

Sustainability

Sustainable Behaviours, the Gap Between What We Say and What We Do

Roundtable Summary

There can be a gap between what people say they will do, and how they actually behave. This is human nature and it is especially true when we address questions relating to sustainability – as we all want to be seen to be doing the right thing. But there are many reasons why reality does not match desire, and behavioural science can help shed some light on how we can close that gap.

In this session we will discuss and share perspectives around the following questions;

- What is the disconnect between what people say and what they do, and why does this happen?
- How can we leverage data intelligently to try to uncover the hidden truths relating to behaviours
- Why is this especially relevant in the context of sustainability?
- How can technology unlock new sources of data to support these goals?

Additional context

The reality of why we do the things we do is a complex topic, but goes far beyond a rational choice to act in a certain way. We have all been guilty at some point of going against our best interests: Picture a person who has decided they want to lose weight, and hence decided not to snack during the day. They might hypothetically have a cheat snack one day – there could be a whole host of reasons that contributed to the decision to have this snack, but the reality is that this is counter to their desire to avoid snacks, so something more than pure rationality is at heart. Uncovering the truth of those reasons can better enable that person to reach their goals

When we look at sustainability, there can be a desire to signal your own efforts to drive sustainability. But there can be a gap between what people want to do, what they actually do, and what they say they do.

In one example of research conducted, it was found that providing societal context can be a powerful force for change: Sharing details of household energy consumption for others in the nearby area can encourage those using more than their peers to cut their usage. But for those already using less than their peers, it caused them to start using more! Only robust data was able to uncover this risk of the wrong impact being delivered.

In another study, playing traditional French music encouraged supermarket sales of French wines, while playing German music increased sales of German wines. There was a very clear impact of the music on choices, but in a follow up survey on why those choices were made, music was minimally mentioned – the perceived vs actual reasons were not the same.

How can we intelligently use data to encourage people to behave in more sustainable ways, and use data to really quantify that impact?

Roundtable Chair



Alex Peters
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Alex is an insights and data analytics professional with 15 years experience in the insights and analytics field. He is currently responsible for purpose insights capabilities at Reckitt, part of their Centre of Excellence for Insights.

Alex has worked across a wide range of brand portfolios in the consumer goods and consumer healthcare space, and in his current role focuses on bringing the best thinking and capabilities to help Reckitt’s brands unlock insights that can help them build a more meaningful future based on robust consumer insights and addressing the global challenges we face now and in the future.