk, pessimism and feelings of being a fraud should be recognised as soon as they occur, then rationalised as being what they are – simply thoughts, NOT facts. Those in management positions would do well to keep an eye out for it in their teams, so that they can provide reassurance where necessary. This will bring out the best in people, boost productivity and help to retain talent.

**Take proactive steps** to become more positive in your self-belief. Make sure you're paying attention to your achievements and fully enjoy your successes.

**Talk about your feelings** openly, and seek support. Remember you're not alone. **Be kind to yourself.** Mistakes are OK and everybody makes them. Don't dwell on them. Instead, consider them as a learning opportunity and move on!

**Work in a company that values you.** Surrounding yourself with people who embrace and promote your success will help you to achieve your goals.

Overcoming self-doubt can be a challenge, but each step will bring you closer to where you want to be.

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

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# EVOLVING RIGHTS



THE MRS's **DR MICHELLE GODDARD** OFFERS A ROUND-UP OF RECENT LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS IN PRIVACY AND DATA

**T**he social contract between research practitioners and research participants relies on informed consent and respect for the rights and wellbeing of

individuals. The importance of recognising, respecting and reiterating this in robust data practices has been underscored, over the past few months, by some interesting legal developments in cases and statutes relevant to both the research and the wider data and privacy community.

The direction of travel in data and privacy is toward strengthened enforcement powers and clearer and stronger rights for individuals.

This is reflected in recent legal changes that lowered the barriers for enforcement on nuisance calls and introduced a new ability to claim damages for distress (regardless of financial loss) from data breaches. Changes across Europe also reflect this, with Russia's new data localisation law and the ongoing reform of the EU data protection framework.

These developments all emphasise the importance of organisations meeting their legal obligations to ensure that personal information is collected, stored and used appropriately.

## COMPENSATION FOR DISTRESS

A landmark judgment, delivered by the Court of Appeal in the *Google v Vidal-Hall* case, has broad implications for data protection. The court ruled that users could sue Google over its alleged web tracking between 2011 and 2012.

It's claimed that, during that time, Google bypassed users' security settings in the Safari browser to install secret cookies, that tracked their web activity and sent them targeted ads. In establishing the misuse of private information as a tort (a distinct type of

civil legal claim for a wrongful act) the court also introduced the possibility of compensation for data protection breaches under the Data Protection Act – not just for financial loss suffered as a result of a breach but also for distress alone.

This has opened up wider avenues for liability for data controllers under the Data Protection Act (DPA), as well as providing individuals with an additional legal basis for taking action where their private information has been misused.

## NUISANCE CALLS AND TEXTS

The former legal threshold for nuisance calls and texts required the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) to prove they caused substantial damage or substantial distress. But this high bar for enforcement was removed in April 2015.

The ICO still needs to prove a serious breach of the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR) by showing that the breach had either been deliberate, or that the person acting in breach knew their actions risked breaking the rules, but failed to take reasonable steps to prevent the breach happening. However this change ensures that it can take targeted action against rogue operators sooner, with possible fines of up to £500,000.

## PERSONAL DATA OF RUSSIAN CITIZENS

Under the Russian Data Localisation Law, which came into effect on 1 September 2015, businesses collecting personal data of Russian citizens are obliged to store the data in databases located within Russia itself.

Roskomnadzor, the Russian Data Protection Authority, has indicated that active enforcement is unlikely to start until January 2016, but researchers processing data of Russian citizens will need to change the way in which they





store this information. The new law is uncertain and needs greater clarification but it is clear that data collection and the initial data storage of all surveys conducted in Russia should be on servers physically located in Russia. After that there may be some leeway to transfer data abroad, if the explicit permission of participants is obtained.

If you are working with Russian data then you should audit your operations to understand the teams and projects that are collecting this type of data and the IT systems being used. Also discuss alternative solutions with clients, such as anonymising data sets before transferring them out of the country.

## COMPLETION OF EU DATA PROTECTION REFORMS

An update on legal developments would not be complete without referring to the pivotal reforms in the EU data protection landscape. Key changes in the proposed General Data Protection Regulation are likely to include, regardless of compromises during negotiations, emphasis on privacy by design and default; extra-territorial scope for organisations based outside Europe; mandatory data breach reporting; increased penalties linked to organisation turnover, and enhanced rights to individuals such as the 'right to be forgotten' or 'right of erasure'.

Optimists hope that negotiations between the Council, Parliament and Commission in trilogue will be completed by the end of the year, and believe the best way of ensuring compliance is being compliant now.

Organisations need to be aware of the way in which data and privacy rights and

obligations are maturing and evolving. We can expect to see further developments in areas as diverse as the practical operation of search engines on the 'right to be forgotten', the legality of the operation of drones, and individuals' rights on social media platforms such as Facebook.

As this area changes with the pervasive growth and use of digital technologies, policy makers, enforcement agencies, legislators and judges are all heeding the call for clearer rights and greater control by individuals. Data-centric organisations would be wise to continue to place ethical data and privacy practices at the centre of their operating model. ■

**Dr Michelle Goddard is director of policy and standards at MRS**



## Staying curious

Creativity. Innovation. Two of the words that have been at the centre of so many of the strategic debates in which I have participated over the past year. As so many case studies illustrate, combine an absence of these with a lack of awareness, and you have an organisation surprised by the competition, left behind by the general speed of change.

So I wanted to champion the word I see as key to achieving and maintaining organisational and personal creativity. That word is 'curiosity'. It is part of my personal motto 'Stay curious'. I believe it is the foundation of great research and insight, and is a characteristic shared by great researchers.

Let's celebrate curiosity as the foundation of our sector. I believe we are uniquely placed to do so. Let's promote it as a critical factor in change.

Our conference always showcases leaders, thinkers and case studies that individually and collectively stimulate our curiosity and challenge our thinking. This year, I invite you to step forward and join them – see opposite for our call for contributions.

We have just celebrated a record-breaking year for awards entries at both The Oppies and the MRS Awards. Let's make Impact 2016 a record-breaking celebration of our sector, the impact we have on society and businesses, and the curiosity that drives us to discover and innovate.

Jane Frost CBE, chief executive, MRS  
[jane.frost@mrs.org.uk](mailto:jane.frost@mrs.org.uk)



# MY SOCIETY



### Impact 2016 – call for contributions

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## Calendar

### Member events

#### October

14 – Can the market research industry humanise big data?

#### November

3 – Is neighbourhood any longer a major influence on consumer behaviour? An IJMR lecture.

19 – Tapping into the African consumer of tomorrow, today.

26 – Advanced Analytics Symposium, London

#### December

7 – MRS Awards, London.

#### January

20 – 12 Human Insights from Consumer Neuroscience, London.

### Training highlights

#### Generating business through LinkedIn

##### October

1 – Using LinkedIn in a strategic and systematic way to create new business.

#### Nailing the business issues

16 – Understand the pressures impacting on businesses and the tactical priorities of its stakeholders.

#### Focusgroup+

##### October

19 – An accessible way to introduce and frame group design activity and gain a new level of insight into customer values and needs.

#### Advanced semiotics

##### November

11-12 – Understand how best to decode and creatively reconfigure for competitive advantage brand communications in their cultural contexts.

#### One day MBA

##### November

18 – The ability to see the issues that influence business decision-making is more important than ever.

#### Advanced games for research playshop

30 – If you want to future-proof your research, this workshop is thoroughly recommended.

### Conferences

#### October

29 – Customers Exposed, London

#### November

19 – Financial Services Research, London

#### January

28 – Kids and Youth Research, London

Find out more at [mrs.org.uk/events](http://mrs.org.uk/events)



# MRS highlights in 2014-15

"Every sector has its time under the trust microscope – this year it was the turn of market research. We have had significant success in raising the profile of the sector and seeking to address these issues head on," writes Jane Frost in her introduction to the MRS Annual Review 2014-15



## April

MRS launched a **CPD programme** to give members a framework to demonstrate their achievements, gain recognition for their professionalism and take control of their careers.

## May

Six interviewers from a joint DFID and Nike Foundation initiative called Girl Hub Rwanda were awarded a new portfolio based qualification, the **'MRS Certificate in Qualitative Research'**.

## June

**MRS fellowships** were awarded to Arthur Fletcher, David McCallum, Dr Jessica Santos, Richard Sheldrake and Dr Crispian Tarrant.

## July

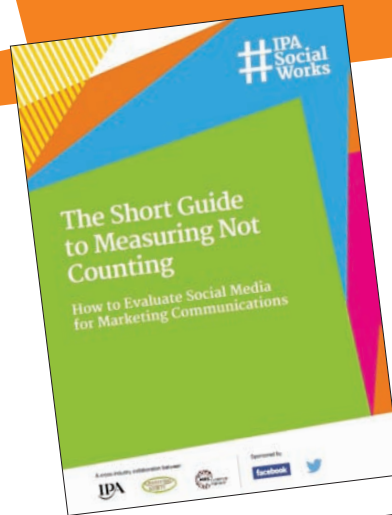
MRS published **'Improving Market and Social Research Procurement and Commissioning within the Public Sector'** which reflected on the research procurement arrangements following the closure of the COI.

## September

A new **MRS Code of Conduct** launched, marking 60 years of protecting standards and quality.

## October

200 people attended a new event, the **MRS Operations Awards** ('The Oppies'), to celebrate the field, data and project staff that keep the sector running.



### November

**Edwina Dunn**, co-founder of dunnhumby, and data entrepreneur behind the Tesco Clubcard, was appointed MRS Patron.

### December

**A Global Research Business Network report**, which was supported by MRS, revealed that more than a third of adults are 'very concerned' over misuse of their personal data, and the survey found low levels of trust in the market research industry.

### January

MRS launched its **Sugging Hotline** and, on Data Privacy Day (28 January) reported 19 companies, including a number of charities, to the Information Commissioner's Office.

### February

MRS launched a new joint industry guide to measuring social media with the IPA and the Marketing Society.

**The Fair Data initiative won the Innovation Award** at the Association Excellence Awards 2015.

### March

MRS Delphi Group published **'Private lives? Putting the consumer at the heart of the privacy debate'** receiving coverage in *The Sunday Times* and other broadsheets.

There was a 13% increase in first-time attendees to **MRS Annual Conference** compared with the previous year.

### For the full review visit

[http://www.mrs.org.uk/annual\\_review](http://www.mrs.org.uk/annual_review)



# Where next?

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



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IJMR

### What to know about mobile surveys?

Tom Wells highlights the need for market researchers to adapt and accommodate mobile surveys into their research, by emphasising their benefits. These include consumers having the power to choose when and where they complete surveys, offering more participants and a broader sample: <https://mrs.org.uk/mobilesurveys>

### Opinion bandwagons

The paper presents an experiment looking at the influence of trends in public opinion – in this case towards the European Economic Community – on people's subsequent stated views on the topic. A significant and consistent effect was observed. <https://www.mrs.org.uk/bandwagons>

### Digital Drugs

Michael Brown of UM London writes about the mass adoption of smartphones and people's fear of the negative impacts on our health that these digital drugs can have for those addicted. <http://www.research-live.com/digitaldrugs>

consumers' attitudes towards innovation, Jonathan Pirc was able to find out the extent to which technology is significant for innovation, and whether it is worth a premium to consumers. The answers challenged his predictions. <http://www.research-live.com/innovationpremium>

### Car buyers' new habits

Four old myths of car buying are exposed by Iain Stanfield, who researched car buyers for Auto Trader. <http://www.research-live.com/cars>

### Hot-cold empathy gap

Crawford Hollingworth, founder of The Behavioural Architects, offers alarming insight into our own minds by highlighting how a person's actions can alter dramatically when in a hot state versus a cold state. <http://www.research-live.com/hot-cold>

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### Think Happy

was presented by Karen Schofield & Kelly McKnight as part of the award-winning MRS session, 'Empathy, humanity, happiness & haulage'. Contact us to discuss the paper.