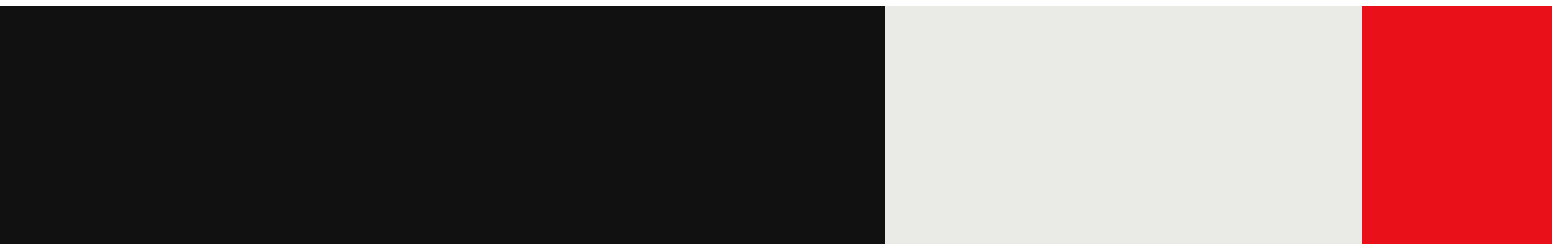


The Weekly Listen: Quality of life on the internet, Apple's mixed reality expectations, and the new primetime

Audio



On today's episode, we discuss how the quality of life on the internet is changing, what to expect from Apple's imminent mixed reality headset, when the new primetime is, whether customers are too demanding or businesses aren't empathetic enough, how plane speeds have changed over time, and more. Tune in to the discussion with our director of reports editing Rahul Chadha and analysts Blake Droesch and 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 Meltwater. This is the Friday show that feels like it

moved back up north just a little too early because it's still bloody freezing. The hell was I thinking? I'm your host Marcus Johnson that moved too soon. In today's show, is the quality of life on the internet coming at a higher price?

Blake Droesch:

I think eventually as these tiered subscriptions evolve, there probably are going to be offerings that are more akin to the experience of the consumers, whether it's more ad free content or whatever.

Marcus Johnson:

What to expect from Apple's imminent mixed reality headset.

Rahul Chadha:

It's just hard to undersell how powerful they are in terms of their cultural capital in the world. And I think if they can hit that sweet spot in the Venn diagram of marketing and design, they could have a runaway winner on their hand.

Marcus Johnson:

Is the new primetime for TV news in the afternoons?

Max Willens:

The audience for network nightly newscasts, which have always and continue to dwarf the audiences for the cable news shows is still there and it hasn't changed and it's still gigantic.

Marcus Johnson:

Are customers too demanding or are businesses less empathetic? Why haven't commercial planes gotten any faster? Join me for this episode. We have three people. Let's meet them. We start with one of our senior analysts covering everything digital advertising and media, based out of Pennsylvania, it's Max Willens.

Max Willens:

Yo.

Marcus Johnson:

Hello there, sir. Also joined by another senior analyst, but he covers retail and e-commerce and based out of New York, it's Blake Droesch.

Blake Droesch:

Hey, everyone.

Marcus Johnson:

Hello, hello. And finally we have one of our directors of reports editing based out of upstate New York, it's Rahul Chadha.

Rahul Chadha:

Hello, gents.

Marcus Johnson:

What's going on, fella? So what do we have in store for you today? Three segments, of course. We start with the story of the week. We're talking about the quality of life on the internet, how that's changing. We then move to the debate of the week where we'll have our panel give the for and against arguments from a couple of different questions that we have for them to present a balanced argument and we'll let you guys decide who makes the more compelling case. And then we move to the game of the week where we talk about some random trivia things we just recently learned. We start with, of course, the story of the week.

Quality of life on the internet is coming at a higher price. So Hope King of Axios recently wrote about social media giants and the fact that they're starting to charge users for improved account security and support; and to the promise of wider public exposure as well. I think Meta verified and the new Twitter Blue, she continues saying that dating apps are testing 50 to \$500 a month plans for their most intentioned users. She keeps going: uber, Lyft, Instacart and DoorDash have all launched subscription services. Think Uber One or Instacart Plus and major news organizations have implemented paywalls and others are offering fewer free articles. So what all this means is the Internet's getting more expensive, it seems, to be able to access content, particularly the better content; we're having to cough up more and more. Max, I'll start with you. What's your take on the quality of people's internet lives coming at an apparently higher price?

Max Willens:

So I think that this is all happening, at the risk of oversimplifying it, because the internet is getting expensive because the internet is getting to be very closed off. 35 years ago, 30 years ago, even 20 years ago, the internet was still kind of a wild west space where there wasn't as much money to be made and there weren't as many gargantuan companies that controlled gigantic swaths of it. And so it was possible for everything to be and feel kind of available to everyone, open source, un-gated, un-pay-walled. And as this new kind of generation of internet and behemoths has been born, range including Google Meta, Microsoft, Amazon, they now control great big swaths of the internet and how we experience it, and are using that to control lots of the ad market and control lots of the user experience. And that in turn is kind of closing off the openness of it and opening up opportunities for people to charge for stuff.

It's funny, I feel like the easiest way to think about what's happened to the internet over the last 20 years is to think about this one sentence that Chris Anderson from Wired, I think he said it at a TED conference and most people for a long time only thought about the first half of the sentence and we're now in this current moment living through the second half, and that sentence is, information wants to be free, but information also wants to be expensive. And we thought for long, long periods of time about how, ooh, on the internet you can copy and remix and do whatever you want; and that was all true, but it's a lot less true when a lot of the information that you want is behind a registration wall that you have to surrender your email address and your credit card and it's going to, I think, continue to get less free and open as we move through the third decade of the 21st century.

Rahul Chadha:

I think we're seeing a shift from, and maybe it's generational nature, but the expectation that things on the internet are free. Content is free, stuff is free. And I think for companies that were disrupted by digital media, thinking newspapers specifically, they started out adding their content for free because they still had a solid revenue stream doing things the old way, and that's kind of evaporated. And I think the challenge for companies when I see things like Twitter and Facebook charging a premium for things that were just baseline expectations at some point... You have to pay extra for customer service? I always wonder when people do this kind of thing, what kind of lifetime value are they going to get out of their customers? What kind of customer retention are they going to have? I think it's really hard to get over that hill for these companies, convince people to pay for things they've gotten for free for a long time, even if the paid experience is better.

Marcus Johnson:

And you've seen that in other industries. There was a time where you could just check a bag and then a lot of airlines have created other tiers where now the baseline is less and we're going to charge you for this and that and the other. And so we've seen that in other industries definitely, where your expectations have evolved as companies have changed what their baseline offering is.

Blake Droesch:

I think you're seeing that analogy lends itself well to some of the things that we're seeing on the retail and delivery end of it where you're basically being sold on an offering, whether it's a Prime membership or a Costco membership or whatever, and none of these things are really new. Costco membership has been around forever, but it's basically you're sold one thing and then you're brought into a system where there are multiple tiers and you're basically being upsold, but it's all sort of within the realm of consumers buying into a product or service based on how often that they use it and they want to pay for it and whether or not they think it's a good value. I don't see anything in that end that's super revolutionary.

What's interesting on the social network and is that it is evolving in a much different way because whereas when the internet and social networks were more primitive, there was a little bit less of a clear line between the creator and the consumer. But now you have these really two distinct profiles across social networks. You have the creators, which all of these tiered subscriptions, they're really catering to that. These targeted towards accounts of people who make an income on social media. So they need things like verified accounts, immediate access to customer support because if something happens, like they get locked out of their account for a week, they lose their income for their week; they lose their livelihood.

But there's also this other end for the overwhelming majority of users who are not creators. Maybe sometimes they're posting and sharing content, but for the large part they're consumers, their viewers, and that aspect remains free for now. I think eventually as these tiered subscriptions evolve, there probably are going to be offerings that are more akin to the experience of the consumers, whether it's more ad free content or whatever. But I think right now what you're seeing more on the social media end is just evolving of two different experiences for that dichotomy of creator versus consumer.

Marcus Johnson:

Consumer. And there was some research from Morning Consult to back then up 76% of American adults said they wouldn't ever pay to use any social media platform. 76% of American adults as according to Morning Consult. Versus 19% who said that they would, millennials were the most open to paying for social apps with 32% saying that they would versus the 19% for all adults. However, to your point Blake, when they asked paid contact creators, would you pay for it? 66% of people said they would, probably said they have to.

Max Willens:

I think it is really interesting. Blake flagged something that I wanted to touch on, which I think is really interesting, which is that to what Blake was saying, a lot of the sort of services or pay in tiers that we see in social are essentially taxes on creators. It's a cost of doing business. You want our audience, you want our tools, you want access to the brands that are all beating down our doors to get influencer access? Give us \$10 a month.

There's a big exception of that though, which is Reddit. So Reddit Gold, which has been around for years now has essentially gone the other way and it's really more meant to giving the power users even more reasons to stay power users: they get kind of powerups and goodies that they can bestow on people, they can trick out their avatars and also no advertising. And it'll be really interesting to see whether the social platforms contemplate more stuff like that, especially as user growth continues to level off for the very biggest, like the Instagrams and the Facebooks and the TikToks of the world.

Marcus Johnson:

Interesting as well. So the most popular feature really quickly to close out the story of the week here, the most popular feature social media users would pay for was improved account security. So of all the things that people could pay for on social media, most people said improved account security. The ability to be tracked less was second and then less advertising was third. And so, things like being able to edit posts, write longer posts, things like that access to an AI chat bot, not as important.

Final thought from anyone wants to jump in here, where's this go? Do you see that these paywalls being put up and people are just like, okay, well I won't use it, I'll use something else or I'll just use the free version, or do you see that actually no, we're going to want access to these tools; we are going to see a wave of subscribers who are now just paying for access to what they already had for free?

Max Willens:

I think there's a version of this that reinvigorates interest in things like public media, for example, or more content and more kind of experiences whose costs are by society collectively. I think of something like Canopy, which kind of has been battered and taken some lumps but I think is a really, really interesting idea. Canopy is basically a streaming service where the funds are furnished by local library systems. So if you live in Pennsylvania, in lots, lots and lots of parts of Pennsylvania, you just have to enter your library card number and you get access to this library of movies and television shows and digital only content.

And I could see stuff like that starting to take root. I think one thing that's important to think about too though, especially in this era of kind of renewed scrutiny of these platforms is that if you're something like a Facebook where you can say with a straight face that basically most of America has a Facebook account except for very young people, you have to be very, very careful about, say, charging your users for permission to access the basic features. Because that starts to I think look like the kind of thing that is anti-competitive purely in the sense of being against consumer interest because you are effectively forcing people to pay to access a basic service and communications tool. I think a platform would have to overreach pretty substantially, but to me it's not out of the realm of possibility that we could be having conversations about things like that in the next couple of years.

Marcus Johnson:

A lot easier if they're able to say, "Hey, we do have a free tier." So people do have that option if they want. And that's what we've got time for the story of the week. Time now for the debate of the week, how civilized. Today's segment: Make the Case.

For our panel, Rahul, Blake and Max present the for and against arguments for each of the following questions based on three news stories we have for you. Two contestants face off per question, giving the for and against. Also, the following takes don't necessarily reflect the analyst's personal views. We've asked them to just present the best case regardless and offer objective analysis. Let's start with question one. It's a good place to begin. And Rahul going up against Max, we're talking about Apple's imminent mixed reality headset. Tripp Mickle and Brian X. Chen of the New York Times note that five years ago Apple demoed a product to its own executives. In the video it showed these executives a man in London was wearing a mixed reality headset, called his wife in San Francisco and asked if she'd like to come to London, showing her the sites of London through his eyes using this headset. But as Apple prepares to

introduce the headset in June, some at the company are expressing skepticism with concerns about the roughly \$3,000 price tag, doubts about its utility, and worries about its unproven market. The Times asked core notes.

So the question here is, Apple's mixed reality glasses, will they be the product that changes the market? The market being, I guess mixed reality, but also AR as well. Rahul, you're going to give the for. So Rahul, Apple's mixed reality glasses will be the product that changes the market, make the case.

Rahul Chadha:

I want to acknowledge that we're talking about trapping a pair of oversized ski goggles to your face. They're attached via cord to basically a fanny pack. But if anybody-

Marcus Johnson:

I said will. Will. You're supposed to be given the for argument. This is not going well.

Rahul Chadha:

Just throw it in an off weight of fanny pack, you're good. But if anybody convinced consumers to do it, it's Apple. You just got to look at their track history. Apple's consist. The conventional wisdom dictates that as people bought more smartphones, they would get commoditized and the market matures and the devices get cheaper. That's not what's happened with Apple's iPhones. They've consistently raised the prices on their high-end iPhones. They know a segment of their consumer base just won't be deterred by that. They've created a culture of cool in which tweens who send green texts are summarily ex-communicated from their social circles. It's just hard to undersell how powerful they are in terms of their cultural capital in the world. And I think if they can hit that sweet spot in the Venn diagram of marketing and design, they could have a runaway winner on their hands.

Marcus Johnson:

I don't know whether I'm supposed to hit the bell or not in this segment, Victoria, but I just hit it anyway. I felt like it needed a little something at the end. All right, Max, Rahul went Papa Doc on you; 8 Mile reference. No, he went I guess it's Eminem's character. What's Eminem's character called?

Rahul Chadha:

Rabbit.

Max Willens:

Rabbit.

Marcus Johnson:

Jimmy B. Rabbit. He went B. Rabbit on you and he gave your argument before giving his own. So if you've got anything, then well played, 'cause I don't know what else there to say apart from there's strapping goggles on your face and walking around the city is crazy behavior. But if you want to give it a go, Apple's mixed reality glasses won't be the product that changes the market. Make the case.

Max Willens:

I got something for you. So if we're talking about the Venn diagram and what's in it for a market making, market shifting product, the \$3,000 price tag is not on it. This is going to cost more than twice what Facebook's expensive pro tier headset costs. By the own estimations that are cited in the Times article, they're hoping that in the first year this thing sells half a million units, and no product that sells half a million units worldwide changes anything. Apple's own sources describe this as a bridge product.

I think the reality is that this is not a consumer technology or a technology that has proven to have real traction in the consumer market. There's a small sliver of the gamer population that likes them. There's a small sliver of the professional class in a certain handful of professions that finds utility with them. But other than that, there is no evidence anywhere that this is something that people feel they must incorporate into their lives on a daily basis. And without that, it doesn't matter how sleek or beveled this Apple version of the headset is.

Marcus Johnson:

That was a good point on the half a million units. Counterpoint research was saying that Apple watches after they debuted were expected to ship 40,000,000, four zero million. Nowhere near that. 80 times fewer than the Apple Watch.

Max Willens:

I will say as an argument possibly against the one I just made: if the technology that's described in the sort of lead of this story that Johnny I. previewed where it's essentially

FaceTime on steroids, where you call somebody and you're not just looking at their face, but when you look around, you see everything that is around them, that's potentially quite a cool bit of technology. Again, I don't think that's worth coughing up three grand, and really more like six because you want your partner or your spouse or your parents to have that technology so there's someone on the other side of that call, but that does sound kind of neat and I'm interested to see if people can push things in that direction. Because the tech that Meta is showcasing, for example, involves you having to get excited about looking at kind of dorky cartoon versions of your friends and acquaintances, which I think is also one of the things that's limiting their appeal.

Marcus Johnson:

And then speaking of the missing appeal, one of the age-old problems with this is people wear glasses. A couple of hundred million Americans wear glasses. 70% of Americans, approximately, over 18 need some form of vision correction. So whether that's eyeglasses, contacts or prescription, regular glasses, sunglasses. And so there's lots and lots of people who just won't be able to use this thing. Apple does say they plan to sell prescription lenses for the displays to people who don't wear contacts, but as plans to, it's not going to be here quite yet. People who have glasses know how expensive it is to get prescriptions anyway. So will you want to also add that to this product however often you've got to get your prescription, every two years? We'll see. Let's move to question two.

So we've got Blake going up against Max: is the new prime time for TV news afternoons? Michael M. Grynbaum of the New York Times believes it could be. He believes the afternoons could be the new prime time for TV news. He writes that the biggest draw on Fox News is not Tucker Carlson, it's the 5:00 PM chat show. That, except for live sports and the hit drama Yellowstone, was last year's most watched program on all of cable TV. Ari Melber's 6:00 PM legal affairs program was the top show on MSNBC; first time in its near 30-year history. MSNBC's near 30 year history that a show outside of primetime, the 8 to 11:00 PM window was ranked number one. And on CNN, Aaron Burnett at 7:00 PM, Jake Tapper at 4:00 PM drew bigger audiences than the later shows once peerless evening lineup. Mr. Grynbaum notes the question is, has primetime for TV news dramatically changed in terms of when primetime is? Blake, primetime for TV news has dramatically changed, make the case.

Blake Droesch:

I think that perhaps what we're seeing here is that whether it's because of just the hosts who are commanding primetime or just the particular news cycle where we are in the election cycle that the news is just not really primetime right now. There are not things going on in the country where it forces you to finish up your dinner and go sit in front of the TV. I think maybe the news climate right now is maybe pop something on and have it on in the background while you're getting home from work or you're making dinner, which is maybe why a show on the five o'clock hour is outperforming primetime.

However, I would caution that we see time and time again, particularly with national political shows, that the popularity of these types of primetime cable news shows are very much tied to where we are in the election cycle. So with that saying, I still think that yes, this could be a shift. And also due to the fragmented nature and on demand nature of virtually any form of video at this point, that maybe the emphasis on primetime will be taken down slightly, like a notch or two permanently. But I would say that I wouldn't be surprised to see some of these primetime shows really regain their providence as we get closer to the election.

Marcus Johnson:

Max, primetime for TV news hasn't dramatically changed, make the case.

Max Willens:

I feel like the important thing in Mr. Grynbaum's piece is kind of buried at the bottom, which is just that the audience for network nightly newscasts, which have always and continue to dwarf the audiences for the cable news shows, is still there and it hasn't changed and it's still gigantic. Between ABC, NBC and CBS, you're talking about 20 million people every night. And in today's fragmented viewing landscape, that's a gigantic number. And the only ads on those programs are for heart medications, but that's where the biggest audience is. And really when you're talking about the story of primetime television news, you're talking about the nightly newscast, and that hasn't really changed because they won't change the TV dials at the nursing homes,

Marcus Johnson:

I'm sorry, older people.

Max Willens:

Actually I think that's where I feel like-

Marcus Johnson:

You're not the only ones who watch TV. You're not the only ones, but you do watch a lot of TV.

Rahul Chadha:

That's funny because I was thinking about, I didn't read the article about the primetime news shifting, but I would dispute the premise of the question. Does the show that gets all those ratings on Fox, actually, I'm saying this as a former journalist, does that actually constitute news? When you get five talking heads debating, just invoking inflammatory rhetoric to get their reviewing audience all fired up? To me, that's not really news, that's entertainment. And I'd say that's a separate question than how are people watching or consuming news these days?

Marcus Johnson:

I was surprised to see that that was the most popular show outside of Yellowstone and live sports.

Blake Droesch:

I'd never even heard of it.

Rahul Chadha:

Me neither.

Blake Droesch:

That shows how far removed I am.

Marcus Johnson:

Really. But it does seem like it's more of a chat show from what I've seen, like once or twice. I guess this is a good question, Rahul, what's the definition of news here? Question three, let's move to our final one here. We've got Blake versus Rahul. What's more likely, customers are being too demanding or businesses less empathetic? Customer rage is at an all-time high suggests Jessica Stillman of Inc, and it's getting harder and harder to talk to a human about it. With Wall Street Journal poll finding about half of folks searched a company's site extensively, in quotes, for a phone number in the last year. Over 40% of people said no number was available. The National Customer Rage survey conducted by Customer Care Measurement

and Consulting and Arizona State University found 74% of people reported experiencing a product or service problem in the past year, more than double the number in 1976.

What are people most upset about? According to the survey, it's listening to messages before being transferred to a human and figuring out how or where to contact the company. But the question is, what's more likely, a customer is too demanding or a business is just less empathetic? Blake, you're going to make the customers too demanding argument, make the case.

Blake Droesch:

I think customers are too demanding in their expectations of these giant corporations to be able to cater to their individual problem immediately. I think, is it a great thing? No. Is it unfortunate that we've gotten to a place where we're so far removed from the mom and pop store and we basically have to buy all of our things from giant corporations or else pay an insane premium to shop at small businesses? I'm not saying that's a great situation, but it's not a new situation. And I think the fact that if customers are actually, which I don't think they actually do, I think this is just a sort of air your grievances survey and why not say you're off at this; but I think the expectation of the fact that the billions of packages that Amazon ships out every day, the one that doesn't reach your doorstep and that you're going to be able to call a number and they're going to be able to find out exactly what the location or whatever happened to your package is immediately, it's just an unrealistic expectation for someone who's shopping on Amazon.

Marcus Johnson:

Rahul, businesses are less empathetic and that's actually the problem, not customers, make the case.

Rahul Chadha:

I think businesses are still relying on this idea that it's well in the rear view now, which is that supply chains were snarled during in the height of the pandemic. You couldn't find your packages, you couldn't get to anybody on the phone because people couldn't go to call centers. I think those days are well behind us now and people's patience is worn out, it's worn thin. And I think a lot of these businesses are passing these changes off as beneficial to the consumer when they're really just cost saving measures that result in bad customer experiences. People don't want to get stuck in some labyrinth of a automated phone dialogue

with a machine. They want to talk to a human to get their problem solved. And I don't think for businesses there's any secret. Make sure you have enough customer support. Understand their job is tough and pay them accordingly. And if you're worried about metrics like a net promoter score or lifetime value from your customers, it's worth it at the end of the day.

Marcus Johnson:

Very nice, folks. That's what we've got time for the debate of the week. Thank you, gents, for your for and against arguments. We move, of course, to Dinner Party Data. Part of the show where we tell you about the most interesting thing we've learned this week. Let's start with Blake.

Blake Droesch:

Oh, man. No, don't start with me. I don't know what happened. I lost my Dinner Party Data.

Marcus Johnson:

You haven't looked?

Blake Droesch:

No, no, no. I got it. I got it.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay.

Blake Droesch:

Don't worry, I've just-

Rahul Chadha:

Course you have it.

Marcus Johnson:

Blake normally does his research whilst the other folks are going, which is why I asked him to go first. Okay, Max, do you want to go, to give Blake some time to find something?

Max Willens:

For sure. So we are about to be at the end of the men's NCAA basketball tournament. Very weird tournament for those of you that celebrate, but it got me think about-

Marcus Johnson:

Celebrate?

Max Willens:

Well, it's a kind of celebration unless you're an Indiana fan or a North Carolina fan.

Marcus Johnson:

Hell no. What happens? Stewart who runs the team is in Indiana. He's a Hoosier, who's your-

Max Willens:

They didn't get very far at all. They lost to-

Marcus Johnson:

I guess I can wait to speak to him after this recording. I might message him now. Victoria, quick. Send me messages.

Max Willens:

Give him a hard time about... Go, get some orange and green stuff to put on. You can taunt him.

Marcus Johnson:

Who beat them?

Max Willens:

Miami.

Marcus Johnson:

Perfect.

Max Willens:

Who made the final four, so that's something. I bring this up because to me it's a good way or excuse to check in on name-image likeness, which is of course the pivotally important development in college sports where college athletes can finally get compensated for the outrageous amounts of value that they bring to the schools that they attend. I feel silly to even call them students. But anyway, comprehensive data is kind of hard to come by. Obviously the NCAA doesn't really want lots of people talking about this or seeing it spread too far and too wide because it complicates things for them. But I found some data from a guy named Bill Carter who's a sports business journal columnist who used to run a sports marketing agency, and by his estimation, 17% of D1 student athletes nationwide had some kind of NIL deal in 2022.

Marcus Johnson:

17? 1, 7?

Max Willens:

1, 7, so not a huge number, but when you think about D1 student athletes, that also includes swimmers and fencers, and so there's lots of sports that you wouldn't think naturally would be able to cash in on that stuff.

Marcus Johnson:

That's higher than I would've expected at this point.

Max Willens:

Is that right?

Marcus Johnson:

I thought it would've been about there.

Max Willens:

Well then you'll love this next stat. So he pointed out that at a sports business conference that happened in December, the athletic director of Texas Tech said that 40% of the student athletes at Texas Tech had gotten an NIL deal of some kind, which to me is pretty crazy. Texas Tech is a school that is prominent in lots of the major sports, but that never really leapt out at me.

And then two other quick data points for you. I think these are from a platform called Influencer, which is a software company that helps influencers secure deals. They looked into NIL a little bit and two quick data points about the scope of these things. The average price tag for an NIL deal in 2022, \$1,300. The median NIL price tag, \$65. So by and large, we're talking about a system where if you're maybe a highly touted future pro football or basketball player, you might get some real dough, something better than dining hall money. But if you're a fencer, you're probably getting something that'll pay for a couple cases of beer for you and your friends.

Marcus Johnson:

Gosh, fascinating. It's interesting to see. It's quite a new development, so it'd be interesting to see where that is in five years time. If only this existed when I was in college, man, I would've raked it in. I'm kidding. I'm kidding, of course. Rahul, I see Blake still look reading stuff on the screen, so I can tell you he hasn't found anything.

Blake Droesch:

No, I was just going to ask what D1 sports you played in college.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, this didn't make the cut, but we did these speed intros to the hosts videos on Instagram, and one of the questions I was asked, my answer was, I played college basketball and American football, believe it or not.

Blake Droesch:

What positions did you play American football?

Marcus Johnson:

Probably not, is what most people are thinking. I played the only position that my height and weight would allow, which was defensive back; you just had to be real fast, so I played corner.

Blake Droesch:

Interesting.

Max Willens:

No kidding?

Marcus Johnson:

That's right. I went to college in the UK, but there are a handful of-

Blake Droesch:

Ah, okay. You buried that one. Okay.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay.

Blake Droesch:

American football in the UK is...

Marcus Johnson:

It's a thing. It's mainly Americans who are overseas studying, so it's not the highest competition and there's like six people who would come to watch, and most of them were lost; they were looking for the soccer game. But still was a lot of fun.

Blake Droesch:

You probably could have gotten on the Great Britain World Baseball Classic Team as well.

Marcus Johnson:

I know. If only, could have dawned one of those spectacular jerseys. Anyway, let's go Rahul. You're up.

Rahul Chadha:

I feel like I maybe pulled a Blake this week. Sorry Blake, but I didn't have a lot of time to prepare. I stumbled across a data point that I'm going to throw out there. I can't promise that it's going to be of any interest to anyone, to be perfectly honest. But the average age of first time mothers in the EU is 29.7 years old, the lowest in Bulgaria at 26.5 years old on average, and the highest in Spain and Italy at 31.6 years old. That just-

Max Willens:

Wow.

Rahul Chadha:

... Kind of got me thinking about, we're talking in generalities, and I'm sure this data's out there somewhere about population declines and industrialized countries and what does this mean for aging populations? I think you read that about Japan a lot and I was just wondering what happened to the Malthusian faction. Are they still worried about exponential population growth or if their theory's basically been run out of town on a rail?

Marcus Johnson:

You mentioned Japan. China is one of those countries where the population is about to start falling. So China's population is 1.4 billion. I think this year they're getting overtaken by India, so India will be the country with the most people. China will come in second, but it's very, very close, about 1.4 billion each. But according to this, the high, low, and even the media variant, when you extrapolate out by 2100, so in 80 years, the median variant of this model expects the population in China to be cut in half.

Max Willens:

Whoa.

Marcus Johnson:

So from 1.4 to about just under 800 million people.

Rahul Chadha:

Wow. That's really dramatic.

Marcus Johnson:

Staggering.

Rahul Chadha:

It's crazy.

Marcus Johnson:

Obviously for a number of reasons. But that's fascinating.

Max Willens:

One child policy, man. On Rahul's thing, that really blows my mind because you think a lot about the factors that are delaying people getting into the parented phase of their lives in the United States and there's lots of, I think, really good reasons for it: People are saddled with student debt, they are having trouble finding high paying work, real estate prices are out of control. And some of those things are weighing on child-having-aged people in the EU as well, but nowhere near to the same severity, I would think.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, that's true.

Max Willens:

And plus, you have the safety nets of all of those governments. In a place like Finland, in addition to basically being guaranteed a year off from your job, you get hundreds if not thousands of dollars worth of classes and resources and literal goods from the government to raise your newborn. And so I'm surprised that people are waiting until nearly their thirties to get along with it. Maybe they're just too busy having fun in Ibiza and enjoying being young and in Europe, which sounds like more fun than being a parent anyway; so I guess I just answered my own question.

Marcus Johnson:

Max is a new parent for people listening.

Max Willens:

That's right. No fun whatsoever. Just kidding.

Marcus Johnson:

Blake, found something?

Blake Droesch:

All right. I had something, for the record. All right? I just accidentally closed the browser window. So opening day was yesterday for MLB, and I found-

Marcus Johnson:

Wow, already?

Blake Droesch:

Yeah.

Max Willens:

That's crazy.

Blake Droesch:

I found, in honor of opening day, some data from YouGov America that ranked the best major league baseball mascots, and it looks like they did a little bracket of their own and came to a rather odd ranking of winning percentages, featuring many mascots that I was unaware of the fact that they had an official name. So the highest ranking MLB mascot was actually Paws. Anybody know who Paws is? P-A-W-S.

Marcus Johnson:

No.

Blake Droesch:

Paws is the mascot for the Detroit Tigers, and how they became the most favorable mascot, I don't know. I think this might be my last week using YouGov America data. I'm going to have to pour into the methodology.

Marcus Johnson:

What's this based on, popularity or who would win in a fight between the mascots or-

Blake Droesch:

No, just is the most endearing. Basically they did a little bracket, I think, and they asked people, who do you like better, this mascot or this mascot? And Paws came out on top. It was followed by Clark the Cub who's the Chicago Cubs mascot; T.C. Bear, who's the Minnesota Twins mascot; Stomper, who's the Oakland A's mascot; and then fifth, obviously everyone's true favorite, Mr. Met.

Marcus Johnson:

I knew it was.

Max Willens:

Any polling that does not recognize Mr. Met in The Fanatic as the first and second most lovable mascots is clearly fraudulent and should be taken with a grain of salt. So.

Blake Droesch:

I completely agree. The Philly Fanatic came in at number 10 behind many obscure mascots, including Mariner Moose from the Seattle Mariners, and Ace, the Toronto Blue Jays mascot.

Marcus Johnson:

A moose?

Max Willens:

This is, I think-

Marcus Johnson:

Why has everyone got a moose as their... Alaska's national animal, Vermont has it as well on their flag maybe, I think.

Max Willens:

I like a moose.

Marcus Johnson:

I don't mind a moose. It's just very popular considering they're not an animal, you see all the time.

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, maybe in Washington state I would imagine they're more common than Florida-

Marcus Johnson:

Northeast?

Blake Droesch:

But sure.

Marcus Johnson:

All right.

Max Willens:

Moose favoritism, a topic for another time.

Marcus Johnson:

We probably won't talk about that, but let's see, I've got one for you guys real quick: Why haven't planes gotten much faster? So it seems like they've gotten a little bit faster. I remember flying from New York to London years ago, and it always would take somewhere in the seven to eight range, and now it does seem like there are times where they'll come on and be like, "It's six hours." And you're like, "Yes," but that's probably got a lot to do with how fast the tailwind is. But anyway, I was curious as to know why a lot of things have improved, why haven't planes gotten faster?

We used to have the Concord and people were like, "No, we shouldn't be going that fast and burning that much fuel." So why we seem to have got on nowhere in terms of plane speed? So the cruising speed for a commercial airliner, slower today than they were in the sixties. Today's airplanes have an average speed of 550 to 590 miles per hour. That's compared to the over 600 miles per hour for the Boeing 707 during the 1960s, according to a 2014 article from the MIT School of Engineering. But why are planes slower today than they were over 60 years ago? Any guesses?

Blake Droesch:

It's cheaper.

Rahul Chadha:

Fuel consumptions?

Marcus Johnson:

Yes. Both correct. Yes. Andrea Romano of Travel and Leisure writes the main issue is fuel economy; going faster, eats more fuel per passenger-mile. This is according to aeronautics and astronautics Professor Mark Drela. He says today's airplane builders favor a smaller,

lighter, and therefore slower aircraft that peaks its fuel efficiency at lower speeds. Similar to how cars also become more efficient at slower speeds on highways. Two examples of how much of a difference that can make: number one, according to a story from NBC News in 2008, JetBlue saved about \$14 million a year in jet fuel by adding just under two minutes to its flights; Another example, number two, one Northwest Airlines flight from Paris to Minneapolis saved 160 gallons of fuel, saving the airline over 500 bucks by adding only eight minutes to the flights. These days, many pilots use flight route planners to map out the most fuel efficient route.

Max Willens:

It was nice of them to transfer those savings on to the consumers. Oh wait, they didn't do that. That's right. Flying sucks now. Thank God.

Marcus Johnson:

It also explains why when you're running late, pilots are like, "We'll try and make up the lost time in the sky." And you think to yourself, you could have gone faster this whole time?

Blake Droesch:

So the Concord, the reason why it was so impractical is because it burned so much fuel that they put it in literally every little pocket and crevice of the plane. But that also meant that in order to get from one side of the Atlantic to the other in the time that it did, it used every little drop of fuel. So if you were on the Concord and there was a lot of air traffic coming in, landing at an airport, they would all have to make room and just hover the airport so the Concord could land. So you never had to wait and circle the airport because of air traffic, so you got to go in and out right away.

Marcus Johnson:

Because it was on its last dregs of fuel-

Blake Droesch:

Exactly. By the time it got there.

Max Willens:

That's crazy. Wow.

Marcus Johnson:

Quickly, out of the way. Well, if you're wondering at takeoff how fast you're going, the average speed of a commercial airplane is anywhere between 160 to 180 miles per hour, which is somehow slower than the Formula 1 car goes, which is terrifying.

Blake Droesch:

They go like 200, right?

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah.

Blake Droesch:

Jeez.

Marcus Johnson:

No, thank you. Anyway, that's what we've got time for today's episode. Thank you so much to my guests. I thank Blake.

Blake Droesch:

Thank you.

Marcus Johnson:

Thank you to Max.

Max Willens:

Always a pleasure, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

And thank you to Rahul.

Rahul Chadha:

Cheers. Thank you folks.

Marcus Johnson:

And thank you to Victoria who edits the show, James who copy edits it, Stuart who runs the team, and thanks to everyone listening. Head to [BehindTheNumbers_Podcast](#) for our brand new, it's not that new anymore, but it's still there, behind the scenes segment called The James Question. We'll see you guys on Monday for the Behind The Numbers Daily: An eMarketer Podcast made possible by Meltwater. Happy Weekends.