

The Weekly Listen: Will AR ever have utility, is Roku the biggest CTV player, and Apple's big banking push

Audio

On today's episode, we discuss whether AR will ever have a less gimmicky and more utilitarian use case, whether Roku is the biggest player in connected TV (CTV), if Apple can successfully move further into financial services, whether "dumb" flip phones might have a mini renaissance, what the world's busiest airports are, and more. Tune in to the discussion with our director of reports editing Rahul Chadha, vice president of Briefings Stephanie Taglianetti, and analyst Max Willens.

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Episode Transcript:

Marcus Johnson:

Hello, everyone, and thanks for hanging out with us for the Behind the Numbers Weekly Listen, an eMarketer podcast made possible by InMobi. This is the Friday show that would hike more

if it wasn't lazy. Is that what you said, Victoria?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

That's what she said.

Victoria:

Verbatim. It's so true.

Marcus Johnson:

It's a good reason not to. Victoria just got back from vacation where she was hiking. Had a good time, V?

Victoria:

I don't know if I would consider what I did actual hiking, but yes I did have a good time. Thank you.

Rahul Chadha:

We don't know. You don't need to qualify it.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Max Willens:

Yeah, this is the part where you embellish.

Victoria:

I'm not trying to be a poser. I'm trying to be honest with everyone here.

Marcus Johnson:

Voice you just heard is Victoria. She heads the show. I'm your host, Marcus Johnson. In today's show, are we forcing the issue a bit with augmented reality?

Max Willens:

And I think the other thing about it, too, is that AR is fundamentally such an inherently antisocial technology. You're voluntarily using a piece of technology to take yourself out of a space that's shared with other people.

Marcus Johnson:

Is Roku the biggest player in connected TV?

Rahul Chadha:

So I think when you look at a much wider spectrum, the competition is fierce. I think the last podcast we were on, we talked about how there's something like 25 streaming services now. The competition is increasingly crowded and fierce, and I think it's going to be a challenge for Roku to cut through all the clatter.

Marcus Johnson:

Can Apple make a big push into banking?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

They increased with trust as financial institutions year over year. And if you zoom in on digital natives, Gen Zers trust Apple as a bank more than a traditional incumbent. So I'd say it's looking pretty good for Apple.

Marcus Johnson:

Will dumb flip phones have a mini renaissance? And some interesting facts about the busiest airports in the world.

Joining me for this episode, we have three people. Let's meet them. We start with our vice president of everything briefings. Based out of the tri-state area... [inaudible 00:02:30]. Is it-

Stephanie Taglianetti:

When in doubt, when in doubt.

Marcus Johnson:

New Jersey.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

When in doubt, New Jersey because everyone who works here lives in New Jersey. It's Stephanie Taglianetti.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Cheers, mate.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh. Do you practice this at all?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Do you practice saying y'all?

Marcus Johnson:

Maybe. No, clearly not. I'm terrible at it. Hey, Stephanie.

We're also joined by one of our directors of reports editing. Based out of Upstate New York, it's Rahul Chadha.

Rahul Chadha:

Howdy, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

Hey, fella. And finally, we've got one of our senior analysts on the digital advertising and media team. Based out of Pennsylvania, it's Max Willens.

Max Willens:

Yo.

Marcus Johnson:

Hey, fella. So we'll have in store for you three segments. Of course, Story of the Week, we're talking about augmented reality and whether it's caught on, going to catch on. We then move to the Debate of the Week, where our panel will give the for and against arguments for a

couple of different big questions we have for them. And then we move to Dinner Party Data. That's our random trivia segment. We start, of course, with the story of the week.

Are we forcing the issue with augmented reality? This is my question to the panel. A few recent Adweek articles by Brandy Shaul have noted some of the ways businesses are creating augmented reality experiences. So a couple for you.

In one piece, she notes the Cleveland Cavalier's basketball team partnering with fan engagement platform ARound to let fans access a shared AR experience called the Cavs ARcade, where folks can digitally interact with the basketball court at the Cav Stadium, viewing AR versions of mascots and playing games like AR Chain-Shot Contest, where folks can win merchandise and prizes. ARound has launched AR experiences with the Minnesota Twins, baseball; LA Rams, football, in 2022 and the KC Royals earlier this year. Baseball as well. That's one example.

Another one, American Eagle, is using AR Snapchat lenses to promote secondhand sustainable clothing shopping. Number three, third example, a Lenovo ad for Yoga Pro 9i laptop unleashing digital art on real cities. So you can see this art through your phone layered on top of real cities. And then finally, in early... Another example and number four. In early 2023, Tiffany Jewelers partnering with Snapchat to release a Tiffany Lock-sponsored lens, where Snapchat users could virtually try on different versions of the bracelet by holding their wrist in front of their device's camera.

After reading all these examples, folks, it just got me thinking that how useful are these really? How useful has augmented reality really been in our lives? And so Stephanie was asking me before the recording, "So what the hell do you mean by forcing the issue with AR?" And I was saying to her that I felt that some of these examples, it feels as AR is just trying to ram gimmicks down people's throats where there's no real utility. Do we agree?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I mean, I immediately thought of the Business Insider article yesterday that said the metaverse is dead. And I thought perhaps that signals that AR may be the more sticky extended reality tool than VR. If we look at our own numbers, we expect AR to keep outpacing VR by a huge gap through 2027. And I know that AR shopping is one of those big growth drivers, especially the fact that it's just smartphone based. So people are seeing the utility in that.

But for me, I'm more interested in seeing what the juxtaposition between AR shopping and rates of returns are. Because anecdotally, I just don't think the tech does a great job of showing a realistic depiction of items in space or on your person. So I'd just be interested in knowing the correlation between AR-based shopping and rates of return.

Max Willens:

I think the thing that's interesting, though, about... You point out that AR is far outpacing VR, but it's still, if you look at the share of the US population, it's still only about a quarter of Americans use AR. And I think that the examples that Marcus, you pointed out and that you pointed out, Stephanie, speak to the big problem that AR has, which is the... I think the term of art is form factor. Holding your phone up to see something that's in front of you in real space is a fundamentally awkward and inconvenient user experience, but all of the attempts to build a product that can make it easier to add AR to your life, and by that I mean glasses, have all foundered.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yeah.

Max Willens:

Snap Spectacles have flopped. The Ray-Ban Stories that Meta launched with Ray-Ban can't have done very well because neither Ray-Ban nor Meta seems to want any kind of numbers out into the wild after launching a couple years ago. Google Glass is still thought of as this horror story even though it was, in some sense, was pretty innovative. And so you add all of that up, you're still left with this technology that doesn't have a great product and use sit.

And I think the other thing about it, too, is that I think that AR is fundamentally such an inherently antisocial technology. You're voluntarily using a piece of technology to take yourself out of a space that's shared with other people, and it's really hard to build a big, big mass consumer appetite for technology like that. And so if you add all that up, it's not hard to see why it hasn't taken off.

Marcus Johnson:

I could see people... Putting on glasses and having them on all the time that have AR functionality, I can't see the purpose in that. But I mean, I cycle a lot and so I could see the idea. And Rahul, I know you do as well. And I could see the idea of putting on glasses before I

leave and having big, giant arrows show me exactly which directions to turn. Or maybe if I'm driving and-

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Right.

Marcus Johnson:

... being able to see where the close... If I just press a button and maybe using voice, I can say, "Closest gas station." And through the glasses, I can see there's a couple of different markers in terms of where the closest gas station. Things like that. Maybe you put them on to build some furniture and it shows you a diagram of what the thing's supposed to look like so you know to put this to that, et cetera. So putting it on for certain functions, I can understand. But there doesn't seem to be any... Outside of that, I can't see a massive use for them.

We talked about how many people are using them. 90 million AR users, more than VR as we mentioned, but if... I mean, podcasts for example, podcasts still, to me, even though I work in it, they seem... Maybe I shouldn't think like this anymore, but they seem relatively niche. But 40 million more Americans listen to podcasts than use AR, according to our numbers. 10 million more people listen to podcasts weekly. So 40 million more listen to them monthly, 10 million more listen to them weekly than use AR. 6 million more people read print newspapers and magazines than use AR, according to our numbers.

Stephanie mentioned AR for shopping. That's less than half of the total number of people who use AR. Just less than half of them use it for shopping purposes. It's still about 45 million people, so it's not nothing. Rahul, AR. Utility, gimmick, where are you on this scale?

Rahul Chadha:

It just reminds me a lot of the first wave of QR codes. It's like this technology exists. Marketers and maybe product people are always trying to figure out how to shoehorn it in the faces of consumers. Nobody's really interested because it doesn't really have a practical application. And even just reading the pieces, I was confused a lot of times.

There's still a lot of friction, I think, in experience. How are people accessing this content? Do they have to download Snapchat? Do they have to pick their phone up and scan this thing or that thing? It's very, I think, similar to the-

Marcus Johnson:

Have the Cabs app. Yeah.

Rahul Chadha:

When QR codes were everywhere. Then I think the end result for a lot of people is an ad. I think one of the articles described it as an art installation involving Tiffany. Let's be real. It was an ad. So there's a lot of friction points and work that you're asking a person to view an ad, at the end of the day, or maybe play a game. So I'm not really sure if marketers are still participating in some kind of collective delusion that people want to watch an ad. Just they should ask themselves if they hit X on popups or hit the skip button on YouTube. So I think it's asking people a lot of work for a questionable end result.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. Maybe it doesn't have to have a utility that's permanent. Maybe it's going to be short little use cases, little campaigns that are popping up.

Max Willens:

I think to your point, I feel the same way about VR. I think that its application and its path into American life is going to come at work rather than at play. There's a lot of very clear-cut professional use cases for AR as well as VR, but I think that the idea that it's going to become the interface that informs a lot of our leisure time is just crazy and doesn't really match up with what we want from our leisure in a lot of respects.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. That's all we've got time for the story of the week. Let's move, folks, to the Debate of the Week. How serious and formal.

Today's segment, Make the Case, where our panel, Rahul, Stephanie and Max, 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 and offer objective analysis. How have we decided who gets what? Well, I send an email, typically very late, and the analysts scramble-

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Dibs.

Marcus Johnson:

... like crazy to try-

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Dibs war.

Marcus Johnson:

... to try to pick which ones they want. And Rahul typically doesn't get to it in time ends up with whatever's left.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Whatever ones we don't want.

Rahul Chadha:

I get handicapped though, right?

Marcus Johnson:

Yes. Question one, and we're going to have Max versus Rahul for this one, is Roku the biggest player in connected TV? Mollie Cahillane of Adweek believes so. She notes that Roku just added nearly 2 million more active accounts in Q1, approaching 72 million total. Streaming hours grew 20% year on year, and Roku's data shows that 50% of all AVOD impressions happen on its own platform. Roku made over \$700 million in Q1, topping analyst estimates. Revenue from devices, hardware sales, was up around 20%.

But the question is, is Roku the biggest player in connected TV? Max is going to present the it is case. One minute on the clock. Make the case.

Max Willens:

So I think that there's... No matter what direction you want to come at this from, I can build a strong case and so I'll just lean on that. So Roku is more deeply integrated into the CTV ecosystem than anybody else. So its operating system, which powers a line of televisions, has a dominant market position in smart TVs. It's about 38%. It's tied with Amazon for hardware

sales, so its dongles reach about 40% of the market. As you pointed out, it commands about 50% of the open market programmatic CTV ad spending, and it's moving into content.

It's going to spend a billion dollars, or north of a billion dollars, on content. And because of the visibility that they have into what people watch, what kinds of services they use, they can spend money in a way that's smarter, not harder. They don't have to just spend a crazy amount using a siloed vision of what people like to watch. And thanks to its tie-up with Nielsen that it announced a few months ago, they potentially solved a frequency capping problem that has bedeviled CTV for years. So anyway you slice it, they're the big kahuna in CTV.

Marcus Johnson:

All right. Rahul, Roku isn't the biggest player in connected TV. Make the case.

Rahul Chadha:

If you look at this through the lens of ad revenue, Roku trails both Hulu and YouTube, according to our forecast, and faces a lot of challenges. The AVOD market is crowded with these free ad-supported services like Tubi, Pluto and Freevee now, which means more competition for eyeballs and ad dollars that Roku faces. And I think even though they're investing in content, Roku isn't delivering that water cooler chat level content that lets it compete with other AVOD services that are paid, including HBO Max, Disney+ and Netflix.

So I think when you look at a much wider spectrum, the competition is fierce. I think the last podcast we were on, we talked about how there's something like 25 streaming services now. The competition is increasingly crowded and fierce, and I think it's going to be a challenge for Roku to cut through all the clatter.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. To Rahul's point on those numbers, US CTV ad revenues, we've got Hulu in first with 3.6 billion, YouTube 2.9 and Roku with just over 2 billion in third. But then yeah, the other side of the coin, to Max's points, one in three Americans use a Roku device according to our forecasts, over 120 million folks, and 68 million of them watch the Roku channel. All right. Very nice, folks. Let's move to question two.

We've got Stephanie up against Rahul for Apple's big banking push. "Do you want the company that makes your phone to be your bank too?" asks Sara Morrison of Vox. She writes that that's the question some people are asking themselves now Apple has rolled out its new

Apple card savings account which comes with a 4.15% interest rate, well above what most traditional banks are offering. Miss Morrison lays out the timeline of Apple's financial offerings. It launched Apple Pay in 2014, Apple Cash in 2017, Apple Card in 2019 Apple Pay Later, its by now, pay later service, last month and now the savings account. Both the credit card and savings account work through a partnership with Goldman Sachs.

Question is, can Apple's push into banking work? Stephanie, Apple's push into banking will work. Make the case.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yeah, Jenna McNamee on my team wrote a really great banking briefing when the savings announcement was made, and she noted that people are generally becoming comfortable switching to a different banking entity. I think about 30% of US banking customers moved funds away from their primary savings account into another financial institution. And that was just as of this March. And when those same people were asked, "Why did you switch?" a third of them said it was for a higher savings rate. That was the main factor. So it's notable that Apple's API is 4.15% because that is over 10 times the national average for savings rates.

Also worth noting that in our own digital trust benchmark, PayPal and Apple, they increased with trust as financial institutions year over year. And if you zoom in on digital natives, Gen Zers trust Apple as a bank more than a traditional incumbent. So I'd say it's looking pretty good for Apple.

Marcus Johnson:

Mm-hmm. Very nice. Rahul, Apple's push into banking won't work. Make the case.

Rahul Chadha:

I can't. I mean, I'm just girding myself for-

Marcus Johnson:

What do you mean you can't?

Max Willens:

[inaudible 00:17:45] you get for responding late.

Rahul Chadha:

... infinite demerits and for rousing Marcus's ire. But I mean, reading this, I was reminded of WeChat, which is maybe the world's only true super app which I think is even a misnomer. It's more like an operating system, and I think what Apple is doing reminded me a lot of that.

One of the WeChat's key ingredients was offering easy access to banking and financial products for unbanked or underbanked consumers for the first time. Apple got there a little bit differently. They're providing value in the form of this really high interest rate. They're making the process of getting access to banking via their operating system pretty much seamless, and they're using their iOS and their Wallet app design to put its products front and center. The only thing I could see potentially throwing a wrench in the works is regulation. The article you sent over to us, the writer expressed some concern about just the consolidation of all this information and power put in the hands of Apple.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

If anyone's in the market for a lawyer, don't ask Rahul because he'll literally get up from his side of the courtroom and walk to the other side and sit down with the-

Rahul Chadha:

He's guilty.

Marcus Johnson:

... with the prosecution.

Rahul Chadha:

He's guilty. Throw the book at him.

Marcus Johnson:

Will the defense like to make... I've got nothing. He probably did it.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Inexcusably guilty.

Rahul Chadha:

I mean, look at his face. He's guilty.

Marcus Johnson:

It's not called tag team the case. Make the case, Rahul. Make the... We came round to regulation at the end, so there is something there, for sure.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

There was something.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Something negative in there.

Rahul Chadha:

This is what I get for not looking at my emails until 8:30 the morning, I guess.

Marcus Johnson:

I know.

Max Willens:

What a slacker.

Marcus Johnson:

That, or Stephanie's a Jedi. My goodness. Okay, question three. And we've got Max against Stephanie for this one. Dumb flip phones will make a comeback.

Young Gen Zers are snapping up flip phones. We're not talking about the \$1,000 Samsung Galaxy Z, or Z, Flip4 kind. The old-school flip phone is what we're talking about. Modern models are a bit smarter than those from the early 2000s, but still offer a needed break from endless notifications, notes Kate Morgan of the Wall Street Journal, pointing out that you can buy a basic flip phone and a prepaid plan for under a hundred bucks at most big box stores.

So the question is, will dumb phones have a mini renaissance? Max, dumb phones will have a mini renaissance. Make the case.

Max Willens:

I think emphasis being on mini renaissance, I will say that they will. And the reality is that if you just look at the fact that there are multiple companies that have sprung up out of the woodwork to offer these things and a critical mass of influencers talking about it on social media, it just seems like the mini renaissance is here already. The thing that I think is maybe going to make this sticky is that a lot of the coverage around this isn't about anything convenient or fun. It's about public health.

I mean, people talk about the fact that the kind of engagement mechanisms that power the modern smartphone experience are just really not very healthy. They fry your attention spans. They make you jittery. They make it difficult to relax. And so people that have the means and privilege to opt out of that, at least in their leisure time, are going to do it. And they have.

Marcus Johnson:

Stephanie, dumb phones won't have a mini renaissance. There's no way in hell. Make the case.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yeah, no, there's no way. I think dumb phones will remain a low-cost, affordable option for people that need basic phone features, but I don't expect them to become massively popular. We expect time spent on smartphones to grow 2% between this year and next. We adjusted our own forecast of how much time people are going to spend on TikTok, which you use a smartphone to engage with. We adjusted that forecast up to 56 minutes a day, which exceeded our previous forecast by almost 19%. Time with Instagram's growing. People are second screening on their phones while they're in front of the TV.

And Gen Z can say that they want to limit screen time all they want, but it doesn't add up to the amount of time they're actually spending on screens. They're spending more time on TikTok and Instagram than ever before. So sorry, but no.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, I think our time spent... Is it time spent on smartphone is like three and a half hours a day? And that's on average.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yes, yes.

Marcus Johnson:

I think for Gen Z, it's going to be higher.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

It is.

Marcus Johnson:

That's half an hour more than people spend with the television. Some interesting points, though, from the piece. Nokia sells tens of thousands of flip phones each month in the US, which is not millions, but it's not nothing, according to Finnish manufacturer of Nokia phones, HMD Global. But yeah, feature phones, as they're often called, are absolutely a thing outside the US. In 2022, 80% of feature phone sales coming from Middle East, Africa and India, according to Counterpoint research.

Max Willens:

I think I would just add to the public health point. This week, the American Psychology Association released basically best practices and a official position on social media and its... How to limit exposure to it to maintain mental health particularly for teens.

And it's very easy to find one or two people espousing a particular viewpoint for a feature in a newspaper article, but I do think that if you look at the perception and the societal scrutiny that is being turned on social media in particular, to me it's not unrealistic to think that social media might be regarded like fast food in a couple of years, where it's something that's widely available, it's ubiquitous, it's part of the cultural tapestry, but it's also regarded as something that you really shouldn't consume too much of, that it's almost looked down upon if you spend too much time or resources consuming it. And in an environment like that, which again is not where we are but I think it's possible we go in that direction, I think it's very possible that a sliver of the most mindful, or at least most privileged and health-conscious people, will opt not to expose themselves to that level of stimuli if they can avoid it.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. I wonder if it's a one or the other. I wonder if there's a world where people buy a feature phone as well as having a smartphone. So if they do go out somewhere, they need to have a phone for emergencies or in case they need to get in contact with their kids or whatever, they can take that phone out with them as opposed to the device that has maps they won't need, the Uber Eats app they won't need, the TikTok app they won't need, the emails they're getting from work that they won't need to get in that moment. But there is a world where yeah, maybe... I mean, you said things might change. We might start seeing this as the fast food of today.

But there is a... Like in Germany, there's a law where you are not allowed to be contacted by your boss after work hours. That exists. And so I'm not saying America's going to be there anytime soon, but there is a world where this stuff starts to become perhaps less common because of mental health reasons or just overall wellbeing. I'd be screwed if that was a law here. I'm always emailing you guys at 11:00.

Rahul Chadha:

My recollection of the articles, too, is there's a certain irony to teenagers or whoever is adopting these feature phones for specific circumstances also posting about what they're doing on TikTok. It's like obviously, they're still using smartphones.

There's ways to limit your interaction with smartphones by turning off your notifications, using gray scale. It's like you have to fight against all those, I guess they call them dark design forces at work that are designed to keep you engaged and addicted to the dopamine hits. Feature phones are one way of doing it but yeah, it did feel like a lot of the information about that shift was anecdotal and not really reflective.

And even when I hear the number that Nokia is still selling tens of thousands of feature phones in the US, I think about my father-in-law who absolutely hates trying to figure out how to use his Android. We got him an iPhone. He's just not a smartphone guy, you know?

Marcus Johnson:

Mm-hmm.

Rahul Chadha:

And I think there's probably a sizable number of people who are just don't want to deal with what they consider to be an annoyances of trying to figure out how to use a smartphone.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. Yeah, the dark patterns, absolutely an issue, Rahul. Maybe there's a world where regulations suggest that when a phone comes out of the box, it has to have all those things set to off, whether it's those notifications, whether it's having things like your background be gray scale, whether you're having only certain number of preloaded apps, et cetera. But yeah, also maybe there's... It's not just the Gen Z folks. Maybe it's some of those folk... Even millennials, I guess, who remember what it was like to have those phones or older folks as well who smartphones seem to have been thrust upon them. But maybe they can go back to those feature phones.

I wonder if those... Those feature phones must be running on 4G or 5G because when they got... They got rid of 3G spectrum, or they're getting rid of 3G spectrum, and so a lot of people who had feature phones had to get rid of them and upgrade to smartphone. So as long as the bandwidth supports them, then maybe there is a world where people go back. Probably not.

Anyway, that's what we've got time for, for the Debate of the Week. Let's have some Dinner Party Data. It's the part of the show where we tell you about the most interesting thing we've learned this week. We'll start with Rahul.

Rahul Chadha:

Yeah. So I stumbled across Forbes's list of the highest paid athletes in the world for 2023. So the top three were all soccer players. Cristiano Ronaldo was at number one. I believe it's pronounced Lionel Messi was at number two. Sorry, that's a dumb joke. I actually need help with this. Kylian Mbappé, is that right?

Max Willens:

Kylian Mbappé.

Rahul Chadha:

Yeah. Kylian Mbappé was at number three. Some interesting placements by golfers. Dustin Johnson and Phil Mickelson who are at six and seven, respectively, but that was largely due to payouts from them joining the LIV Golf tour.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, yeah.

Rahul Chadha:

I guess they recruited them away from PGA and they got one-time big payouts.

Max Willens:

Mm-hmm.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Mm.

Rahul Chadha:

Mbappé is really interesting to me because he makes 120 million, but the vast majority, about 83%, comes from on-field earnings-

Marcus Johnson:

Wow.

Rahul Chadha:

... and only 20% is from off-field earnings, which means things like endorsements, appearances, licensing income. Roger Federer, meanwhile, who's at number nine with 95.1 million, 95 million of that income came from off-field. So I feel like Mbappé probably should fire his agent and hire Federer's. And then-

Marcus Johnson:

Isn't he retired? I thought he retired, Federer.

Rahul Chadha:

I thought so too. Yeah. So I mean, it's not surprising that-

Marcus Johnson:

Still killing it.

Rahul Chadha:

... he maybe made a hundred million on court. But I mean, almost making a hundred million in endorsements and whatever else is pretty impressive. And eight of the people earned more than a hundred million, and the article is just noting that first, the Middle East money is pouring into sports in this new way and-

Max Willens:

Yeah, that was the point that I was going to make, is that I feel like the Middle East is inflating a sports bubble. Like, PSG is owned by Emirates.

Rahul Chadha:

Right.

Max Willens:

Cristiano Ronaldo signed some gargantuan amount-

Rahul Chadha:

Oh, yeah.

Max Willens:

... to play in the Middle East, Mbappé, where does Mbappé play? I don't remember.

Marcus Johnson:

I think it's Paris Saint-Germain.

Max Willens:

Oh, he does play for PSG. That's right.

Marcus Johnson:

I think.

Max Willens:

And I guess Messi played for... Well, is Messi retired? I don't know where he plays. Anyway, but the point is that, as you say, the golfers, that's from LIV which is oil money. And yeah, I think it's

wild how much of the valuations and money flowing into the pockets of these players is all coming from oil oligarchs.

Rahul Chadha:

It was interesting to me, too, that at least in the States, we talk about how much of a money faucet the NFL is, but doesn't seem like much of that is trickling down to the players.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, not so much. Lionel Messi, he plays for Paris Saint-Germain as well. PSG. So you've got Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappé and Neymar, or... How do they lose? How do they lose any games? Ridiculous. Very nice.

Wait, hang on a second, Rahul. So you said... Was there a American sports professional in the top 10 outside of golf?

Rahul Chadha:

For sure. Yeah, LeBron was at number four with almost 120 million. Steph Curry was at about a hundred million at number eight, and Kevin Durant was at 89.

Marcus Johnson:

Wow.

Rahul Chadha:

So I guess I left that part out. It seems like all the Americans were golfers or basketball players. Yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Hmm.

Marcus Johnson:

Interesting. Especially yeah, because the biggest sport being football, most of the money being there, but maybe... And then more players, perhaps. Different type of sport. Let's go to

Stephanie.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

All right. Changing it up quite a bit. May 12th is National Limerick Day in the United States.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh.

Max Willens:

Yes.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

It is celebrated on Edward Lear's birthday to remember the contributions that popularized the limerick in his Book of Nonsense, which was published in 1846. If you don't know what a limerick is, they are five-line poems with a distinguishing trait that it must have a very specific rhyming pattern referred to as an anapestic trimeter. They're made famous by poems such as Hickory Dickory Dock and There once was a man from Nantucket. They can be profane or harsh. They're frequently offensive. Lear himself said that clean limericks were only passable at most. And so I figured I'd end with a limerick written by-

Max Willens:

Oh.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

... Lear himself. A passable, clean one of course. And so it goes, there was an old man with a beard who said, "It is just as I feared. Two owls and a hen, four larks and a wren have all built their nests in my beard." Limerick Day.

Marcus Johnson:

This could've been about Rahul up till up about two weeks ago. That dream has been ruined.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Now it's just a mustache.

Marcus Johnson:

Yep. Very nice. I thought you had an original for us, Stephanie.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

No.

Marcus Johnson:

I got very excited. You could've just pretended that was yours. We wouldn't have known.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I could have, right?

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

No one would call me out.

Marcus Johnson:

I wrote this for Rahul.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I wrote this as I was waiting while you all were talking about sports.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. Also possible. Very nice, very nice.

Max Willens:

I think Victoria should still just fill that reading with bleeps so that it sounds like what Stephanie read is [inaudible 00:32:04].

Marcus Johnson:

And have us afterwards be like, "Stephanie, how could you? It's a family show."

Stephanie Taglianetti:

That is a very funny.

Marcus Johnson:

Max, what you got for us, mate?

Max Willens:

I like that you mentioned, Stephanie, the Book of Nonsense because it ties into my chatter, which is about children and books. And I have a copy of the Book of Nonsense, which I occasionally tried to interest my daughter in. And I was basically looking for stats and information about children and reading. And the thing that delighted me most is that more than 50% of children say they'd read for pleasure once a week in the United States, which I think is a really heartening and really wonderful sign that for all the attention that we pay to content that's visual and video-focused and electronic, most children still enjoy the pleasure of a book. But it also brings me to something that I discovered, which really, really bummed me out.

The Department of Education did a bunch of research right after the pandemic, and it found that about more than one in six kids in the United States live in an area of the country where the children's book circulation is under 10 per child. So if you know how much children like to read and how much you are supposed to read to them, especially when they're very little, that's nuts. I mean, you can get through 10 books, assuming that you think those 10 books are any good for your kid, right quick. So just want to say let's all open up more libraries, please.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, that's a good one. Does your kid have a favorite book, Max?

Max Willens:

This week, it's-

Marcus Johnson:

What we got?

Max Willens:

This week, it's The Gruffalo, I think.

Marcus Johnson:

Yes.

Max Willens:

But every week, it's something. Oh yeah, you know this one?

Marcus Johnson:

Of course.

Max Willens:

Love that book.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, your kid's in a good place. I can tell.

Max Willens:

Yeah, she is.

Marcus Johnson:

[inaudible 00:33:43] a classic. So I've got one for you real quick. A recent Visual Capitalist article by Avery Koop noting the world's busiest airports by passenger count according to Airports Council International, which is particularly fitting given that the World Health Organization just declared the COVID-19 emergency over.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Mm-hmm.

Marcus Johnson:

Which is huge news. Not gone forever disappeared, but the emergency portion of it over globally, which is just amazing. And so I've got five stats from that article about the world's busiest airport. So last year, any guesses? The world's busiest airport by passenger count?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Tokyo.

Marcus Johnson:

That's a good guess.

Max Willens:

Heathrow.

Marcus Johnson:

Heathrow was eighth.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Is Tokyo in there?

Marcus Johnson:

No, it's not.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

What?

Marcus Johnson:

But this could've shifted a lot recently because this was done as of 2022, so the pandemic obviously has affected things.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Oh yeah, people couldn't go into Japan for a long time.

Marcus Johnson:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

So number one is Atlanta. Has been for a while, Atlanta.

Max Willens:

That's right.

Marcus Johnson:

But-

Max Willens:

That's right.

Marcus Johnson:

It's the busiest airport. Close to a hundred million folks passing through, which is just staggering. Second fact here. America has five of the six busiest airports in the world.

I think, Max, I think Heathrow did used to be number three a couple of years before the pandemic. I think Beijing was number two as well. But because, as Miss Koop notes, the States has been faster at loosening COVID restrictions and had a stronger domestic travel market, America has five of the six busiest airports in the world last year. So after Atlanta, Dallas. 20 million fewer, so way behind in second place. But Dallas in second, Denver in third, Chicago in fourth and LA in sixth. Dubai was in fifth, so Dubai's the only non-US airport to crack the top six busiest.

Speaking of Dubai, third fact. Dubai in fifth place has the highest number of international travelers. Makes sense based on where it is on the map.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Mm-hmm.

Marcus Johnson:

Number four, the top 10 airports. So Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Chicago, Dubai, top five, and then LA, Istanbul, London Heathrow, New Deli and then Paris's Charles de Gaulle. Those top 10 make up 10% of all passenger traffic in the world as of last year.

Finally, the fifth fact, or stat, here. A recent report from the World Travel and Tourism Council found the industry has recovered to 95% of its market size in 2019, so almost a full recovery after the pandemic. Jobs also recovered in the industry, with 22 million workers added last

year. That brings the total workers in travel and tourism to 300 million globally, which would represent one in every 11 jobs. So travels may be back. Any international trips we've been desperate to get to, folks?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I just did mine to Japan.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, you did just come back. Oh, yeah. Stephanie's off.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I just was in Japan. That's why Tokyo is top of mind for me.

Marcus Johnson:

Ah. Stephanie's like, "There are definitely a hundred million people here. This has to be the busiest airport."

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yeah. Right.

Max Willens:

I want to go to South Korea one day, but it's not happening anytime soon.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, good country. The correct answer that we're looking for is England. Anyone? No one. Very well.

That's all we've got time for this episode. Thank you so much to my guests. Thank you, of course, to Max.

Max Willens:

Always a pleasure, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

Thank you to Stephanie.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Thank you, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

And of course, thank you to Rahul.

Rahul Chadha:

Cheers. Thank you, guys.

Marcus Johnson:

Thank you to Victoria who edits the show and hikes on the side. Thank you to James who copyedits it and Stuart who runs the team. Thanks to everyone listening. Send us a message on Instagram at @behindthenumbers_podcast. If you want to say hi, I reply to all of them. We'll see you guys on Monday for the Behind the Numbers Daily, an eMarketer podcast made possible by InMobi. Happy Weekends.