

The Weekly Listen: Buying items from TV shows, are online ratings broken, and can CNN and sports help Max?

Audio

On today's podcast episode, we discuss whether people will ever buy items they see in TV shows, if online ratings are broken, a relaunched Amazon Shipping trying to compete with UPS and FedEx, if CNN and sports can move the needle for streaming service Max, whether the continuing partnership between Target and Starbucks is boosting curbside pickup, where we got gas before gas stations, and more. Tune in to the discussion with our vice president of content Suzy Davidkhanian and analysts Blake Droesch and Paul Verna.

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Episode Transcript:

Marcus Johnson:

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their own bottom line and inflate costs at a time when every single marketing dollar counts. Awin's affiliate partnerships platform offers a real alternative to big tech and puts you back in control of your ad spend. Want to find out how? Visit awin.com/emarketer to learn more. Hello everyone, and thanks for hanging out with us for the Behind the Numbers Weekly Listen, an eMarketer podcast made possible by Awin. This is the Friday show that is trying out a new voice. Right, Suzy?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

That's me, yes.

Marcus Johnson:

Didn't you say you wanted to? You were like, "I'm going to try a new voice for this episode."

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I wanted to try a new character voice.

Marcus Johnson:

Suzy was like, "I want something a little bit more..."

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Deep.

Marcus Johnson:

Husky.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Hey.

Marcus Johnson:

That's how you described it, didn't you?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I didn't describe. I just said I was sick, are you sure you want me on the show?

Marcus Johnson:

It's got that gravel-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

And because-

Marcus Johnson:

... to it.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I'm amazing. You were like, "Obviously I want you to come back."

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, I didn't realize. You didn't say you were sick. You said you were trying out a new voice for no reason.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Okay, whatever. Luckily it's in writing.

Marcus Johnson:

I'm your host Marcus Johnson. In today's show, will people eventually buy items in shows?

Paul Verna:

How bad does the show have to be for you to hit pause to buy something and not wait until the end of the show, the way you might if you're watching it on Disney or Netflix?

Marcus Johnson:

Are online ratings broken?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I think like any other piece of data, if you don't use it in the right context, it's useless, but when used in the right way, it's very important.

Marcus Johnson:

Can a relaunched Amazon shipping compete with FedEx and UPS?

Blake Droesch:

We've been seeing initiative after initiative that Amazon has come out with, over the last couple of years, to really take control of the fulfillment and delivery ecosystem.

Marcus Johnson:

Can using sports move the needle for Max? Target expands its Starbucks partnership to grow curbside pickup. And where did gas stations come from? Join me. In this episode we have three people. Let's meet them. We start with our senior analyst covering everything retail based out of New York City, it's Blake Droesch.

Blake Droesch:

Hello everyone.

Marcus Johnson:

Hey Chap. We're also joined by the Vice President of Content who heads up the retail team based out of New York as well. It's Suzy Davidkhanian.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Hey everyone.

Marcus Johnson:

Hey Suzy. Finally, we have our principal analyst who heads up our digital advertising and media desk based out of New York, just above the city. It's Paul Verna.

Paul Verna:

Great to be here as always.

Marcus Johnson:

Hello. Hello. We have in store for you, we have a story of the week, we play a game and then we end with some trivia. Let's just get to it. We start, of course, with the story of the week. Will people eventually buy items in shows? Recent economist article notes that Citadel, a thriller on Amazon Prime Video, shows what happens when the world's biggest online retailer, Amazon, becomes one of the biggest entertainment producers as the article explains. As bullets fly around a high-speed train carrying a former Miss World and a gang of spies through

the Italian Alps, shopping is surely the last thing on viewers' minds. Yet, should they press pause on the show, they will see an option to buy items from the show. The heroine's gold necklace, her red dress or the teetering stilettos in which she is improbably running rings around the villains. This is from that economist article, basically offering up the question of whether people will eventually buy items in shows. What do we think folks?

Paul Verna:

Well, this is not a new concept. I mean, Disney and Netflix have done it very well in the streaming world. What Amazon has going for them, of course, is they have this infrastructure, this retail infrastructure in place. Anything that is featured on one of their shows or movies is naturally going to drive people to buy it right on Amazon if they choose to. I think they have an advantage here. But as far as the concept itself, I mean, it's probably as old as entertainment.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

You mean shopping is?

Paul Verna:

Well, I mean interesting-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I'm just joking.

Paul Verna:

I mean, getting people interested in buying things they see in shows or movies, everything from-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

It's like sponsored marketing kind of, right?

Paul Verna:

Yeah, I mean if you think about all the product placement that's happening now on pretty much everywhere, it's pervasive. I have a friend who is going to Sicily mostly because of White Lotus.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Marketers dream.

Paul Verna:

So that's not a direct benefit to Netflix, which streams that show, but it certainly underscores just what people are willing to do when they're inspired by something they see on a screen.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I totally agree in that it's not new and that people... We are studying, Blake, especially, is studying, and we're trying to do a new forecast on shoppable media. It is very clear that there is a delineation between being inspired by a TV show and being able to purchase the things you see. But I do think it'll just depend on how intrusive it is and how easy it is. I actually think Amazon has it maybe a little bit harder because there are more friction points. In this particular instance, there's only three items from what she's wearing that are up for grabs. But what if you want something else that's not there and all of a sudden that causes some friction?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Or what if there's something that's up for grabs that's part of the program, but then Amazon doesn't have the inventory to deliver to where you live? I think there are going to be a lot of friction points before it becomes truly natural. But as Paul said, there are many other ways that it's happening, whether it's Netflix. Macy's tried this reality show with a couple of other retailers where fashion designers showcase their work and then, lo and behold, whatever they wanted to buy on the show made it into the store not as successful because I think they just didn't iron out the kinks. But that's probably the most important part. It's how do you make it easy?

Marcus Johnson:

So people may be inspired by what they see in shows and then go buy it, whether that is direct product placement or whether that accidentally happens because of a location that's featured in the show or otherwise, but there's no direct click through onto that item and into a store. Correct? If someone presses pause, for example.

Blake Drosch:

Like that hasn't existed before, is-

Marcus Johnson:

No, I'm saying-

Blake Droesch:

... what you're saying?

Marcus Johnson:

Well, Paul, you were saying about Netflix and Disney already being involved in this. But we don't have a bunch of people sat on their couches at home who are pausing something, seeing that they can, "Oh, there's that LeBron James jersey," because I'm watching a Lakers game and it shows me that I can buy that jersey through the TV and I press on it and I go through to the NBA store and I buy it through the television. That's not happening.

Paul Verna:

Not that I know of. But I have a feeling that with Amazon, especially if they're doing this in a thriller-type show, I mean, how bad does the show have to be for you to hit pause to buy something and not wait until the end of the show the way you might if you're watching it on Disney or Netflix?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Funny.

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, I mean the goal with any type of shoppable media, the dream is that it flattens the marketing funnel from discovery to purchase. But as you pointed out, that's not really the way people shop. The advantage for Amazon is basically to use their website and the data that they gather because they know what you're watching and they know how you shop, to link the two to hopefully create some resonance with products that may be seen on the show. But even, I think, with the type of products that you talked about in this example, it's probably things like apparel that requires some more decision-making.

Blake Droesch:

But even with some of the consumer studies that I've done in the grocery and CPG space where you have products that are lower costs and are probably way more conducive to

impulse buying, people are still not really enacting this type of behavior in terms of shoppable recipes and things like that. It seems to me like an even further stretch that there's going to be impulse shopping for accessories and apparel from television shows in the way that Amazon seems to be positioning it in an ideal scenario.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

But I wonder if that's also because we're just not conditioned to do it yet. To Paul's point, nobody's pausing a TV show without realizing they're going to do that to make a purchase of a dress. But if we start thinking about it like livestreaming where it's not really we're not doing it yet, but we think that there is potential for certain product categories and for certain use cases, maybe there is for this too, although probably Thriller is not the right show.

Paul Verna:

Like when I watch Citadel, I'm definitely going to buy those stilettos, but I'm just not going to do it in the moment.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I do think that there is no data play here either personally, but I do... The article keeps going on about Prime might start introducing advertising and there I see the closed loop where Amazon knows what you're already buying. If you're on Prime, they'll try and convince their advertisers that they understand who their audience is and will service, me, for example, Oreo cookies and Blake, Chips Ahoy!.

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, I mean, well they already do that with their free ad-supported streaming service. Is it called Freevee now? It used to be IMDb TV. But the problem is that it doesn't attract a ton of eyeballs because the content isn't really that good. I think that's what this all comes back to, that if Amazon's going to try and work this model, then content becomes king. It's not necessarily as much about the data and the connectivity between the media and the storefront, but if people aren't watching the shows, then nobody's going to be interested in buying the products.

Paul Verna:

Yeah, and Amazon now has a huge audience with Thursday Night Football to which, of course, they serve ads as well, so they can connect a lot of those dots.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

That's the thing. I really do think it's for the NFL, that even the distinction between Coors and Miller or other brands that you prefer, if they start to see what your activity is, then you're much more engaged if they service that to you. They can convince an advertiser that their platform is worth more money because they know exactly who the audience is and what they're buying.

Blake Droesch:

Right. So if I'm watching Thursday Night Football in a few weeks and I want to buy Aaron Rodger's jersey, oh wait, no-

Paul Verna:

You're out of luck. You'll have a better chance of buying a-

Marcus Johnson:

Soon. Jets fan.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I didn't get that one.

Marcus Johnson:

I'm sorry. You know what we're talking about, right, Suzy? You get it?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

No idea.

Marcus Johnson:

Of course.

Paul Verna:

You'll have a better chance, Blake, of buying a jelly filled twinkie.

Blake Droesch:

I was at the game though, so I will say that I did witness probably the final moment of Aaron Rodgers's career with the Jets.

Marcus Johnson:

Brutal. A lot of this discussion is around watching shows on a TV, on a CTV. A lot of streaming does happen on the computer, so maybe people will be more likely to click through to an item if they can use their mouse. Maybe CTVs could use a mouse, easier to navigate around than using the controller. But-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

At the end of the day, if it's not easy and the viewer doesn't realize that they're also being treated as a consumer, then it's not going to work. It doesn't matter what the platform is.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, maybe you don't want it then and there by the products, but maybe being able to just throw it into your cart for later to have a look at it, revisit it, is the play. All right folks, that's what we've got time for, for the story of the week. We've got to move on to the game of the week. Today's game, what's the point?

Marcus Johnson:

I read out four stories and Suzy, Blake and Paul would give us their main takeaway of the story. Okay answers get one point, good answers get two and answers that give you the same feeling as zero balance on your credit card, a feeling that no one has ever experienced, answers that leave you without feeling, they get you three points. Each person gets 20 seconds to answer before they hear this. The bell. If you run long, it's minus two points. Whoever has the most points wins gets the last word. Let's do it. We start with Paul for round one. Our online ratings broken, questions Ian Bogost of the Atlantic. He thinks the root of the problem is that a request for your feedback is actually a means to accrue data. E.g, the demand to know if you'd recommend us to a friend indicates the pursuit of a net promoter score. A doctor who asks for a rating is likely just trying to raise their local search-engine rankings so new patients can find their practice, Mr. Bogost writes. But Paul, our online ratings broken. What's the point?

Paul Verna:

They've been broken for a very long time because they now are at a point where every single thing you do generates a survey and it's just gotten to where I will stop answering or I'll give negative reviews just because I'm annoyed at getting the survey.

Marcus Johnson:

Suzy?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I have such a different perspective. I think this article was absurd the way he talked about ratings. I definitely agree that we're being bombarded by requests at every part of the journey and that's wrong and that a brand should work together across all the different parts of the operation and send one survey towards the end of the experience. I think having, obviously, positive reviews helps increase conversion, so it's really important. I think like any other piece of data, if you don't use it in the right context, it's useless, but when used in the right way, it's very important. I really, really, really believe in these and I think everybody should be doing them and you should only be doing them because you believe in whatever you're giving them, not because you're annoyed.

Marcus Johnson:

Blake?

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, I think that from a lot of the data that I look at, ratings and reviews are still extremely influential. I mean it's basically the first thing that most consumers do after the awareness stage when they become aware of a product or begin a journey. So figuring out a way to, I think, legitimize the public end of rating and reviews is going to be very important going forward to maintain the consumer confidence in it, which is going to have to mean that people are going to have to trust what's happening on the backend as well. This is a little bit beside the point, but I wonder how much harder it's going to be to verify and legitimize these types of reviews once brands and small businesses can start using AI to generate a lot of potentially fraudulent feedback. I do think it is something that you're going to be hearing a lot more of just the verification and the ways that ratings and reviews and surveys are conducted in the coming years.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Can I just add one thing? Sorry.

Marcus Johnson:

Please.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I do think it's really important that if you are taking the time to ask your consumer whether they made a purchase or not, because sometimes you get a survey for not making a purchase, that you use the data so that you understand if the bathroom wasn't clean and there were a lot of thumbs down that you do something about it. If you're asking for it, then use the data to make a difference in your business.

Paul Verna:

Yeah, for sure.

Marcus Johnson:

That's a good point. Blake, to your point about reviews being important, still very significant. A PWC studies showing that customer reviews are a slightly wider used research tool before a purchase than speaking to other people or using social media. However, a lot of folks, most folks still use search-engines, go to Amazon or head directly to the retailer's website to do product research. However, there was one example of a company just packing in when it comes to reviews. Insider Intelligence Retail Briefing's analyst, Rachel Wolff was pointing out that e-commerce marketplace Zalando will no longer show customer reviews or give shoppers the option to leave one. Why? Number one, because so few people leave reviews on its site. A single bad one could have an outsized impact on the brand's sales and reputation. And number two, it frees the company up from the headache of having to police fake and misleading reviews.

Marcus Johnson:

Round two, we start with Suzy. Can a relaunched Amazon Shipping compete with FedEx and UPS? Amazon has resurrected its ground shipping service that it paused back in 2020 due to the pandemic. As our retail analyst, Zach Stambaugh explains, Amazon sellers can now use Amazon Shipping even if they are shipping from their own warehouses. It can also handle

delivery for products sold on other marketplaces like eBay or sellers own websites. But Suzy, Amazon relaunching Amazon Shipping, what's the point?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I think the point is that it's not so much that can they compete with UPS and FedEx as much as Amazon is always trying to figure out a way to integrate all of their different business units to maintain its brand identity, especially when it comes to fast shipping and to be able to create new revenue streams. They paused it because wasn't working really well for them, for whatever reason, there are many and the list is too long to go over. But they've realized that now that everything has settled back and there isn't this influx of online shipping that they need to figure out how to recreate that sticky ecosystem to get people to keep coming back to them and to continue to make more money.

Marcus Johnson:

Blake?

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, I mean if you own all of this entire fulfillment network, then why not use it? We've been seeing initiative after initiative that Amazon has come out with over the last couple of years to really take control of the fulfillment and delivery ecosystem, not only for brands that are on their website and selling on their website, but for other retailers, with Cheap, with Prime and a bunch of other adjacent programs. But really what this is about is creating a business presence in so many different places and over time attracting more sellers into its network so it can have more control of the data and then eventually greater market share in these different categories. Amazon has done so well with large brands that the future is really going after these different pockets where they might be underpenetrated and I think this is part of their long game.

Marcus Johnson:

Paul?

Paul Verna:

Can I just ask for a clarification before I answer? This article by Zach said that Amazon had paused the program in 2020. So what are all the Amazon trucks that I see every single day

and have seen, if not Amazon shipping?

Blake Droesch:

Amazon Shipping is different than Amazon Logistics. Amazon Logistics is basically them delivering packages that are bought on their marketplace. Amazon Shipping is specifically for packages that are not being delivered from an Amazon warehouse.

Paul Verna:

Okay.

Marcus Johnson:

That's a great question.

Paul Verna:

I guess my takeaway here is that I would assume that part of the calculation for Amazon is saving money on their FedEx and UPS contracts, which I would assume also that they're going to continue those contracts but maybe are able to downscale them. In terms of the infrastructure and extending this service to all Amazon sellers on the network, that makes a lot of sense to me, so I agree with Blake on that. It just seems that this is another case where the rich get richer where Amazon has deployed this massive shipping and logistics infrastructure, and why not continue along that path and make even more of it.

Marcus Johnson:

All right, at the halfway mark. Paul is ahead with four points, Suzy and Blake in joint second with three a piece. We start with Blake for round three. Can news, CNN in this instance, and sports move the needle for streaming service, Max? Two pieces of news here. Number one, Isabella Simonetti and Joe Flint, the Wall Street Journal, recently wrote that Warner Brothers Discovery, WBD for short, is adding a CNN-branded live news service for its Max platform that will carry original programming and content from CNN's cable channel. CNN Max, as it's called, will be available to US Max subscribers from the end of September at no additional cost. Second piece of news here is that Max will reportedly start offering free sports later this year for a few months, writes Emma Roth of the Verge. She notes that using this promo WBD hopes to attract more viewers by showing live NBA, MLB and NHL games. But Blake, can news and sports move the needle for Max? What's the point?

Blake Droesch:

Well, it's complicated. I guess we'll start with the news first. I think the news, no, we've already seen what a colossal disaster CNN's previous premium streaming service, I think, was it plus it wasn't CNN-

Marcus Johnson:

CNN+

Blake Droesch:

CNN+ which lasted for 48 hours basically, one news cycle. So that no. I mean younger folks are not typically watching CNN at the rate that older people are watching cable news and they're still on cable. Sports, perhaps. However, when I hear about some games across different leagues, as a sports fan, that's very annoying to me. That doesn't create a good experience if I'm someone who watches the NBA, but I have to jump from platform to platform. So yes, if I already subscribe to the service, sure it's great to have an extra game. But if I'm a super fan, I'm probably already getting access and if I don't, it's annoying to have to go. So maybe good for Max in general, but not good for the sports organizations to keep fracturing up the viewership.

Marcus Johnson:

Paul?

Paul Verna:

On the news part of it. The fact that they're launching another over the top news service around CNN is living proof that the original debacle with CNN+ was purely political because really they're coming back and doing the same thing. Though, I will say one key difference is this is free, whereas the other one they were actually going to charge a subscription for CNN+. So there's that. There's also the fact that CNN is a very well established news brand, to the extent that you're going to try to serve news to people, you might as well do it with that brand. We all know that this company has definitely had problems with branding.

Paul Verna:

On the sports front, I agree with Blake. I also think that if you offer sports as a freebie, it's only going to lead to at some point charging and charging more. It kind of sets people up for a bad

user experience. But I think it's kind of a mood point because, again, to Blake's point, most people who are subscribing to sports are doing it because they are super fans. Giving someone like a one month or three month trial doesn't really serve that audience.

Marcus Johnson:

Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

So I agree with everything. The question was phrased in an interesting way for me because it's like who is this servicing? Is it CNN and the sports people or is it Max? Because I think they each have different things to gain. CNN is looking for a younger audience. They clearly couldn't figure it out on themselves whether it was paid or not paid. I think this lends itself well to getting a whole new audience that they don't typically get. But to Blake's point, does that younger audience actually tune in? So just by being part of Max, does that mean people will be watching CNN? Probably not. Then this, I don't know enough about sports, so I didn't even think about how you're splintering the audience. What I was thinking more along the lines of was like it's trickery to give me something for free and then have me pay for it. If you only have some of the different leagues, but not NFL, which I thought was the most popular sport in the US, then does that make me want to buy Max more? Probably not.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, I think the difference between the two is important. CNN Max versus CNN+, which is now shut down as we mentioned. So CNN+ used to cost \$6 a month and it didn't have CNN's highest profile content. It had some tangentially related shows, kind of like ESPN+. It wasn't ESPN, the main channel, it was some shows that were sports content surrounding the main channel. The hope is giving folks the real highest profile CNN content and giving it to them for free will make a difference. In this article saying that they're trying to combat a multi-year rating slump starting to hit the bottom line, so looking to do something to change that. Let's move to round four. Double points round four. Paul still ahead with six. Suzy and Blake just behind on five. We start with Paul for round four. Target is expanding its Starbucks partnership to grow curbside pickup orders, writes our very own Rachel Wolff. She notes that the expansion to over 1,700 stores will be completed by October. But Paul, Target expanding its Starbucks partnership to grow curbside pickup orders, what's the point?

Paul Verna:

Well, they need all the help they can get, Target, and Starbucks is definitely a magnet. What I'm wondering is why this is just about curbside pickup and not Starbucks in Target stores because that seems to be a very effective partnership as well. I mean selfishly I use it a lot because I know Starbucks always has the best wifi. So if I need to use wifi, I might go into a Target store knowing they have a Starbucks and I might be more inclined to make a Target purchase.

Marcus Johnson:

Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

So I agree, there's no point in that. I think that curbside pickup is a service that every retailer should be offering. If you're trying to differentiate yourself by having Starbucks available at the car, that's amazing. But I don't understand the stat around how 20% more bigger baskets because you're not going to buy more at curbside pickup just because there's Starbucks. I think to Paul's point, having the Starbucks in the store, which I think a lot of them have it, and you do store pickup, is excellent because then all of a sudden you're going to maybe potentially buy other things. So unless the Starbucks curbside increases frequency of making random purchases at Target, I don't think there's a point.

Marcus Johnson:

Blake.

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, I agree. Obviously Target is very proud of this idea. They seem to really love totting this example. And it is a good idea, but I will just, caveat, that our forecast shows curbside pickup users basically plateauing from here on out. That market's kind of maxed out. But in-store pickup users are set to increase. As Suzy mentioned, it's always more advantageous to get customers in the store and that future partnerships and other marketing collaboration should really be centered around the in-store pickup offering, not so much curbside.

Marcus Johnson:

Great points folks. Yeah, Blake, to your numbers about curbside being flat. 72 million folks in the states doing curbside and then going into the store to pick up stuff is still inching up.

That's at 94 million, so higher than curbside. More folks likely to do that than curbside. But Target, they're trying to boost online shopping growth. We estimate Target's e-commerce sales will grow only 3% this year versus Walmart's 13%. Last year, Target's online shopping was an even lower, 1.4%. Currently, of Target's online orders, about 40% are click and collect, but that share is flat, has been for a couple of years. All right folks, at the end of a hideously low scoring game of the week, we take a drum roll.

Blake Droesch:

It was pretty solid all around.

Paul Verna:

It was pretty poor.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I think that's so rude. And we got minus two.

Marcus Johnson:

Eight points for Paul, seven and seven for Suzy and Blake, so Paul wins. Congratulations to Paul.

Paul Verna:

It's kind of a backhanded compliment. You won but everybody sucked. You just sucked a little bit less.

Marcus Johnson:

It wasn't your best performance people. So that's just what the numbers say. It was eight point-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

That's not nice.

Marcus Johnson:

That's just what the numbers say.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

The arbitrary super subjective numbers.

Marcus Johnson:

It's official. The official numbers. Paul, congratulations.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Congratulations.

Marcus Johnson:

You did need to do much to beat Suzy and Blake this week, but you did enough. Eight points.

Paul Verna:

I don't like to over-excite myself.

Marcus Johnson:

And the last word.

Paul Verna:

The last word. Wow. Okay. Actually-

Marcus Johnson:

Actually this score is pretty low. Maybe it's not really deserving of the last word. Let's just move on. Let's just move past it.

Paul Verna:

You make the rules, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

Go on.

Paul Verna:

I do have the last words if you still want to hear them. But-

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, go on. Just a few words. Just half of them.

Paul Verna:

A few words about Pips and if you're wondering what the heck I'm talking about, I can't blame you. But do yourself a favor and Google Gladys Knight and the Pips specifically their signature hit, Midnight Train to Georgia. What you'll hear if you listen to that song is that her backing band and backup singers who are, of course the Pips, they're back there egging her on and repeating and amplifying what she's saying. Sometimes they're anticipating her maybe like a high school drama teacher who feeds a line to a kid on stage and sometimes they're just singing along in harmony. But the way they do it is always fun and pleasant and constructive and understated. So they're never trying to upstage her or contradict her. They're just backing her up and building her up. I just want to make a nod to those particular Pips, but also to wish for all of us that we all have our own Pips. I think it would make the world a more beautiful and more harmonious place. So there, Pips.

Marcus Johnson:

I think that really saved the segment to be honest because it was pretty awful up until that point. But it's a nice sentiment, Paul. Well-played.

Paul Verna:

Marcus Johnson and the Pips.

Marcus Johnson:

We ended strong here.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Marcus Johnson-

Marcus Johnson:

Anyway, that's what we got time for, for the game of the week. It's time now for dinner party data. It's the part of the show where we tell you about the most interesting thing we've learned this week. We start with Paul because he won. He only needed eight points to do it, but he won nonetheless.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Well, what's the highest scoring game, come on?

Blake Droesch:

It's usually about eight points.

Marcus Johnson:

Not this one. No, there's strong double figures, normally. Max gets comfortably into double figures. Blake, I think you've been there before.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Wait, what's the number... What's the highest value-

Blake Droesch:

That's a miracle.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

... per question? Four points?

Marcus Johnson:

What's the highest value per question? You can get total of 15. So it's not-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

15. Okay. I'm sorry-

Marcus Johnson:

It's pretty bad.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

... he got more than half.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, he did.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

It's like an eight.

Marcus Johnson:

It's not Paul I'm talking about really.

Blake Droesch:

It's C. I got a C. What's the record? I want to know. What was like the Kobe Bryant 81 point game?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh, you're asking for too much now.

Marcus Johnson:

Probably Mark Dolliver.

Blake Droesch:

Oh yeah, Mark. That man put up numbers.

Paul Verna:

He did.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I don't even know who that is.

Marcus Johnson:

Mark... He's only-

Paul Verna:

He was in the Hall of Famer.

Marcus Johnson:

... in the Hall of Fame. Head to Canton, Ohio. You'll see him in the Hall of Fame.

Blake Droesch:

The Black Mamba of the Weekly Listen.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Wow.

Paul Verna:

I still think we should have him back on the show one of these days.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, we should. Mark, we miss you. All right Paul, you're up.

Paul Verna:

So dinner party data. So this is in honor of International Women's Day, which is today. It's officially March 8th, but I always say when it comes around every year, that every day should be International Women's Day. So that's today. This is not a very encouraging report from the World Economic Forum about the gender gap index, which measures gender parity across economics, politics, health, and education. So this report noted that at the rate of change that the world is going through, it will take 131 years for the world to close that gender gap and it ranks-

Marcus Johnson:

We don't have that long. We definitely don't have that long.

Paul Verna:

Yeah, we don't have that long. No. It should happen today on International Women's Day. But it also ranks countries by where they are. Iceland has closed 91% of the gender gap while Afghanistan has closed just 40% of it. It's worth noting that, Marcus, the UK is ranked 15, which is not great. But I mean sometimes as we know, you can win without scoring a lot of points. US has ranked 43rd and Saudi Arabia 131st. So there's obviously a very big gap. But bottom line is everybody should just get their act together and work toward gender parity today, not in a hundred and something years. Just saying.

Marcus Johnson:

It'd be nice to not have to bring these numbers up at all because there wouldn't be anything to talk about. But unfortunately there is. Paul, very good numbers to kick us off. Suzy, you're up next.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Well, mine's not quite that meaningful because I wanted to talk to you all about Happy Hour.

Marcus Johnson:

Here we go. Okay.

Paul Verna:

Every day is happy hour as well, Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

My dad is visiting and one of the things we do when he comes is go and do Oyster Happy Hour. So I wanted to find out more about Happy Hour and the term. So do you all know how it started?

Marcus Johnson:

Yes.

Paul Verna:

Enlighten us. I have no idea. You know Marcus?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh, Marcus, do you know?

Marcus Johnson:

No, I'm kidding.

Blake Droesch:

It starts around two o'clock every day, right?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

That too.

Paul Verna:

Thank God.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay, we'll talk after this show, Blake.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

1913, '14, depending on who you follow, the US Navy. It started with the US Navy. They used to do weekly entertainment programs to alleviate boredom with live music and dancing and movies and other things. It didn't include alcohol. Alcohol started during the prohibition in the '20s and '30s where Americans had to get together at speakeasies or people's houses to drink before they went out to dinner because they couldn't drink at dinner. So they had a cocktail hour before going out. And so it became a euphemism for a secret and festive hour. Today it's what we do as a collective where you get a good deal. In the 1960s, they started doing discounts on food and drink as a way to lure people into restaurants. However, because of binge-drinking, did you know that there are certain states in the US that have prohibited Happy Hour?

Paul Verna:

I didn't know that.

Blake Droesch:

Massachusetts.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Correct. One of the first-

Paul Verna:

You're kidding.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Massachusetts-

Paul Verna:

I didn't know that.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

... implemented a ban in 1984. Alcohol has to be the same price throughout the day because they don't want it to be a bad influence.

Blake Droesch:

Thanks Boston.

Marcus Johnson:

I feel like Blake's got something to do with that, given the earlier calls.

Blake Droesch:

Hey, hey. I've only been there a few times.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

The good news about Happy Hours is that according to Restaurant Tally Group, it increases the number of transactions during Happy Hours by 24%. According to YouGov, slightly dated research, so I'm sure the numbers are even higher now, it's 45% of people who attend an office Happy Hour do so to get to know their colleagues better. They believe that it increases their happiness by 66%. So go to Happy Hour, but don't binge-drink.

Paul Verna:

I'll raise a glass to that.

Marcus Johnson:

Blake, you're up.

Blake Droesch:

Last week the Rolling Stones announced the upcoming release of their 26th American studio album, which is coming out on October 20th. It's called Hackney Diamonds. When the album comes out, Mick Jagger will be 80 years old and Keith Richards will be 79 years old. I did a little bit of poking around to see who... I tried to find who the oldest touring musician from

that era was. So obviously there are some of them, a lot of them, actually are still around. Not all of them are still putting out albums. Not all of them are still touring. But there are obviously some big name that are still out there on the circuit. So one of which obviously is Bob Dylan. Bob Dylan's currently on the Never Ending Tour, which is going from, I think, 2021 to 2024. He's 82 years old.

Blake Droesch:

But older than Bob Dylan is the blues guitarist. More of an influence on sort of that crop, the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan, but Buddy Guy, blues guitarist, who's 87 years old and is still touring. The oldest musician that I've found, a popular musician that is still touring is Willie Nelson, who's currently 90 years old and is still out there doing it. It's good to know that if you're Mick Jagger and Keith Richards that they maybe still got another decade of touring in front of them.

Marcus Johnson:

That's a lot. I'm just trying to get to 50.

Paul Verna:

This gives you an idea how old I am, but the first time I saw the Rolling Stones was on the Steel Wheels tour in 1989. The joke at the time was it was the Steel Wheelchairs tour. So that was what, 34 years ago. So here they are, still doing it. I think they're going-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

How did they let you-

Paul Verna:

... to keep doing it.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

... into the show? You were a toddler.

Paul Verna:

I had a fake ID.

Marcus Johnson:

Ah, Paul.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Got it.

Marcus Johnson:

This changes everything.

Blake Droesch:

Take it that way.

Paul Verna:

Thank you Suzy.

Marcus Johnson:

Unbelievable. All right folks, we've got one for you real quick. Where gas stations came from. So there are 145,000 gas stations in America, according to the National Association of Convenience Stores. There are about 200,000 in the mid-nineties, so there are less today. In the days of motoring before dedicated gas stations, motorist bought gasoline from hardware stores, general stores, pharmacies, et cetera. That's because these businesses already had relationships with the refineries through their sale of kerosene used for stoves and as a lighting fuel. The fuel was poured into the car's gas tank using a funnel. Due to rather obvious fire danger, gas started to get sold at filling stations according to the 1994 book, *The Gas Station in America* by John Jakle and Keith Sculle. Where and when the first gasoline station appeared is difficult to establish since various types of stations appeared on the American scene between 1907 and 1913, they write.

Marcus Johnson:

And so in 1905, the first dedicated gas station is established in St. Louis according to one source, St. Louis, Missouri at 420 South Theresa Avenue. In 1907, two years later, the first service station is established. It was installed by Standard Oil of California. It's now Chevron in Seattle, Washington, in what is now Pier 32. A service station is different in that it's a gas station, but it also offers other services, oil changes, repairs, stuff like that. So gas station 1905, service station 1907. But the oldest existing gas station in the US still going today is

Reighard's gas station in Altoona, Pennsylvania, which is two hours east of Pittsburgh, established in 1909 and it's still there.

Paul Verna:

Who knew?

Marcus Johnson:

4.8 stars on Google.

Blake Droesch:

Were those authentic reviews or have they been verified?

Marcus Johnson:

They've been verified.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I thought the Corn Palace Place or the Wall Drug or whatever that place is in the middle of America, was the oldest pre-gas station, sort of a place where the horses came to get fed and watered and whatever else, rested.

Marcus Johnson:

Is this a real place?

Paul Verna:

The horses actually went there for Happy Hour.

Marcus Johnson:

Is this a real thing, Suzy? Or like when you made up crater moon.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I didn't make up crater moon. That's a real thing.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay, sure.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

It's in the Dakotas. No, it's truly a real thing. The Wall Drug thing is also real. It's like the gigantic drugstore in the middle of the country.

Marcus Johnson:

Are you sure about this?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I'm going to Google it and send it to you.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay. But there is, speaking of giant establishments in the middle of the country, this past summer, Buc-ee's opened the world's largest gas station in Sevierville, Tennessee. 74,000 square foot location with 120 gas pumps that employs over 350 people. America, what are we doing? How stressful? Is it stressful enough going to a gas station?

Paul Verna:

It is. More than six pumps. It's just too much.

Marcus Johnson:

It's chaos. 120.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I wonder what they'll do when all the cars are electric.

Paul Verna:

Well, that's interesting you bring that up, Suzy. Because when Marcus set up this segment, I thought he was going to maybe talk about... I know he introduced it as where did gas stations come from? But I read an article recently about what is going to happen. It turns out it's really hard to decommission a gas station because they have a lot of underground storage tanks that you can't just shut them down. Not exactly like shutting down a nuclear power plant, but there's a lot of aspects to it that have to be considered where you just can't convert a gas station to an electric recharge station or even anything else. I think we're going to have to reckon with that somehow over time as more electric cars hit the roads.

Marcus Johnson:

Because you do see a lot of them, don't you? You see a lot of them like decommissioned, but they're still there and you wonder why they haven't been cleared away. So that's a really interesting point, Paul. That's what we've got time for for today's episode. Thank you so much to my guests. Thank you to Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Thanks for having me.

Marcus Johnson:

Feel better. Thank you to Blake.

Blake Droesch:

Thanks again.

Marcus Johnson:

And thank you to Paul this week's winner of the Game of the Week.

Paul Verna:

Always a pleasure.

Marcus Johnson:

Thank you, of course, to Victoria who edits the show, James, who copy edits it and Stu who runs the team. Thanks to everyone for listening in. You can head to [behindthenumbers_podcast](#) at Instagram if you want. You don't have to. We'll see you guys Monday hopefully for Behind the Numbers daily, a new eMarketer podcast made possible by Awin. Happy weekends.