


The Weekly Listen: Conversational voice assistants, digitally cloning yourself, and AI search destroying online traffic

Audio



On today's podcast episode, we discuss what to expect in 2024, whether Google's new AI search tool will destroy traffic, a new self-checkout machine, loyalty in the age of the "zero consumer," if everyone will soon be creating digital clones of themselves, roads that can wirelessly charge electric vehicles, and more. Tune in to the discussion with our vice president of content Suzy Davidkhanian, analyst Blake Droesch, and vice president of Briefings Stephanie Taglianetti.

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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 video podcast. This is the Friday show that is wishing you a happy brand new

year. I'm your host, Marcus Johnson. Welcome to 2024. In today's show, what to expect in 2024.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

It's basically doing what Apple always does and quietly work on things and come a little late to the game and do it better.

Marcus Johnson:

What will Google's AI search tool do to traffic?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

And so, if you're trying to discover something new versus if AI already knows exactly what you're doing, it's just going to surface the brands you already know.

Marcus Johnson:

Can a brand new self-checkout machine save self-checkout?

Blake Droesch:

In terms of categories like apparel, it should be in every store, absolutely.

Marcus Johnson:

Loyalty in the age of the zero consumer. Will everyone start creating digital clones of themselves? And we check in on how electric vehicle adoption is going. Join me for this episode. We have three people, let's meet them. We start with one of our vice presidents of content who heads up the retail and e-commerce team based in New York. You know her as Suzy Davidkhanian.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Thanks for having me.

Marcus Johnson:

Of course, Suzy, welcome to the show, welcome to 2024. We're also joined by someone else on that retail and e-commerce desk, based in New York as well, senior analyst Blake Droesch.

Blake Droesch:

Hey, Marcus, pleasure to be here.

Marcus Johnson:

Hey, chap. And finally, we have our VP, vice president of everything, briefings... I don't know why I had to explain what VP stood for. She's based in New Jersey. It's Stephanie Taglianetti.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Thanks for clarifying and Happy New Year, mate.

Marcus Johnson:

Happy New Year to you, too. As I mentioned, the Weekly Listen is now a video podcast, so if you want to watch along, you can check this episode out on youtube.com/insiderintelligence and click the podcasts tab if you want to see what we look like and hang out with us that way. If not, you can just listen along all the places you normally listen to this show. What do we have in store for you? What to expect in 2024, we've got some fresh, brand new predictions that you can't find anywhere else. We'll start there. We then move to the game of the week. We haven't yet come up with a new game, so it's of course, What's the Point? Our contestants will go head-to-head to head to try to win the championship belt. And finally, Dinner Party Data, everyone's favorite bit where we talk about some random trivia. Let's get on with it. We start of course, with the story of the week.

What to expect in 2024. Well, so anything's possible in 2024. Who will win the most medals at the Paris Olympics this summer? Probably America. Who will win the Men's Euro football cup in June this year? Probably not England. There's plenty to anticipate though in 2024, and Insider Intelligence has put together a ton of trends reports to help prepare you for the year ahead. How to prepare for cookies slowly disappearing this year, why short video will face a reckoning, which US company is most likely to be closest to a super app by the end of the year, all this and much, much more. But I've asked our three guests on today's show to come up with three brand new predictions that you can't find in any of our published research. So gang, Suzy, I'll start with you. What have you got for the listeners? What are you expecting in 2024?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

First of all, I'm so excited that I'm going first. I think that bodes well for the weekly games.

Marcus Johnson:

It doesn't. It means nothing. There's no correlation.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

There's 100% correlation. I'm very excited about mine. Did you guys know that Apple is going to launch in the next two weeks apparently the rumor goes, a new, I think it's souped up in true Apple finessed technology, AR/VR sort of headset called Apple Vision Pro, and I think that is going to make the Metaverse come back into all of the headlines and AI will start to disappear as a must have foundational IT tech tool versus something that's in the limelight, and so that is my prediction that Metaverse will make a comeback.

Marcus Johnson:

So, the Vision Pro, Apple's VR/AR?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

It looks like it is. It's already on their website, it's listed on their website, it says launching soon. It is like an immersive experience. It looks like ski goggles. Apparently, you can take a picture of yourself and then it'll pose your own face on the goggles, so it looks like you're looking at yourself. What is prohibitive is that it's \$3,500.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I was going to say, how much does it cost?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Apparently, it's going to be \$3,500 and they're planning to go a la Nintendo with a very limited number of release. So, it's not going to be like an iPhone where they're going to expect lots of people buying in. They're going to make it very, very exclusive, but what I think will happen is it's going to bring attention back to this whole idea of AR/VR, the Metaverse, Web3, and because Facebook keeps putting out new goggles or new face things, glasses, and whatever-

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Form factors.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

... Which are significantly cheaper, right around \$500, but with better technology. So, I think what's going to happen is all the people who hear about it and don't want to buy an Apple \$3,500 one are going to start buying the Facebook one. So, I think Facebook will accidentally sort of feel the halo effect of the Apple Vision Pro, and I think it's just going to bring life back to Web3. And I'm going to still call it Web3 instead of Metaverse because I think Facebook meta changed the whole concept of Metaverse by changing its name.

Marcus Johnson:

But will this be a flash in the pan moment? Because we're still waiting for a killer app. We're still waiting for a better price tag because even the current price tag is prohibiting a lot of people from investing in VR. One benefit it does have is people are familiar with the Apple ecosystem may be more inclined to use something that is also going to be using a similar type of software, an iOS style software.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

So, I don't know that it's the Apple Vision Pro that's going to make it, that's the prediction part, that that's going to hit it big as much as it is Apple is going to legitimize something that unfortunately Facebook took away from. And I think Roblox, although I guess we all agree AMC is not going to buy Roblox this year, Roblox is not going to buy AMC, I still think there are a lot of retail brands doing different sort of activations with Roblox, which is another part of the Metaverse. And so, I think Apple putting their own sort of branding behind this concept of a third digital world aspect is going to help make it stronger. And if you think about it, AI sort of took over the what's hot and new in technology for '23. I think Apple launching this product will bring the Metaverse back into our common day conversations. So, it's not that Apple is going to launch this thing that's going to become huge, it's just that Apple is going to help bring back the Metaverse to reality.

Marcus Johnson:

One of Suzy's other predictions, Roblox will buy AMC. Very specific, highly unlikely predictions and have a Metaverse playground.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

No, that was the type of prediction Steph, it was meant to be.

Marcus Johnson:

That was type of prediction, not just Suzy's predictions in particular.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

It was on purpose. It's supposed to be that.

Marcus Johnson:

Extremely unlikely predictions from Suzy. Let's move to Blake. What do you have for us?

Blake Droesch:

So at the end of last year, Amazon announced a date for when they're going to start introducing advertising to Prime Video. January 29th is now when they'll start introducing ads to the platform, unless subscribers pay an additional 2.99 fee. I think what really is going to happen here is it's going to introduce a way for shoppable media to expand beyond social media in a way that we haven't really seen before. And I think it actually is going to move the needle on consumer adoption of shoppable advertising because Amazon has a shoppable video ad product that advertisers can already use on Freevee and Twitch and some of other associate publisher platforms, but what the introduction of ads to Prime Video is going to do is going to reach this massive audience of, I think it's 160-something million US Prime subscribers, and it's going to combine its retail media network first party consumer data with premium video content, and then that e-commerce integration, which is really the third component here.

So in order to watch Prime video, you have to be logged into Amazon, which means you're a Prime subscriber, which means that your credit card and all your personal information and all of your data is already built into the video platform. So, this is going to introduce a potential new way for consumers to engage with shoppable media that is actually much more fluid than some of the other experimentation that we've seen in the space outside of social media. So even if there's, let's say, four to 5% of Prime Video viewers end up adding something to their cart directly from a Prime video ad, that's going to amount to a pretty big number.

Marcus Johnson:

Suzy, any thoughts here on the retail angle?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I agree. The big question mark, which I think Amazon, we give them a lot of leeway for is the consumer experience, and will it be an easy seamless one or will it interrupt the show? And then if you have a bad experience, will you try it again? I think we give Amazon a lot of sort of permission to have a bad user experience, and so this might be the right platform to start that with.

Blake Droesch:

And just anecdotally, I saw one of these ads a couple of months ago on Freevee, and it was for a product that I had no interest in buying, but I wanted to try it out, so you literally press the button on your... I have the Amazon Fire TV and it added it right to my Amazon cart. I didn't end up completing the purchase, but actually it is pretty seamless and that's why I think I'm so bullish on it.

Marcus Johnson:

Nice, very nice. Stephanie, close this out.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Coming back to Apple, I think we'll see Siri on steroids in iPhone 16. Apple has been kind of quietly working on its GenAI developments. A recent study came out like a week ago about how Apple is working on GenAI that could run directly on the iPhone. And so, while Apple has been critiqued for not jumping all in on GenAI as quickly as some of its tech competitors, it's basically doing what Apple always does and quietly work on things and come a little late to the game and do it better because it's challenging a lot of the privacy concerns that folks have with GenAI tools by allowing its "Apple GPT" to run directly on iPhone, and I think what we're going to see with its event in the fall is that Siri is just going to get a whole lot better and become sort of its killer app if you will. Not necessarily a killer app on the whole, but for Apple, a killer app for sure.

Marcus Johnson:

So Siri, it's the second most in terms of smartphone assistance in the US. 80, basically call it 90 million for Google Assistant, and then you've got Apple at about 84 million, so just behind, and then Amazon Alexa uses a couple of million behind that, so already a ton of people using Siri. How do you see people changing how they interact with it?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Not getting as frustrated with its recommendations and accessibility features because it'll get a whole lot better.

Marcus Johnson:

All right folks, very nice. Three brand new predictions for you. Like I said, you can't find in any of our research, but we do have tons and tons of trend reports, we'll be doing tons of trends and predictions episodes throughout the month of January, so stay tuned for those, or if you want the written version of our content, you can head to insiderintelligence.com. Let's move to the game of the week, folks. Today's game, What's the Point? I read out four stories and Suzy, Blake, and Stephanie tell us what they think is the main takeaway of the story. Okay answers get one point, good answers get two, and answers that give you the same feeling as climbing out of the car and stretching after a long road trip-

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yep.

Marcus Johnson:

Yep, you know. [inaudible 00:12:15]-

Stephanie Taglianetti:

You're getting way better at these, Marcus, I got to say.

Marcus Johnson:

It didn't feel like a compliment. You're maintaining a certain level of perfection, Marcus, with these, is what we're looking for. We can cut. Do you want to say something like that and we can cut it in?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Well, no.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay, fine.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Because I don't like to lie at to our listeners, sorry.

Marcus Johnson:

Well, they won't know. It'll make me feel really good. Answers that leave you with that feeling, they get you three points. You get 20 seconds to answer before you hear this noise. People who run along are the worst people. Most people... No, not most people, most points wins, most people wins, gets the last word. Let's play.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Cool.

Marcus Johnson:

We start with Suzy for round one, news publishers see Google's AI search tool as a traffic destroying nightmare. About 40% of The Atlantic's traffic comes from Google searches. The Wall Street Journal citing an internal report from the magazine claiming that AI gives users an answer to their question about 75% of the time. So, no need to click through to anything, and as the journal explains, what was once a hypothetical threat is now a very real one because since May, Google has been testing an AI product called Search Generative Experience on a group of about 10 million folks with the intention to bring it into the heart of its core search engine, but Suzy, will Google's AI search tool be a traffic destroying nightmare?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

So in the lens of publications, I don't think so in that the publications are striking deals with all the different AI owners, platforms to ensure that they're getting some sort of revenue sharing model, that they are sending the sources and links, so that people can go to the actual website. That's probably going to generate some different kind of traffic, add some legitimization to your content being plucked by AI.

Where I do think from a completely different perspective, for retailers I do think it might destroy traffic in that AI is only as good from what I understand as the data that it has. And so, if you're trying to discover something new, when you go into Google and you just type in new jeans, all kinds of things that'll pop up that might have nothing to do with what you were expecting, and so you'll discover it, versus if AI already knows exactly what you're doing. It's just going to surface the brands you already know or the brands that are most bought, the

chances are you already know. And so, I think if you're a small brand without a lot of clout, AI is going to really destroy you from a search perspective.

Marcus Johnson:

Not literally-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Correct.

Marcus Johnson:

... Kill you. Thanks for clarifying.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Absolutely.

Marcus Johnson:

Blake.

Blake Droesch:

I think really it does have the capability to really harm publishers in the sense that there are users who are going to search engines for specific answers to questions and they're not being directed towards media publishers to get answers to these questions, but that's potentially detrimental to a lot of publishers' business, but I think it really is going to enforce them to invest in things like long-form pieces and engaging readers in a way that they're not just answering their questions and getting redirected via Google, but at the same time, it could really harm the sort of fragile revenue models that it has used to sustain itself in the digital era so far, so definitely a lot of transformation.

Marcus Johnson:

Stephanie.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I think my colleagues have said a lot that I agree with. I think that user behavior is not going to change when it comes down to using Google search. So, I think if you're typing a string and

need a quick answer to a question and you're getting enough of a result without needing to go over to a publisher site, then absolutely, it's definitely a site traffic nightmare.

Marcus Johnson:

Average traffic loss. Google was saying its AI products is far from set, but publishers estimate they will lose between 20 to 40% of their Google-generated traffic if anything resembling recent iterations rolls out widely. Google said it is giving priority to sending traffic to publishers. We'll see. Round two, we start with Blake, a new self-checkout machine. Clothing retailer Uniqlo has invented a self-checkout machine that does everything for customers, except pay the bill. An Inc article from Bruce Crumley notes that customers just drop their items into a rectangular bin and then RFID tags inside of price tags are instantly scanned and the machine lists the goods and prices on a screen, telling folks when to pay and using a card reader below the display. But Blake, can this new self-checkout machine save self-checkout?

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, as someone who's personally used that at the Uniqlo store on Fifth Avenue, it really did amaze me and I'm not someone who's easily wowed by technology and it really is convenient-

Marcus Johnson:

Or anything.

Blake Droesch:

... For that matter. The thing that I am going to be interested to find out is around grocery because I think a lot of what really annoys people about self-checkout on grocery is having to basically input and weigh the produce and the non-packaged goods. And I'm not sure if this technology is going to be able to solve for that, but in terms of categories like apparel, it should be in every store, absolutely. It's a great way to get people into the store and coming back.

Marcus Johnson:

Someone who's not easily impressed, you do watch golf, Blake.

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, it's [inaudible 00:17:44]-

Marcus Johnson:

Riveting.

Blake Droesch:

Have you seen how small that hole is? It's impressive.

Marcus Johnson:

It's tough to play, but I don't need to watch it. Stephanie.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Totally aligned with Blake on the grocery front. It's so much more of a nuisance than a help right now, and I've never been more frustrated/embarrassed in my life than ringing up lemons for the third failed time and having to call the clerk over to give me the assist again. So, hopefully it does improve that experience because it really is terrible right now.

Marcus Johnson:

Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

So outside of Steph's story, I would've actually said, how many people truly have that much of a difficult time with self-checkout? Really, honest, maybe in groceries, but even then, I just went to a Walmart in Canada where there's like 10 people helping you, so it's not even really self-checkout, it's like assisted checkout, different lineup.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

But it's like shame checkout at that point.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I don't know. I think sometimes we internalize things we don't need to, like not always winning on Weekly Listen and that's okay.

Marcus Johnson:

Not ever winning, ever.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Hey, what I will tell you about this though, me too, I tried it last year during NRF time, everybody was talking about it. It is very easy to use. What I think is going to be hard is it's very expensive. That means that all clothing, all sort of items are going to need that RFID tag. So, that means that if you're a multi... Uniqlo sells its own thing, so it's different, but if you're like a department store or a multi-branded store, you have to make sure that all your vendor partners are going to put the RFID tags on your things, otherwise your box is useless. And from a logistics perspective, they take up a lot of room and it's expensive. So, I think the cost to make this happen is probably much greater than the friction that consumers are feeling towards checking out.

Marcus Johnson:

There were some numbers though in this Inc piece, which were quite interesting. So, it was saying about 60% of shoppers have used self-checkout machines, about just under half, so they basically use them all the time. 90% wanted stations to be more intelligent and 67% complaining about having been inconvenienced by system failures. And Blake, I've used one too, and they are remarkable. It's so good you think that you are stealing. You think that you must have done something wrong because there's no way you've paid that quickly, and there was some numbers, the Wall Street Journal article, saying the whole process takes about 30 seconds, and it really did become so popular with shoppers that between 70 to 90% of them use over staff registers. It really is quite remarkable. We'll see if it can help though, because a lot of people are even admitting to stealing on one survey from self-checkout and retail is kind of getting fed up, so a lot of them have kind of pulled back from it, but maybe this can reinvigorate some of that interest in the technology.

Let's move to round three, halfway mark. Suzy and Blake tied on four, Stephanie just behind with three. We start with Stephanie for round three. Loyalty in the age of the zero consumer, Eva Kis of Adweek points out that consumer expectations for loyalty programs are rising. Nearly 40% expect to be rewarded for sticking with a brand up from 17% in 2020 according to a study from Hall & Partners. And David Limmer of RetailWire talks about the concepts of the zero consumer, shoppers characterized by zero patience, zero boundaries, and zero loyalty, who are challenging traditional definitions of customer loyalty. But Stephanie, how are companies rethinking customer loyalty in the age of the zero consumer?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Healthcare companies in particular are acknowledging that they need a better online presence and that their reviews matter and also that they need to basically be available at a whim because customers are going to someone that's available tomorrow versus someone that they saw a month ago. So, that's one reaction I'm seeing in health at least, but this article didn't really say much new about how consumers are disloyal.

Marcus Johnson:

Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Well, I actually was going to say the same thing in that this is not... It's a new word I've never heard, zero, or new idea, sort of buzzword catchphrase, zero consumer. I'd never heard of that before. It's not even intuitive. The concept is not new. Consumers need to make it an easy sort of transaction where you show them value and the only solution really to have a loyal customer is to have something unique. If you don't have unique either experience or product, they're going to shop and go somewhere else if the price is better somewhere else. And so, if you're a multi-branded retailer, it means maybe you have some loss-leader type products where you bring people in at a lower value point and then you offer other unique things, I think different retailers will have to think about it in a different way, but at the end of the day, if you don't serve your consumer in the way they want to be served and you don't understand what value means to them, you're going to lose.

Marcus Johnson:

Blake.

Blake Droesch:

I totally agree. It just a new spin on an old story. Consumers are getting smarter. They are aware of their options. This has been the case for a really long time. I don't think it's inherent that everyone has a loyalty problem. Amazon doesn't have a loyalty problem, Apple doesn't, Nike doesn't. The good brands that do everything right and they're constantly evolving to meet the customers are doing just fine. So yes, I think that there's a heightened awareness among consumers and there's more competition than ever, but that's been the case for a long time.

Marcus Johnson:

Very nice, folks. We head into double points round four and Suzy and Blake are still tied just ahead of Stephanie, six a piece for them, Stephanie on five. We start with Suzy for round four, creating digital clones of yourself. As MaryLou Costa of the BBC writes, property expert Rob Dix now has a digital AI chatbot clone of himself on his website that can quickly answer questions as if it is him talking. This is because he says he gets far more questions than he can individually answer. Mr. Dix created the clone by feeding it content from his books and also content from him and his partner's Sunday Times column and property podcast, but Suzy will more and more people start making digital copies of themselves?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

This is the most absurd headline I have ever read. That's-

Marcus Johnson:

You don't want two of me?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Just ridiculous. It's basically-

Marcus Johnson:

Two Marcuses.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

... Talking about a chatbot that's smart. You give it the information that you've created, so that it can reply in the way you would create. There is nothing innovative about that. Now that we're talking about chatbots and ChatGPT and GenAI and all that jazz. Did you guys see the... I only saw it on Instagram, which is very sad that I'm admitting to a news source for me is Instagram, but did you guys see how celebrity chatbots were made and how that was very cool for a while, but the most important part is the technology needs to work and that the cool factor will wear off? And if the chatbot isn't answering the questions that you're asking, then people are going to move on.

Marcus Johnson:

Blake.

Blake Droesch:

I think it will work up into a point where the chatbot contradicts something that the person actually agrees with, and then it becomes a big problem, but I actually saw a similar example of this in the grocery world. It's a smaller retailer, The Fresh Market and Firework, which is like a well-known live streaming business, they have a new AI product where they'll have a live stream, and then after the live stream goes off the air, you can still ask the person doing the live stream questions and they'll just give you artificially generated answers. People are experimenting with all types of different use cases for the similar type of a more advanced chatbot, but I agree with Suzy, it doesn't seem like it's going to replace the appeal of actually speaking with someone in this context.

Marcus Johnson:

Stephanie.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Again, nothing really new here except for that the chatbots are mirroring an actual person, not an invented one. So, real people are held accountable to what the tech is saying to other real people, and that's the only thing I see here is being potentially problematic. And immediately, it made me think of the show *Severance*, where people have a version of themselves that do work and then have a happier version of themselves that do not do work, if anyone's seen that.

Marcus Johnson:

I haven't, just full transparency though, the podcasting, we're currently working on digital clones of all of you guys, so you can't say no to being on the show anymore.

Blake Droesch:

I'm for that.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Oh, perfect.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh my God, we're going to get jobbed out.

Marcus Johnson:

I could see... Are there any use cases? But I thought it was interesting that your digital version can speak over 120 different languages. I thought that's pretty cool because a lot of content isn't translated into that many languages or accessible for that many people. And so, if you're a author putting out a book, you're doing a book reading to be able to do that book reading and answer basic questions about the book in over 100 places or whatever it could be, it could be pretty cool. Maybe if you're in a movie screening, speaking to the director, or a digital version of the director. There's a couple of use cases here.

It says another 150 people have also created AI clones of themselves through a UK company called Coachvox AI, including chief executives, an astrologer, a nutritionist, a fitness coach, and even a marriage counselor as well. So, maybe there are some niche cases in here, probably not mass market anytime soon, but very good game folks. Count scores, and I can reveal that Blake is this week's winner of the game of the week, congratulations.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

It's Blake.

Marcus Johnson:

To Blake 12 points, Suzy 10, Stephanie nine-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

10?

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, just the 10. You should be happy with 10. Blake, congratulations.

Blake Droesch:

Thank you.

Marcus Johnson:

You are the first winner of the game of the week for 2024. You take the belt from Paul Verner who had it over the holiday period, and you of course get the last word.

Blake Droesch:

I just want to wish all of our listeners a Happy New Year. I hope everybody feels rejuvenated and refreshed to tackle the year ahead, and a thanks to Marcus and the rest of the folks behind the scenes who do a great job day in, day out keeping this thing running, so bless you all.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh my God, this was exactly what Paul Verner said, guys. Come on. Did you plan this?

Blake Drosch:

No, that's actually not true. I'm not just copying Paul [inaudible 00:27:43]-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

You are.

Blake Drosch:

It's 2024, I've turned over a new leaf and this is the way I am now.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

You digitally cloned Paul Verner in your speech.

Marcus Johnson:

I'm not sure how to feel about this version.

Blake Drosch:

Just a pleasant, nice guy [inaudible 00:27:56]-

Marcus Johnson:

Victoria, are you as taken aback by this as I am? I'm in shock. I've got no words. Thanks, Blake. I'm blown away.

Blake Drosch:

You're welcome, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

I was waiting at any moment for you, Blake-

Blake Droesch:

That's a great jacket, by the way. Is that new?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh, stop it.

Marcus Johnson:

Thanks for noticing, it is new's.

Blake Droesch:

Nice.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Stop it, cut this out.

Marcus Johnson:

That's not why I'm wearing it indoors, but that's just how England treats you sometimes. Let's move to the final segment of the show. It's of course Dinner Party Data. This 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:

So, this is fresh data from YouGov about Americans' reading habits over the last year.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh God.

Blake Droesch:

How bleak is it? It's pretty bleak, as you might have guessed, so 46% of us adults read-

Marcus Johnson:

I've forgotten [inaudible 00:28:59]-

Blake Droesch:

... No books in 2023, 26% read between one and five books, and-

Marcus Johnson:

I thought you were going to say half a book.

Blake Droesch:

... 11% read more than 20 books. Physical books were actually still the most popular way of reading. 42% said that they had read a physical book, compared to 21% who read a digital book and 19% who listened to an audiobook, but the thing that I found interesting is that the most avid readers prefer digital books over physical books. So the avid readers, which I guess makes sense, you're not going to really invest in a Kindle unless you're serious about reading, but I just found that to be interesting because I associate serious readers with people who still read physical books, which actually, I guess now that I read it out, it's 46% reading no books is alarming, but the people who do read seem to still be reading a fair amount. So, I think it's just sort of that gap.

Marcus Johnson:

I thought you were going to say 97% of Americans have never heard of a book, so I think it's better than that, so that's positive. They're pretty positive numbers actually. I was expecting [inaudible 00:30:16]-

Blake Droesch:

It's actually not that bad.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

You guys just got to dig there.

Marcus Johnson:

No, no, no.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

You just got an American dig.

Marcus Johnson:

It'd be higher in England. That's right, English people. I'm looking at you and Canada.

Blake Drosch:

Back it up next time.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

No, Canadians read everywhere. We have newspapers.

Marcus Johnson:

Canadians read. Suzy, you're up.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

So today, January 5th is Armenian Christmas Eve. It is also tomorrow will be Epiphany and Three Kings Day, and it's the end of the 12 days of Christmas, and in France they have these things called [foreign language 00:30:50] where they hide a coin or a toy in this like flat pancake looking cake thing, and you cut it into the number of pieces that are around the table, and then whoever gets the coin or the toy has luck for the year, so my Dinner Party Data is in a recent-ish study-

Marcus Johnson:

Recent-ish?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

... What percentage of people believe in some sort of luck?

Marcus Johnson:

What timeframe is that?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

68% of Americans believe in some sort of luck. Of the people polled, 31% of people who do not believe in luck still follow some sort of superstitions, which I think is kind of funny, and when you think about the different types of luck sort of activities and events, one in two

believe in beginner's luck, 44% of people pick up a penny. Do you know how many percent of people cross their fingers to indicate good luck?

Marcus Johnson:

Most.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

37%, which is kind of a little bit lower than I thought. Nearly 30% of people, I'm one of these, think that if a ladybug lands on you, it's for good luck.

Marcus Johnson:

Why?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

And I'm also one of these, do you guys know about the if you can't walk under a ladder, it's bad luck?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yes.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

One in four believe in that and don't walk. I'm one of those. If you ever see me in New York crossing the street in a weird spot, it's because there was a ladder. Anyways, it's a new year. I'm not going to say a new you because I think everybody should just be building on themselves and everybody hopefully will be lucky in any parts and all parts of their life this year.

Marcus Johnson:

So-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

How do we go from Armenian Christmas?

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Let me tell you, January 6th is Armenian Christmas and January 6th is also many other sort of symbolic things and traditions, which one of them is in France. It's when the Three Kings came and presented gifts, and it's when Jesus was presented to the world, so one of the things that they do in France is they have these [foreign language 00:32:46].

Marcus Johnson:

[inaudible 00:32:46] Simba.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

They have these little cakes where there is this toy in it that represents luck for the year. So, I just was curious about how people feel about luck.

Marcus Johnson:

Beginner's luck is just something that people say to themselves when they get beat by someone who they've just taught the game to.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Exactly.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Well, 58% of people-

Marcus Johnson:

Which is the worst [inaudible 00:33:07].

Suzy Davidkhanian:

... Believe in that. That is a thing, beginner's luck. The truth is that... You know what? Actually, as I was reading more about luck, it's a huge psychological phenomenon in terms of if you believe in luck, then apparently there are four things you do. If you believe in luck, then you look for opportunities, you take risks, you do all these things because you believe in luck, versus the exact opposite could be true. If you believe in fate and luck, you might not do

things that you should be doing because you're worried about it, so it's a very psychological thing, luck.

Marcus Johnson:

Interesting. The thing with beginner's luck, though, going back to it for a sec, is that no one... I was listening to what you said, kind of, is that no one says that about themselves. No one wins the first time around and goes, "Ah, it's just beginner's luck." You always say that about someone else. So when someone says it about you, you're like [inaudible 00:33:54]-

Blake Droesch:

You do when you're hustling someone.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Or if you're Canadian.

Marcus Johnson:

Whoa, that got dark.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Marcus, did you have a recent experience? Was this triggering to you, Suzy's stats? It sounds like it.

Marcus Johnson:

No, I'm just saying. It's just-

Blake Droesch:

I feel like Marcus got beat-

Stephanie Taglianetti:

You're really harping on it.

Blake Droesch:

... In like a one-on-one basketball match with like a 12-year-old.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yeah.

Blake Droesch:

And he's just really bitter.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

[inaudible 00:34:13] back.

Marcus Johnson:

He traveled. Why play if you're not going to abide by the rules?

Blake Droesch:

Most of time.

Marcus Johnson:

Lucky shot. Who's left? Stephanie.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I see Suzy and I still have our Christmas trees up. When do you think is a appropriate time to leave up Christmas decor after Christmas?

Marcus Johnson:

Not now.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

January 8th.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

January 8th? Why 8th?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Because it's after Armenian Christmas.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

No one has opinions on it?

Marcus Johnson:

I have an opinion, they should be taken down already, especially if they're in your background.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Not if you're Armenian or any Orthodox.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Well, honestly, this tree is acting as a nightlight for my new kittens who live in my office now.

Marcus Johnson:

That sounds like an excuse. Suzy, what I really want is just if you just push it, just push it over a bit.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Just topple it.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Like this?

Marcus Johnson:

No, no, no, other way.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

To the rest of the-

Marcus Johnson:

There you go.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yay.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Well-

Marcus Johnson:

[inaudible 00:35:04] is going to be furious.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Since Suzy and I are still-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Hey, Google, turn the light on.

Marcus Johnson:

Don't bother, Google. We haven't got time for it. Go on, Stephanie.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Suzy... Oh, it's so delayed.

Marcus Johnson:

Thank you.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I was really prepared for this Dinner Party Data and just frantically typed into Google random things about Christmas.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, good. Thanks for taking it seriously.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yeah, of course.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Was it like iGoogle or was it regular Google?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

It was regular. It's pedestrian Google. Did you know that there's actually over 630 kinds of species of Christmas trees? I thought that was absurdly high.

Marcus Johnson:

Species?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yes, species.

Marcus Johnson:

All right. 630 million?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

630. Million would be outrageous.

Marcus Johnson:

I know. Well, that's what pedestrian Google would do to me. I can't adjust it.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

But I also learned that Jingle Bells holds the Guinness record for being the first song ever played in outer space.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Wow.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

The crew of NASA's Gemini 6A space flight made history when they played Jingle Bells on December 16th, 1965. There's also a scientific-

Marcus Johnson:

Is that what you're going for though?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

What?

Marcus Johnson:

If it's the first-

Stephanie Taglianetti:

When you're in NASA, is that the record you play? In NASA, that's the record.

Marcus Johnson:

This is the first song you play. If you're up to space, you've got to play-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

It [inaudible 00:36:20]-

Marcus Johnson:

Dancing in the Moonlight, Toploader, a classic.

Blake Droesch:

That song didn't come out till the '70s.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

This was 1965, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

No, I'm just saying. It was just a more fitting choice.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I have two more.

Marcus Johnson:

40 years later.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Two more facts. There's a scientific theory by US scientists who worked out that if Santa Claus was real and had to visit all the homes of children, he'd have to visit 822 houses at 650 miles a second in order to reach all of the homes and deliver all the presents.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Wow.

Marcus Johnson:

One more time.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

He'd have to visit logistically 822 houses at 650 miles a second to get it all done.

Marcus Johnson:

Possible. This is a kid's show, Stephanie, I hope you know. And that is possible, children, that is possible.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Here's a juicy one. Two weeks before Christmas is the most popular time for couples to break up, and then-

Marcus Johnson:

Two weeks before Christmas?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Two weeks before, and then Christmas Day itself is the least popular day for couples to break up.

Marcus Johnson:

I should hope so.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

There you go.

Marcus Johnson:

Two weeks before, oh-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I'm surprised that's more popular than before Valentine's Day.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I'm sure-

Marcus Johnson:

Before Valentine's Day?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Before, this way you don't have to go through with it with that person that you're not really into.

Marcus Johnson:

Jesus.

Blake Droesch:

Or buy a gift.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Or buy a gift.

Marcus Johnson:

All right.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Take them out to dinner, buy them roses.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Do something nice.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Get them chocolate.

Marcus Johnson:

We must move on. This has gotten real dark. Very nice, I got one-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

There's nothing dark about Valentine's Day. We love Valentine's Day.

Marcus Johnson:

No, about you guys giving reasons why you should break up with someone ahead of time to save money and time. All right, I got one for you real quick, electric vehicle facts. I've got three and a half for you. One-

Stephanie Taglianetti:

A half?

Marcus Johnson:

Well, four, it's four. It's not really a fact. It's kind of a-

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Are you just going to stop saying it midway?

Marcus Johnson:

It's a piece of news. So, three facts in a piece of news about electric vehicles. One, the average range for EVs, electric vehicles, is significantly higher. As recent as 2021, the average range of an EV was just 220 miles, 350 kilometers for our friends who are in America, as well short of gas cars, the average range was over 400 miles, 660 kilometers, but today, there are multiple EVs that can offer 300 to 400 miles per charge. The Lucid Air offers over 500 miles. It's expensive though, it's \$140,000. Next one, number two, EV sales are on the rise. EVs now represent 8% of new auto sales in the US.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Wow.

Marcus Johnson:

Americans bought a record 1.5 million of them in 2023, according to BloombergNEF, about the same number sold that they sold in the previous five years total they sold last year. Most

young people, 18 to 34-year-olds will consider buying or leasing one next, versus one in five older folks according to YouGov. And then number three, top reasons to get an EV. What do we think?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Save-

Blake Droesch:

Save money.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

... Gas.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Money.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

On gas.

Marcus Johnson:

You guys, you're all about saving money.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

But the statistic is interesting about the increase, but how many more models are available? I think it's just much more available now, and they're all cheaper and there's the tax credit.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

No-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Is it that people are just more interested in those cars or there's just so many more options that are more affordable?

Marcus Johnson:

Certainly more options, yep. Yep, more affordable and good for the environment is what we were looking for. That's the number one reason to get an EV. You guys are the worst.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

How many of you guys have a car?

Marcus Johnson:

46%.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I do

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Is it an EV?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I wanted an EV, but when I went to the dealership, they said I'd have to wait six months to get the EV model, so I decided not to do that.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, interesting.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Because the inventory was all out of whack over the summer.

Marcus Johnson:

Well, reasons to not get it, too expensive, 61%, can't go as far, 36%, lack of charging stations, 32%, but other reasons to get one, good for the environment, then saves money, then you can charge it at home, which is cool. However, that leads nicely into a piece of news. You might not have to charge at home because Detroit is now home to America's first stretch of roads that can wirelessly charge an EV, whether it's parked or moving.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Wow.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

That's cool.

Marcus Johnson:

When an EV equipped with an approved receiver nears the in-road charging segment, the road transfers electricity wirelessly through a magnetic field.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Wow.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

That's not terrifying.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh, that you're going to get electrocuted?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, you can walk on it and stuff, that's fine.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh, cool.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

That's weird.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

The other thing about saving money is do you think you actually save money or your electricity bill is just three times more if you're charging it at home?

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, at home? Good point. I once read it was about a 10th of the cost of petrol, so as long as it's not... Then the other 90 cents to charge our home versus charging it elsewhere, I imagine it wouldn't be too much.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Do you have to pay if you're charging it somewhere else?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

I would imagine you have to pay the little charger.

Marcus Johnson:

The little charger.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Like at the grocery store? Yeah.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

They're at grocery stores?

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Yeah, my Stop & Shop has several.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

That's very cool.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

New Jersey, no one uses them.

Marcus Johnson:

Please don't be surprised by that. It's in New Jersey, wow.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

What the hell?

Marcus Johnson:

Ahead of its time. That's all we've got time for for today's episode. Thank you so much to my guests for being on the first episode of the 2024 Weekly Listen. Thank you to Stephanie.

Stephanie Taglianetti:

Thank you, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

Thank you to Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Thanks for having me back.

Marcus Johnson:

Of course. Thank you, Blake.

Blake Droesch:

Thanks, Marcus. Happy New Year.

Marcus Johnson:

Happy New Year, sir. This week's winner of the game of the week. Thank you to Victoria who edits the show, James who copy edits it, Stu who runs the team, Sophie does our social media, and Lance who helps us out with the video version of this podcast. Thanks, of course, to everyone for listening. We'll hopefully see you guys on Monday for the Behind the Numbers Daily and New Markets podcast. Happy weekend.