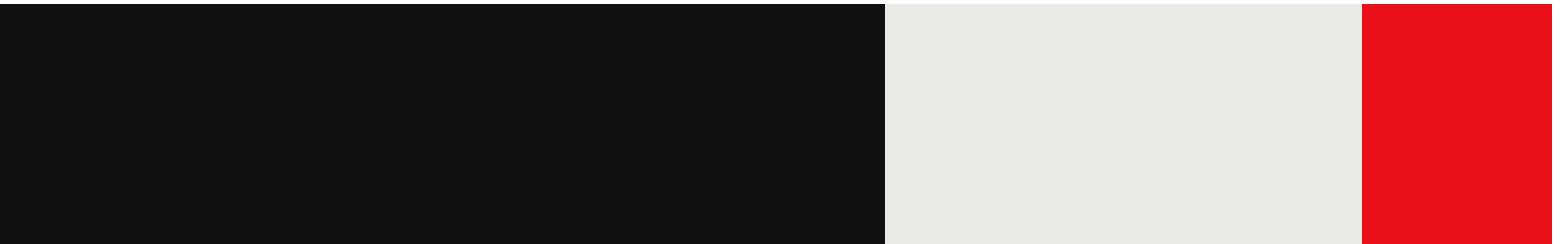


The Weekly Listen: Will people start to SearchGPT, a dynamic pricing minefield, and more

Audio



On today's podcast episode, we discuss the likelihood of people using OpenAI's new SearchGPT, how much of a minefield dynamic pricing is, if its better for shoppers to have fewer choices, Harley Davidson waiting for customers to age in to the brand, how Olympic athletes are changing, and more. Tune in to the discussion with host Marcus Johnson, vice president of content Suzy Davidkhanian, and analysts Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf, and Max Willens.

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Episode Transcript:

Marcus Johnson (00:00):

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(00:24):

Hello everyone and thanks for hanging out with us for the Behind the Numbers Weekly Listen, an eMarketer podcast. This is the Friday show that tricks Suzy into being on today's show by pretending we are going to play a game.

Suzy Davidkhanian (00:40):

That's 100% factual

Marcus Johnson (00:42):

And it worked. We're not playing games.

Suzy Davidkhanian (00:42):

It always works.

Marcus Johnson (00:46):

Yeah, I can just shout out point totals throughout.

Suzy Davidkhanian (00:46):

It's fine.

Marcus Johnson (00:49):

Okay.

Suzy Davidkhanian (00:50):

I mean, even the games aren't real, so it's fine.

Marcus Johnson (00:52):

Yes, they are. Probably not. I'm your host, Marcus Johnson. In today's show, will people start to SearchGPT? Will customers embrace dynamic pricing? Are fewer choices good for shoppers? Is it a sound strategy to let customers age into your brand? And how are Olympic athletes changing?

(01:18):

Join me for this episode. We have three people. Let's meet them quickly. We start with our Vice President of Content, who heads up our retail and e-Commerce desk. Based in New York City. It's Suzy Davidkhanian.

Suzy Davidkhanian (01:18):

Hello.

Marcus Johnson (01:30):

Hello there. We're also joined by two folks who both cover digital advertising and media. One is based in Virginia, called Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (01:38):

Howdy, Marcus. Howdy, everybody.

Marcus Johnson (01:40):

Hello there. And the other, is called Max Willens. He is based in Philadelphia.

Max Willens (01:45):

Yo.

Marcus Johnson (01:45):

Hey, chap. So what do we have in store for you? We start with the story of the week. We have a debate in the middle. We end with some trivia. Let's get to it. We start, of course, with the story of the week.

(02:01):

Will people start to SearchGPT? With Google in its sights ChatGPT maker OpenAI unveils SearchGPT, a search feature designed to give timely answers to questions drawing from web sources, writes Kyle Wiggers of TechCrunch. He explains that it looks and feels like ChatGPT. You type in a query and SearchGPT serves up information and photos from the web with links to sources. You can ask follow-up questions or explore additional related searches in a sidebar. SearchGPT collects and shares general location data with third party search providers to improve the accuracy of its results. It says it launched last Thursday, July 25th as

a prototype for a small group of users and publishers. We'll start with Evelyn, who covers search the most for us. Evelyn, will people start to SearchGPT? I mean

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (03:00):

Eventually, sure, some people will. Broadly speaking, my stance, I've said it before, I will say it again, is that Google has sort of a leg up here because it is the default search engine across most smartphones, devices, major browsers in the US and globally. And because of that, it is the path of least resistance to search. It is the easiest way for consumers to get what they want on the web. And Google is also, I think, dabbling is putting it lightly, maybe going headfirst into the AI evolution here. So I think there will be, I mean it has a competitive product sort of in AI overviews. So the use case that SearchGPT might serve that is different from the typical Google query is Google will be able to serve that use case as well. So I think SearchGPT will certainly see some traction, especially among those ChatGPT enthusiasts out there, but I don't think it's going to be any huge market disrupter that's going to totally upend search dynamics as we know them today.

Suzy Davidkhanian (04:11):

Do we know if it's a separate plugin or tool that you have to go to? Or is it part of ChatGPT? Do you need to open something different? Is it another step? Or you're already in ChatGPT and you're like, "Oh wait, I don't remember this," and then you're searching in it and then you go back to whatever you were going to use ChatGPT for?

Marcus Johnson (04:28):

I believe it's currently separate, which is what's so interesting about this.

Suzy Davidkhanian (04:33):

Oh, which is even worse.

Marcus Johnson (04:34):

Well, it seems though, for now, because it seems like they're implementing a bit of a Trojan horse strategy here, because OpenAI says that they plan to integrate their new search engine technology with its existing online chatbot, ChatGPT. So they will be smashed together at some point. We estimate, I was looking, 68 million Americans will use ChatGPT this year. 77

million will use them next year. So the question becomes what happens when those folks get instant access to search?

Max Willens (05:07):

I think that the answer could very well be not that much. One thing that I think is really worth keeping at the front of our brains is we have those numbers which you just cited, Marcus, but those don't get into frequency of the use.

Marcus Johnson (05:20):

Good point. That's once a month use, yep.

Max Willens (05:22):

That's exactly right. And if you look at research that has been done into frequency, what you find is that the number of people that are kind of reliably turning to ChatGPT is quite small. The Reuters Institute, which puts out really phenomenal research every summer about essentially digital's behavior around news, found that in the United States it's less than a fifth of its users use it even weekly. And that's actually quite high relative to other developed Western economies. So in places like Denmark for example, it's closer to one-tenth. And to Evelyn's point, Google is still effective and still free and still almost completely penetrated.

(06:04):

But I do think that if there's a chance for this to sort of jump itself into kind of mass digital consciousness, it could come from the integrations that ChatGPT has made into lots of other systems. So I think about something like Apple Intelligence for example in Siri.

Marcus Johnson (06:23):

Yeah.

Max Willens (06:23):

So it's possible that once this really gets rolling, if they can kind of use the right sort of marketing and advertising push to get people to get used to asking Siri the questions that they might've opened a browser for on their iPhones, that potentially changes everything. But I guess you would say that the bloom is off the rose for consumers for ChatGPT and that's going to make it difficult for this to take off quickly.

Marcus Johnson (06:49):

And Max is mentioning Siri because the Apple intelligence, the Siri there, if it doesn't know what you want, will go on and ask ChatGPT and that's a deal they've made with Open AI.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (07:01):

It will eventually It's not yet.

Max Willens (07:09):

That's right.

Marcus Johnson (07:09):

Yes, yeah.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (07:09):

And Apple Intelligence got delayed.

Suzy Davidkhanian (07:09):

But I will also add, in addition to all that stuff, it sounded like to use the search, you're going to have to give it more information about yourself and I think people are just weary about data, giving as much data. So it's just another friction point. Why would you go to another completely different tool to try and get the answers that Google Overview is doing a great job at? And offers the same things? Like it's saying, "We'll give you the links. We'll do this. We'll do that." But Google's already doing that, so why?

Marcus Johnson (07:37):

So to that point, and also to push back a bit against the argument that it won't work, to suggest that there maybe this could work. There's a good line by Kylie Robinson of the Verge that said, "It's the start of what could become a meaningful threat to Google." And so maybe this isn't going to happen overnight, but is it fair to posit that this might be a death by 1000 cuts? This might be a slow and steady momentum gain from a rival? Especially because on the plus side for OpenAI, Google has a huge antitrust case going on at the moment, which could provide a window of opportunity for an alternative search platform.

(08:22):

On the other side of things, Mr. Wiggins of TechCrunch was noting the launch of SearchGPT comes at an inopportune moment as AI powered search tools are under justifiable fire for plagiarism, inaccuracies, and content cannibalism. So you could argue it's good because it's coming when Google is at its weakest, which is not probably not a fair term given how well it's done most media performance. You could also argue that maybe this is a bad time for them to enter a market that's under a lot of fire for a lot of different reasons.

Max Willens (08:54):

Well I think also there's the issue of, you mentioned the scrutiny that OpenAI is under and all these other guys are for sort of scraping data, but when I was thinking about this question, the thing that I kept coming back to is what I use search engines for and a lot of it relies on a knowledge graph which I believe ChatGPT doesn't have. So I'm often kind of doing lazy Googling of things that I, as a person who once didn't use the internet because I'm that old, used to just keep in my head. So the names of coffee shops that are near me and small business data and things like that, which based on what I've read about SearchGPT, that is not part of it and I think that that's another thing that's going to tamp down on it. If really all that this means is that now you can ask SearchGPT to tell you the latest in the conflict between Israel and Gaza? That's more valuable than ChatGPT is today but it doesn't mean that instantaneously SearchGPT is at parity in terms of functionality with a Google or a Bing or any other legacy search engine.

Suzy Davidkhanian (10:10):

Well, and don't forget to your point that Google has so many other components to it. So it's the Maps, it's the Google Search, it's Google shopping. I mean it's so much. The more people are accustomed to doing something with less and less friction and people are looking for ways to save time, the easier it is for that to take hold. And so the only way I see the SearchGPT working is if it's embedded in and helping you so you don't move from one platform to the other. Like you couldn't remember the name of something and before you ask ChatGPT to help you with something you ask search for what are the right words to use or if it starts getting embedded in other people's services that you're using on a day-to-day basis. Habits are important.

Marcus Johnson (10:51):

Yeah, that's a really good point. And everything we were talking in yesterday's episode, which was on Google and their performance, we touched on SearchGPT. You were saying that a lot of people use Google as a navigational tool and a stepping stone to other sites. And so unless there's a way where you can speak to SearchGPT and just say, "Open up YouTube, open up Amazon, open up whatever," a lot of people will use Google to spell check something, to use it as a calculator, or more often than those things to get to a site. So it depends what people are going to be using these search engines for. That's all we've got time for the story of the week. Time now for the debate of the week. Today's segment, make the case.

(11:39):

Where our panel, Suzy, Max, and Evelyn present the for and against arguments for each of the following questions based on three news stories. Two contestants face off per question. Also the following takes don't necessarily reflect the analyst's personal views. Their job is to just present the best case regardless offering objective analysis. Let's start with question one, Suzy going up against Max. We're talking about dynamic pricing and it being a potential minefield for retailers and consumers being divided on it. This was a piece written by our Retail Briefings Analyst, Rachel Wolf. She was explaining that on the one hand 22% of Americans say they won't shop at a business that uses dynamic pricing, pricing that changes because it's on a digital display and it can change throughout the day, throughout the week, the month. This is according to NerdWallet and Harris Poll.

(12:27):

On the other hand, a similar share of people. 25% would take advantage of dynamic pricing if it meant lower prices. Rachel notes that Wendy's was recently met with a backlash after revealing its plans to use digital menu boards to adjust pricing throughout the day, forcing the fast food chain to clarify that it will use the screens only to offer promotions during slower day parts. Question is, will customers eventually embrace dynamic pricing? Suzy is arguing customers will eventually embrace dynamic pricing. 60 seconds on the clock. Make the case.

Suzy Davidkhanian (12:56):

So dynamic pricing is not new for consumers. We know it's in Uber and rideshare, we know it's part of planes, hotels, I mean there are a lot of industries that are doing it. More importantly, it's already been happening in retail with Amazon. So Amazon changes the price of things all

the time. It's just behind the scenes and nobody knows about it. In fact, McKinsey did a whole study in 2021 around dos and don'ts of dynamic pricing in retail. So none of this is new.

(13:24):

I think there's two things that are happening right now that we're talking about it. It's the digital signage, which is getting confused with dynamic pricing. So that's a problem. And then it's the surveillance pricing, which is also a problem. At its core, dynamic pricing is meant to help a retailer make things leave their inventory, sell things that are fashion items that you're not going to buy pink three summers in a row so they're trying to get rid of inventory. It's not meant to be price gouging. So I think as long as retailers are doing it in a transparent, easy to understand, it feels like it's more about macro activity and not consumer information, that consumers will understand that this is what they have to do.

Marcus Johnson (14:04):

So dynamic pricing, pricing that changes throughout the day for everyone. Surveillance pricing, which Suzy referred to, there's actually an FTC probe into this. So that's a gathering of information about how companies are using AI and other tools to enable retailers to charge folks different prices for the same product based on their finances and shopping habits.

Suzy Davidkhanian (14:24):

But even that, I mean now it's like next level surveillance, the way that they're talking about it with AI. But I mean if you think about it, a coke in New York City, a can of Coke or eggs is a different price in New York City than it is in a different part of the US. And wine is more expensive in the US because of taxes than it is in Europe. So we're already paying different prices for the same things. It's just that right now it's at the forefront again

Marcus Johnson (14:50):

Just not on the individual level. I think that's part of the concern here. Max, you're arguing it won't eventually, dynamic pricing, sorry, you're arguing customers won't eventually embrace dynamic pricing.

Max Willens (15:02):

Yeah, I just think that price transparency and a modicum of stability is kind of one of the cornerstones of consumer relationships. Everyone has basically no choice but to accept that

the price of an airline flight changes and I know of zero people in my life that are pleased about that. They would much rather have the stability and kind of clarity about what the price of a good or service is going to be. And once you inject uncertainty or a lack of transparency into that relationship, it makes the relationship hostile.

(15:40):

And I think also one thing that's worth thinking about here too is that if people, if consumers start getting trained to believe that the price of something is liable to change based on certain factors, they're just going to wait to buy things until things are at a certain low price point. I mean I think about brands like Banana Republic and Gap, which have put themselves under tremendous strain by sort of over discounting and training their consumers to think, "I'm not going to buy this at full price. That's for suckers. I'm going to wait for them to do a sale because hey do a sale every 15 minutes." And once you sort of start messing around with that, that's a real Pandora's Box that I think that retailers should be very, very cautious about opening.

Marcus Johnson (16:27):

The uncertainty portion of this is interesting and Rachel had some great lines in this piece. One of them was saying that this could basically distort consumer's reality is what she's getting at. She says, "There are customer concerns that the prices," sorry, "the practice is merely an attempt to pad companies bottom lines as well as the sense that tactics like digital price labels exacerbate price volatility and make it difficult for consumers to know what things actually cost," digital price labels versus dynamic pricing as Suzy was saying. But she says, "However, there are some very powerful use cases." Rachel was suggesting companies need to make clear what the advantages are for consumers, such as the ability to lower prices for food items as they approach their expiration date to help with things like food waste, which seems like a really good one. This chart on the screen though, for folks watching on YouTube, shows that most folks today aren't convinced, according to CivicScience, 68% of consumers view dynamic pricing as price gouging versus 12% who don't.

(17:25):

Okay, Max won that one, so congratulations to him. Cue confetti. And move on to question two. Suzy versus Evelyn. Shoppers have fewer choices. Brands and retailers like it that way, writes Jennifer Williams of The Journal. She notes that retailers, Hanesbrands, dollar General,

Under Armour et cetera, started thinning their product lines to focus on items consumers wanted most to help raise profits as supply chain bottlenecks made it difficult to stock many items. Hasbro had cut around half of its individual product types heading into this year. Hanesbrand's net unique products in Q1 were down 50% from five years ago, 2019. And as of late April, Levi's had eliminated about 15% of its unique products. The question is are fewer choices good for shoppers? Suzy's arguing that fewer choices are good for customers. Make the case.

Suzy Davidkhanian (18:21):

So the article was all about the retailer perspective. Less things, mean less markdowns, mean better margins, means we can have smaller footprints or we can buy more things that are not related. There is a fine balance. This is where art and science comes into play around do you really need to have 37 pairs of jeans? Probably not. But do you need to have multiple color ways of a v-neck and a round neck? Yeah, probably. But at the end of the day it's the retailer's fashion office or buyers who set the tone. So every retailer, if you're in fashion, will have all the basics and the staples that they'll buy a lot of and then they're going to have pops of color that they will help consumers better understand what they should be wearing. If you think about fashion runway shows that all sort of interties together. But the best point I can make, which was one of the first concepts I learned, I was going to say the name of the company, at my previous job, was there is a study that is-

Marcus Johnson (19:20):

We know where it was.

Suzy Davidkhanian (19:21):

Oh, yeah, everybody knows where it was.

Marcus Johnson (19:21):

Bring it up at least twice an episode.

Suzy Davidkhanian (19:25):

There was a study in 2000, literally it was called the Jam Study. Do you guys know about this one? It's worth looking up at the end. I am running out of time, so all I'm going to say about that-

Marcus Johnson (19:36):

Ran out of time, but keep going.

Suzy Davidkhanian (19:37):

That more choice equals paralyzing a consumer and they just walk out. So they studied, if you had 24 SKUs of jams at this California grocery store versus only six, how much more converted? When there were only six you forced a customer to make a choice. Just think about when you go to a restaurant and you have one page to choose from versus a whole book. You're like, "Waiter, please help me." Consumers need help deciding and that's where the buyers come in. The article takes it in a completely different way, and so similar to dynamic pricing, if you do the right thing for the consumer, you're going to win as a retailer.

Marcus Johnson (20:10):

You went horribly over. Negative two. Candice Medeiros, an insight strategist at trend forecasting firm WGSN had a great quote saying, "More and more retailers are realizing that today's consumer no longer wants an endless aisle. They want the right aisle." Evelyn, what say you? Fewer choices aren't good for customers is what you're arguing. Make the case.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (20:29):

All right, I'm looking at the big picture here. For physical goods, a company paring down its catalog of products is great. Will the world lose some of those niche products that were absolutely perfect for a specific scenario or life moment for a particular person? Yes, and that will sting. But it's better for the environment, better for retailers bottom lines. Zooming out though, it is not good for consumers to have fewer choices when it comes to where to shop. It is not good for consumers to have fewer choices when it comes to price to quality ratio. It's not good for consumers for there to be one major internet provider in the city or a region. We've all been there. It sucks. Why? Because market power is concentrated and those companies can stop innovating without risking customers. They can also raise prices without risking customers. Higher prices for an outdated product? No thank you. Mic drop.

Marcus Johnson (21:27):

Please don't, they're very expensive, but it's a really good argument. They're both really good arguments. And I thought it was interesting in this piece that this is customer driven, at least Michael Schwindle, CFO at bagmaker vera Bradley was saying. "What you're seeing is a

consumer who's very discriminating in tough economic times," he's saying. So we have to be discriminating in terms of how we manage SKU. So people are being much more selective and so this is the retailer responding.

(21:56):

Miss Williams of The Journal is saying, "In a more stable economic environment, many retailers give shoppers the luxury of choice." I thought that was interesting because this is a stable economic environment. Doesn't feel like it, but we just had nearly 3% GDP growth in Q2. Inflation has been close to 3% for a year. It's not 2% what it was, but it's still a lot lower. Unemployment has been below 4% for two and a half years, so it feels like maybe this is just the new normal. This is a strategy a lot of retailers are realizing is working. Evelyn for the win. Oh for two, Suzy. That's tough. Tough episode for you. Anyway.

Suzy Davidkhanian (22:27):

I think it's only because I complained at the top of the game that it wasn't a game before we even got on line.

Marcus Johnson (22:30):

Primarily, yes.

Suzy Davidkhanian (22:31):

I know it's fine.

Marcus Johnson (22:35):

And now it's Max against Evelyn. So you can't lose, Suzy, in this one, technically.

Suzy Davidkhanian (22:39):

Thank God.

Marcus Johnson (22:39):

Can't win either. Question three, Harley-Davidson will ride or die with the gray beards. John Keilman of the Wall Street Journal writes that the legendary American brand focuses on high-end motorcycles, but some say it isn't cultivating the next generation of buyers. Something has to change though. As Mr. Keilman points out, Harley is selling less than half as many bikes

as it did during its 2006 peak. Its share of the US large motorcycle market is down to its lowest level since the '80s, and its stock has been cut in half from 2006 to today.

(23:16):

The article notes that in 1990 when the Harley boom was just getting started, The Journal had reported that the typical buyer was 35. Today the company says the average age is 49. That matches the motorcycle industry. However, UBS analyst Robin Farley thinks the average age of a Harley buyer is actually closer to a person in their late '50s. Harley Davidson CEO Jochen Zeitz says, "I always talk about how you age into the brand. You get older, you actually realize it's a really cool thing" the question is it a sound strategy to wait for customers, to let them age into your brand? Max is arguing that it is. Make the case.

Max Willens (23:57):

So I think that if you have a brand that is synonymous with a quality and a certain level of excellence, aging in is something that you should aspire to do rather than go the other way around. For all the article's points about Harley's declining sales and it targeting older buyers, the article also makes the point that the average age of their buyers is in line with industry standards and I think it's more down to, in this particular instance, motorcycles generally losing the cultural cachet that they enjoyed 20, 30, 50 years ago, which is responsible for the declining sales rather than them pursuing a kind of misguided marketing or branding strategy.

(24:40):

The way that I think about this all the time as a kind of north star is The Wall Street Journal actually, which for years and years was always fretting about the fact that its readership was on the older side. It didn't have a lot of younger readers and the reality is that that's not because their website was unpleasant to use or the content wasn't shiny and TikTok friendly enough. It's because young people don't care about business news because they're too busy running around and having fun or working in sectors where knowing that information is not relevant. If you're working as a barista, you don't need to be reading about the bond market. But by holding fast and ensuring that the product is as good as it is, that's what's going to ensure its long-term viability. I mean, The Journal is having some of its best years in its history and it's not because they're putting more content on TikTok.

Marcus Johnson (25:35):

Evelyn is arguing it isn't a sound strategy to let your customers age into your brand. Make the case.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (25:41):

So I think the real answer here is that it depends on the brand and it depends on the product. But I think it's risky to hope that the same brand narrative and image that worked with 30-year-old women in 1980 or even 2000 will work with 30-year-old women now. Because times change and it's one thing to serve 30-year-old women to focus steadfastly on their needs and change as they do, but a winning strategy has to evolve over time. Keeping up with younger generation's needs and preferences will help build longevity. That doesn't mean generating sales from teenagers necessarily because teens preferences are going to be different from adults, but it does mean thinking ahead and proactively developing a strategy that's authentic to your brand, that is important, but it fits the next generation of customers rather than just sticking to your guns and hoping that they will realize one day that they got it wrong and your brand is actually cool.

Marcus Johnson (26:40):

Yeah, great arguments, folks. That is where, oh yeah, more please, please.

Suzy Davidkhanian (26:45):

I did not read this question in the same way that you guys answered it. I was thinking about, like I worked for a hot second at Tiffany and they had charms on purpose and the silver jewelry line is on purpose for younger folks to move them from, so nothing about their brand changes, it's more like the adjacent product assortment mix is catered to multiple different and it's mostly in luxury.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (27:08):

Well, I think that's a good point though, but I think it goes back to the depends on the brand and the product because not every brand is going to be able to have a line that is suited for younger people in the same store with the same branding and not alienate both audiences. I think about Victoria's Secret with the Pink line that's geared for younger people. It's like a separate room, separate store entirely, than the more sexier lace and all that kind of stuff.

Marcus Johnson (27:38):

Yeah, excellent arguments, folks. Great segment. Let's move to our final one of the day. It's of course dinner party data.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (27:49):

Wait, who wins?

Marcus Johnson (27:51):

Not Suzy. This is the part of the show where we tell you about the most interesting thing we've learned-

Suzy Davidkhanian (27:57):

It's not even a winning game. I don't even know why we're pretending

Marcus Johnson (27:58):

It was. Real points.

Suzy Davidkhanian (27:59):

Then who won?

Marcus Johnson (27:59):

It was a tie.

Suzy Davidkhanian (27:59):

Obviously.

Marcus Johnson (28:04):

Evelyn and Max joint first, Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian (28:09):

Zero. Minus two

Marcus Johnson (28:10):

Negative two. That's true.

Suzy Davidkhanian (28:12):

Probably minus five because I butted in on one that's not even mine.

Marcus Johnson (28:15):

You did, you won't be invited back for a while. Let's start with Evelyn for the dinner party data.

Suzy Davidkhanian (28:19):

Did everyone hear that? I just want to make sure that everybody heard that.

Marcus Johnson (28:22):

We'll cut it out.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (28:27):

Okay. So I did a little bit of research on allergies. The USDA has identified the most common food allergies. They call them the big nine.

Marcus Johnson (28:38):

Whoa.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (28:39):

They are milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, I don't know why those are separate, but tree nuts and peanuts, also separate. I guess peanuts aren't tree nuts. Wheat, soybeans and sesame.

Marcus Johnson (28:55):

Are these in order? Like most to?

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (28:55):

They're just the big nine.

Marcus Johnson (28:57):

Okay.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (28:57):

And according to the CDC, food allergies affect 6% of adults and about 8% of children, which is lower than I thought it would be. Some food allergies can be outgrown or appear later in

life, which has happened to me and it is awful because you get used to eating something and then all of a sudden you can't have it. Also, if you've noticed that your seasonal allergies are worse now than they used to be when you were a kid, you aren't alone. Seasonal allergies affect one in four US adults per the CDC and according to the Association of American Medical Colleges, allergists have reported in recent years anecdotal increases in patients seeking treatments for seasonal allergies and there's evidence to suggest that climate change is increasing airborne pollen loads.

Marcus Johnson (29:45):

Great.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (29:46):

Yeah.

Marcus Johnson (29:48):

Fascinating. Let's go to Max.

Max Willens (29:53):

Fantastic. Thank you, Marcus. Flash poll of everybody on the call here.

Marcus Johnson (29:57):

That's just random, random.

Max Willens (30:01):

What's the worst month of the year?

Suzy Davidkhanian (30:03):

In what way?

Marcus Johnson (30:04):

The worst month?

Max Willens (30:06):

What's the worst month?

Marcus Johnson (30:07):

February.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (30:07):

February. I was going to say

Max Willens (30:10):

Suzy?

Suzy Davidkhanian (30:11):

I feel like the question is very poorly worded.

Max Willens (30:16):

That's probably intentional.

Suzy Davidkhanian (30:17):

December, I don't know.

Marcus Johnson (30:19):

Attack the question.

Suzy Davidkhanian (30:20):

January.

Max Willens (30:21):

No, I'm kidding. According to a bunch of people on Reddit, the answer is February.

Marcus Johnson (30:28):

Suzy, man, this is a rough one for you.

Suzy Davidkhanian (30:29):

I did it on purpose.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (30:31):

How could it be December? December's got the holidays.

Suzy Davidkhanian (30:34):

But then the year, all the fun festivities and the gift giving is over and now you need to make January New Year's resolutions of exercising and eating less and drinking less. And I mean that's not fun.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (30:43):

But that's in January. That's not in December.

Suzy Davidkhanian (30:45):

Well that's why I said December, January. I said two.

Marcus Johnson (30:47):

You picked two.

Max Willens (30:50):

Well then half of you is extremely wrong. I don't know. This is something that came up because I don't know that I would say it's the very worst, but for me August is always up there because-

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (31:03):

It's hot.

Max Willens (31:04):

It's hot and summer is while not over, there's a lot less of it than there was in June and July when it just seemed like of-

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (31:11):

It's the Sunday.

Max Willens (31:12):

That's right.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (31:12):

It's the Sunday of summer.

Marcus Johnson (31:15):

That's a good way of putting it.

Suzy Davidkhanian (31:15):

It's like camp blues.

Max Willens (31:16):

Everyone knows what I'm talking about. And so I just thought to myself, what a delightfully arbitrary but still somewhat interesting thing to look into and so what I decided to do was in keeping actually with our conversation about search instead of using Google, I used Reddit and looked for information about the worst month and there is in fact a subreddit called sample size, which I think is basically exists to poll random people on random questions. And they got a decent sample. Over 900 people responded to this poorly worded question.

Suzy Davidkhanian (31:49):

You put the poll in?

Max Willens (31:51):

I believe so, yeah. I haven't monkeyed around on the subreddit. There might be rules as far as who can ask questions, but that does seem to be how it works.

Suzy Davidkhanian (31:51):

Holy cool.

Marcus Johnson (32:00):

Yeah, some people would take this segment pretty seriously, Suzy, unlike some of the other people-

Suzy Davidkhanian (32:00):

I have a really good one.

Marcus Johnson (32:05):

Who looked two minutes before we start the show slash during the intro for theirs, which we're about to hear right now. So everyone lower your expectations. Yes, go ahead.

Suzy Davidkhanian (32:16):

Max, I think I'm going to brighten up your August with my fun fact.

Marcus Johnson (32:21):

Too much.

Suzy Davidkhanian (32:22):

August 2nd is International Beer Day. It was founded in 2007 in California. It is actually the first Friday of August, which this year happens to be August 2nd. Do you guys know what are the four main ingredients of beer?

Max Willens (32:39):

Barley, hops, malt, and water.

Suzy Davidkhanian (32:44):

I don't know if those are synonyms.

Marcus Johnson (32:44):

What are you a brewer? Where did you get that stuff from?

Suzy Davidkhanian (32:45):

But it's waters, grains, hops and yeast. So I don't know if the ones you picked were synonyms of the ones that I got, but anyways, it doesn't matter. Do you know who the largest volume producer in the world, since it is International Beer Day, is?

[NEW_PARAGRAPH]China.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (32:45):

Maybe InBev.

Marcus Johnson (33:00):

China? Oh, a country?

Suzy Davidkhanian (33:03):

Nope, but that is the number one company, which was the next one on my list.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (33:07):

Sorry.

Suzy Davidkhanian (33:08):

Yeah, no, you guys are confusing me. The number one company, which is based in Belgium, because it is International Beer Day, so we wanted to do trivia on lots of things, is Anheuser-Busch, InBev.

Marcus Johnson (33:20):

The country is China you said?

Suzy Davidkhanian (33:21):

Yes, the number one producer, which is kind of weird, but maybe not. The number one by volume, which is it was like I'd never even heard of this volume metric is China and the second one is the US.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (33:21):

Oh, I see. I see.

Marcus Johnson (33:40):

Okay. All right, I've got one for you real quick. How are Olympic athletes changing? I thought this is fascinating. Pallavi Rao, Visual Capitalist, was noting that Olympic athletes are getting bigger. He writes that, "Using data from sports reference via Kaggle, Georgios Karamanis plotted the average height and weight of Olympic athletes by sport to show how their body dimensions have changed over the last 50 years, 5-0.

(34:08):

Only sports where a direct comparison could be made between 1960 and 2016 were included. He found, go through the male Olympians first, so out of 19 sports, so 19 sports that he could compare from 1960 to 2016, basketball players have added the most weight going from an average of 185 pounds to 220. So that's nearly 40 pounds heavier than they were in 1960, a

20% increase. For our metric system listeners, that's like going from 84 kilograms to a 100. Wrestling was a close second. They are now 19% heavier than they once were 50 years ago. The only Olympic sports where male athletes weighed less in 2016 versus 1960 was?

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (34:59):

Swimming.

Marcus Johnson (35:01):

Fair guess. Gymnastics.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (35:04):

Oh.

Marcus Johnson (35:04):

Losing a few pounds on average going from 143 to 139 or 65 to 63 kilograms. Male basketball players also first for largest increase in average height, maybe unsurprisingly going from six two to six five or 188 in centimeters to 200. Water polo and swimming with second and third in terms of height increases. And the only Olympic sport where male athletes were shorter today than they used to be was?

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (35:33):

Gymnastics.

Marcus Johnson (35:34):

Gymnastics, again, going from just above five five to just below five five. For female Olympians, there are only eight sports to compare versus 19 because if one got added, there's no comparison, and a lot have been added. So if they've added or removed categories for the games, several sports didn't have direct comparison. So of the eight sports he was able to do this analysis on, fencing saw the biggest gains for women in terms of the average weight was up 8%. Women gymnasts weighed nine pounds or four kilograms less than 50 years ago and were nearly one inch or three centimeters shorter in 2016 versus 1960. So a similar trend to the men, lighter and shorter. And female swimmers also grew the most in terms of height, 5% change in the last 50 years.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (36:20):

That's really cool.

Suzy Davidkhanian (36:23):

It's really cool, but what is that compared to regular average people because I feel like we've all, people from '60 to now, 1960s to now, are probably slightly heavier and maybe taller?

Marcus Johnson (36:32):

Yeah. That's Monday's fact of the day for me. I'll look it up. Tune in Monday and I will tell you then. Thank you for that, Suzy. That's all we've got time for today's episode though. Thank you so much. To my guests, thank you to Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian (36:44):

Thanks for having me.

Marcus Johnson (36:45):

Yes, indeed. Thank you to Evelyn.

Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf (36:47):

Thanks Marcus. This was fun.

Marcus Johnson (36:48):

And thank you to Max.

Max Willens (36:49):

Always a pleasure, Marcus. Thank you.

Marcus Johnson (36:50):

Yes indeed. Thank you to Victoria who edits the show. Stuart runs the team. Sophie he does our social media. Lance runs our video podcast. And thanks to everyone for listening in. We hope to see you on Monday for the Behind the Numbers Daily. That's an eMarketer podcast. Happiest of weekends.