

The Weekly Listen: Twitter becomes X, a billboard in your living room, and why Airbnb has no loyalty program

Audio

On today's episode, we discuss what to make of Twitter changing its name to X, whether Walmart is crushing Amazon in the grocery wars, what a billboard in your living room would look like, what Gen Z has done to the purchase funnel, why Airbnb doesn't have a loyalty program, what the most popular museums around the world are, and more. Tune in to the discussion with our vice president of content Suzy Davidkhanian and analysts Blake Droesch and Carina Perkins.

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Episode Transcript:

Marcus Johnson:

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Hello everyone and thanks for hanging out with us for the Behind the Numbers' Weekly Listen, and eMarketer podcast made possible by Verisk Marketing Solutions. This is the Friday show that still buys their movie tickets in person. Some of us do, don't we, Suzy?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Yes.

Marcus Johnson:

Do you still buy your airline tickets from the airline desk at the airport?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Doesn't everybody?

Marcus Johnson:

Good God, we must move on. Oh my goodness. I'm your host Marcus Johnson who doesn't buy stickers that way like everyone else. In today's show, Twitter becomes X.

Blake Droesch:

If I'm an advertiser, I'm still in the sort of wait and see moment to just see where Twitter or whatever it becomes is when Elon is done sort of shaking the box up.

Marcus Johnson:

Is Walmart trouncing Amazon in the grocery wars?

Carina Perkins:

Some people want to visit a grocery store for interaction, other people want to just pick out the freshest ingredients or they like to browse the aisles for inspiration. Some people don't want to pay a delivery fee. But whatever the reason, it means that Amazon is just that, it's such a huge disadvantage without the sort of store network that its rivals have.

Marcus Johnson:

A billboard for your living room.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I can't imagine that you would want to have a running sort of billboard style mechanism in your house that has a camera sensory that can watch what you're doing. It just doesn't make sense, for me.

Marcus Johnson:

Our Gen Z is upending the purchase funnel. Why don't Airbnb have a loyalty program? And we'll talk about the most popular museums in the world.

Join me for this episode. We have three people. Let's meet them. We start by meeting someone who's first Weekly Listen, this is... She is one of our senior analysts covering everything, UK and Western Europe, with an emphasis on retail, based on the south coast of England. It's Carina Perkins.

Carina Perkins:

Hi, Marcus. Very excited to be on.

Marcus Johnson:

Hello. Your tone suggests otherwise. "Thanks, Marcus. Happy to be here." We made her be here.

We're also joined by Blake Droesch, who is one of our senior analysts on the retail and eCommerce team, based out of New York. Hey, fella.

Blake Droesch:

Good to be here, Marcus, I suppose.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay.

Carina Perkins:

Genuinely.

Marcus Johnson:

And finally, we're joined by one of our vice presidents of contents, heads up the retail eCommerce desk, based out of New York as well. It's Suzy Davidkhanian.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Hi, everyone.

Marcus Johnson:

There we go.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I win. I'm totally winning this week.

Marcus Johnson:

You don't win-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I did-

Marcus Johnson:

It doesn't mean you win.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

... I just won.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay. Which mean did, past tense. That's what we're doing?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay. What do we have? So, for you, this week, well, we have a story of the week. Of course, we'll talk about Twitter becoming X. What does that mean? Then, we move to the game of the

week. Suzy will probably lose. It's called, What's the Point? In our panel, Suzy, Carina and Blake will give us the best takeaways they can from each of the four stories we have for you, and then we move to Dinner Party Data. We'll just chat about some random stuff we just recently learned. We start, of course, from the story of the week.

Twitter becomes X. Sara Morrison of Vox writes, welcome to X, the wannabe super app, formerly known as Twitter. What's happening? Well, Elon Musk just rolled out a new X logo on Twitter. He owns Twitter, now X, kind of replaces the signature blue bird called Larry after Larry Bird. Very clever. Mr. Musk who bought Twitter last year has long described his vision of an everything app that new Twitter or X CEO, Lindy Yaccarino describes as including audio, video messaging, and banking capabilities.

Folks, we'll start here. What do we make of this move from Twitter to kind of become X, but it's still called Twitter?

Blake Droesch:

Well, I don't think that the name change is really going to do anything to make a difference to the Twitter platform. I think the small but active user base is going to remain small but active, no matter what the site is called, just as long as the core functions of the user experience remain intact or as they are right now.

But on the other hand, I also don't think it's going to do anything to help Twitter's prospects as a business. The advertising is still plummeting and the other monetization efforts don't really seem to be catching on. But I guess, what it does say to me is that, Elon Musk's idea here isn't really making Twitter financially viable as a standalone app. I think he just has his sights on creating this super app, and if he could turn something like payments or banking or some other aspect of it into the profit center, then in theory it could subsidize the feature like Twitter. But that's a pretty big if, right? Because he still needs to build this giant new app.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. It seems like it came out of nowhere, but it didn't, at all. It's plenty of tea leaves if you were reading them.

So, a couple here. 1999, Mr. Musk developed a concept for a one-stop everything store to handle anything and everything financial, banking, credit cards, digital purchases, investments,

loans. This former online banking startup, X.com, later became PayPal. Now, if you go to x.com, it's Twitter. But he started PayPal, which was X.com.

Also, it's in the name of his space exploration company that he started in 2002, SpaceX. It's the name of his car company, Tesla's SUV. The Model X is in the name of his new AI startup, X.ai. One of his kids' names starts with an X, and then it's a bunch of letters and numbers. He explicitly said he wants to turn Twitter into X, the everything app. And back in October, he said, "Buying Twitter was an accelerant to creating X, the everything app." And Twitter said in April that they legally filed, that the company had a new name called X Corp. So, maybe it should be less surprising than it seems.

Carina Perkins:

What I find really fascinating here, and maybe it's a lesson about rebranding, dos and don'ts, is that, if they've had so much time to prepare, and this has been in his mind for such a long time, I find it really strange that they've changed the logo on site, but it still says Twitter all over it, it's still got a big blue button saying tweet.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah.

Carina Perkins:

That's what I find really bizarre. It's like a kind of half job of a rebrand and it seems really rushed, and I'm interested to know why that has been so rushed.

And also, there's all of these issues with other companies owning trademarks relating to certain goods and services for X. So, it's something that's been brewing for a long time, but it doesn't feel like a particularly well-thought-out strategy at the same time.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Well, I feel like, to your point, it seems like a lot of starts and stops. And yes, the starts and stops stay back for a long time, but nothing seems to be moving in the same direction. And so, he's literally building a company or a new vision on the go. Or as they say, flying the airplane before it's built.

What I find even more fascinating is, nevermind that he's wiping out all of that brand love and all of the value of the Twitter brand, which is in the billions and billions of dollars, is that it's an

interim X. The logo that they put up isn't even the real logo yet.

Blake Droesch:

Right.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

There's a chance they're going to change that logo. Like, how many times are businesses who have the little logos at the bottom of the different ways you can contact them, are going to change that logo out? I mean, it's just absurd. The back and forth, the seemingly unorganized way of doing something is just mind-blowing. And I wonder if Linda knew about all... I'm calling her Linda. I wonder if she knew. She's my friend. I wonder if she knew. I'm going to have to ask her. Did she know that all this was coming when she got hired? Because that does not bode well, as Greena said, for Marketers toolkit.

Carina Perkins:

Apparently, the police got called because they were removing the letter, the Twitter from the HQ, and there was a big confusion because they hadn't notified authorities that they were going to be doing that. So, the police got called, and it just ended up with ER and the logo on the building which, again, I think just points to this. It's something which has, perhaps, been brewing in his mind for a long time, but I'm not sure how long it's been a kind of carefully thought out strategy for the company.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Just seems so irrational, in some ways, right?

Marcus Johnson:

It definitely feels like one or the other. Like, he sat down to play Checkers, and he's actually playing either Uno or 3D chess. He's playing one of the two extremes, either none of it's thought out and it's kind of cobbled together on the fly, or he has this vision, and he's always had this vision, and buying Twitter, getting rid of a lot of the staff, and changing some of the roles that the company they want to focus on, focusing less on advertisers and advertising,

knowing that in the future we're going to rely less on advertising. He was saying recently that Twitter ad revenue is down 50%, maybe that's because they know they're going to rely less on advertising because they're trying to turn Twitter, which is now kind of X into this super app.

And so, it brings me to the next question. So, WeChat, in China, it's kind of the gold standard of super apps, acts like, basically, opening a browser on your computer. It's the thing you do before you do anything else. Message people, read the news, buy things, pay rent, book doctor's appointments. So, you do everything in this WeChat app in China. He wants to create a similar type of app in the US. Is a super app even possible?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Before I answer that question, because I do have thoughts on that. I think one of the things that CEOs, owners sometimes forget is, you might want to do something, but if you don't have the customer base... Like, if you think about JCPenney and Ron Johnson, you might want to create a town square in the middle of JCPenney, and get rid of the coupons, and just do every day at low pricing. But if your current consumer is not with you on that track, and if you're not going to court a new consumer, then it doesn't matter.

So, for the super app, can we have one? Is Twitter the base? I'm not sure that that is true. Can this idea of Twitter as what was once thought of as the town square be sort of thought more broadly as a super app, kind of? Because if you think about it, like a town square, there's the market that's there, that comes once a week, people go there and hang out and chat, people exchange ideas.

So, I do think you can build community, and so then a super app around a town square concept. I just think that the way he's going about it seems so... I don't know if the right word is delusional. I don't know what the right word to use. Is like, irrational, just like unthought out.

But to your point, Marcus, maybe it's all part of a plan and he's trying to get everybody down to surprise them with a big wit.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah.

Carina Perkins:

I mean, I wonder as well, just because you can do something... And I have no doubt that he could build something like that. But do people actually want it? I mean, I don't know about the rest of you, but I don't wake up every day thinking, "Oh, I wish there was one app that I could open, that I could do everything in." And China, and the internet, and eCommerce have developed in a very different way than we have developed in the West. And you can see that in social commerce. And everyone is desperate for live-streaming to be a success in the US and in Europe. But is it a success? Not so much because consumers aren't sort of desperately wanting that.

So, build it and they will come, is not necessarily true in this case, I think. Unless, it's genuinely answering a problem that people have.

Marcus Johnson:

Right. People in the West tab, a lot of the-

Carina Perkins:

Exactly that.

Marcus Johnson:

... examples that... They're all outside the US, trying to reach out-

Carina Perkins:

Exactly.

Marcus Johnson:

... India's [inaudible 00:11:55], Indonesia's Gojek.

Carina Perkins:

Exactly that.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

And I think Uber will probably be a more successful sort of super app. It's halfway there than would Twitter turned X.

Marcus Johnson:

So, this was one of my points is that, do you need to be a super app to succeed in the West? Because we've gone from app to super app, without thinking there's anything in between. And maybe just a multipurpose app is enough.

Uber, to your point, Suzy, does ride hailing and food delivery and grocery delivery and things like that. On Facebook, you can message people and buy and sell things and watch videos. And so, maybe an app that does three or four or five things is good enough. It doesn't have to be WeChat, which does 30 plus things. We'll see.

Carina Perkins:

Exactly that. You can see the benefit to the super app of having everyone do it on their platform, but what's the benefit to the user?

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. Yeah.

So, Jason Goldman, former head of product at Twitter says, "It doesn't make a lot of sense to replace a globally recognized brand with a generic placeholder symbol." We talked about Twitter admitting that ad revenue is down 50%. Quick thought here, folks. I mean, how are advertisers going to feel in this moment and over the coming weeks, month, two?

Blake Droesch:

I don't think it's going to really make any difference. I mean, it's not like... The name is different, but the reputation's the same. The reputation comes with it, the ad tools come with it, the audience comes with it. If I'm an advertiser, I'm still in the sort of wait and see moment to just see where Twitter or whatever it becomes, is when Elon is done sort of shaking the box up. And it's clear that he's definitely not done, yet. So, I think it's still just very much wait and see. But there are plenty of other places to spend your money.

Carina Perkins:

I don't think the kind of rebrand in itself is necessarily going to put advertisers off. But potentially, the chaos around it, might.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. I was going to say, it certainly adds to the uncertainty to the tornado that's been swelling around this company since he bought it last year. And yeah, trust issues is one thing. Syracuse University professor, Jennifer Grigiel, she was telling MPR that, "I'm not sure Mr. Musk has enough trust from his user base to get people to actually exchange money or attach any type of financial institution to this app." Adding that, "Mr. Musk hurt Twitter's integrity with decisions like removing blue checks, firing thousands of Twitter staff, and reinstating problematic accounts." So, trust issues for advertisers, also for users.

On the other hand, journalism professor at the University of Cincinnati, Jeffrey Blevins thinks that Mr. Musk has dismayed a significant portion of Twitter users, so much that a rebranding can't hurt, saying that, "This could be a way maybe to try to save it essentially by destroying it and recreating it as something else." "This could be seen to help it in terms of a counter PR move to the Threads launch, reinvigorating the Twitter brand," the Wall Street Journal was suggesting.

But one thing, I think, is important to note, the regulatory hurdles trying to build a super app in the US could be very tricky. That's what we've got time for. The story of the week. We'll keep an eye on this, of course. Time now for the game of the week. Today's game, What's the Point?

Where I read out four stories and have contestants, Suzy, Carina, and Blake, tell us what they think is the main takeaway of the story.

Okay answers get one point, good answers get two. And answers that leave you with the same feeling as, actually thinking of a perfect comeback in the moment and not two weeks later, aka, how Suzy feels after most shows. If answers leave you with that feeling, they get you three points.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Nobody thought that was a big one.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. Fair.

Each person gets 20 seconds to answer before they hear this, if you run long.

So, Carina, what's your favorite sport? Let's use an analogy from your favorite sport.

Carina Perkins:

Oh, good luck with that. Eventing.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

No, he doesn't-

Marcus Johnson:

One more time?

Carina Perkins:

Eventing.

Marcus Johnson:

Eventing?

Carina Perkins:

Eventing. Yeah, it's a three-stage horse sport.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay, pick again.

Blake Droesch:

Are there penalties in that?

Carina Perkins:

There are penalties in that, yeah.

Blake Droesch:

What penalty do you have?

Carina Perkins:

It's all about penalties. So, when you are doing your dressage, which is the first stage, you get penalties for any mistakes that you make or incorrect movements. When you do the show

jumping, you get penalties for any fences that are knocked down or refused. And on the cross country, similarly, you get penalties for hitting fences and/or falling off.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay. So, we'll go with football. So, football or soccer?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Wait, the rider falls off the horse?

Carina Perkins:

Oh, sometimes, yeah.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Wow. And they're not disqualified, it's just penalties-

Carina Perkins:

No, they are now disqualified.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh.

Carina Perkins:

Actually, yeah, if they fall. Yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

You shouldn't be in that tournament.

Marcus Johnson:

[inaudible 00:16:33] to injury. After you've fallen off, you're also disqualified.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I mean...

Marcus Johnson:

In blinding pain, and you're also out the competition.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

What we're going to is we're going use football. Thank you so much for suggesting. If you could just say football, we can cut that in, and then cut everything else you've said. That'd be really helpful.

Carina, your favorite sport?

Carina Perkins:

Football. But when-

Marcus Johnson:

Perfect.

Carina Perkins:

... I talk about football, I'm talking about soccer because I'm in the UK.

Marcus Johnson:

Hello? I see what she's done. She speaks American. So, yeah, football, soccer, if you run long, then you get yellow card and minus two points. Two yellows gets you a red, and ascending off. Whoever has the most points, wins, gets the last word. Let's play. We start with round one, of course. Carina is going to go first for us.

Is Walmart trouncing Amazon in the grocery wars? A recent economist article suggests that Walmart is more of a threat to the eCommerce giant than the other way around. Threat to Amazon than the other way around. The piece suggests that since its \$14 billion acquisition of Whole Foods in 2017, Amazon has treated grocery more like a science experiment, and notes that Walmart's lead is huge, saying that it has the largest footprint in America, close to 5,000

outlets versus around 500 for Whole Foods, 44 Amazon fresh stores, and 22 Amazon go shops.

But Carina, is Walmart trouncing Amazon in the grocery wars? What's the point?

Carina Perkins:

So, my take on this is, actually, it's not just about Amazon and Walmart, it's also about Amazon and the big groceries in the UK. And it's all around the complexity of grocery. So, that's partly because of the various logistical challenges around selling fresh food instead of goods, but it's also has to do with the fact that people have quite an emotional relationship with food and drink, and they tend to have quite strong loyalties with their grocery chains. So, it's possible to convince people to change their supermarket, and we've seen that with the success of the discount chains in the UK, but it's not really that easy.

And I think that Amazon is going about it all wrong. So, if you look at the ideas they discuss at the beginning of the article, there was an ice cream truck for adults selling porterhouse steaks or a single cow burger. It's really wider, the mark, when it comes to fulfilling what people need or want from grocery retailers. And to an extent, the same applies to Amazon's just walkout stores, which are all about convenience, when actually people are really worried, at the moment, about price. And what people really want from grocery is decent food that they can trust, at a price that they can afford week in, week out. And it's what the established grocery chains are really good at delivering, but it's really difficult to achieve while turning a profit, especially without long-established supply networks, expertise and experience that the big grocery players have.

And crucially, for Amazon, food is the one thing that people really like to buy in person. Some people want to visit a grocery store for interaction, other people want to just pick out the freshest ingredients, or they like to browse the aisles for inspiration, some people don't want to pay a delivery fee. But whatever the reason, it means that Amazon is just that such a huge disadvantage without the sort of store network that its rivals have. On the flip side, its rivals moving more into general merchandise and copying Amazon's third party model is a relatively simple step.

So, again, I think it's at a disadvantage there, especially as we're going to see people spending more on food and drink, and less on non-essentials. So, that's my take.

Marcus Johnson:

It wasn't close to 20 seconds, but it was an excellent answer.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I was wondering if she was going to be like the rider who fell off the horse and just got disqualified.

Carina Perkins:

I thought I was going to get buzzed when I was at time.

Marcus Johnson:

No, no, no.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

This is self-measured.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. Well, not, is the-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

That was awesome. I love it. It's her first time. I think we leave it.

Carina Perkins:

Yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

We do leave it. We give her a warning. But it was an excellent answer. Blake, anything to add? Probably not-

Blake Droesch:

That that was a great answer, but... I felt like I was watching a football match, because I wasn't sure when it was going to end.

I'll give the... Even though this was a article in The Economist, it's a good take. The US side of it is that, I think it will be far easier for Walmart. I agree to expand and grow in eCommerce than

it will for Amazon, which doesn't have a physical grocery presence to really catch up in grocery.

I think from a forecast perspective, I see that Walmart could actually take much larger gains in the US digital grocery market over Amazon in the coming years, especially as click and collect starts to fuel more and more of the digital grocery growth. But the catch is that, that's only grocery. Amazon has about 37% of US eCommerce market share, while Walmart has about six. And that's a huge difference, and I don't really see that budging significantly in any direction in the near future.

Marcus Johnson:

Suzy?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I'm just going to only add that the... It's funny that the war is heating up. I think we wouldn't be saying that if it wasn't post-COVID. I think, before COVID, there was no war. It was very clear that Amazon was winning. I think it's interesting to compare them because they have different customer profiles, they have different merchandise mix, and they have a different channel mix. So, comparing the entirety the way we have been, just doesn't make sense. Comparing business by business, like Blake and Carina have said, Amazon is definitely losing when it comes to grocery, and the idea that people don't want to interact with folks when they go to the store and just do the walkout technology, seems absurd.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. Big part of why you go to stores or leave the house.

Yeah. Two points for me. One, Walmart rules brick and mortar, or rules the brick and mortar world, and grocery is brick and mortar. Just 10% of America's \$800 billion food shopping business is done online, the article is noting. That means, 90% is done in brick and mortar land.

The second point is, physical store sales are a tiny piece of Amazon's business. They only account for about 4% of its earnings. So, just not a priority at the moment.

We moved to round two. We start with Blake. A billboard for the living room. Megan Graham at the Wall Street Journal explains that a startup called, Telly, has begun sending free smart TVs to US homes. The catch, it comes with an attached lower screen to display targeted ads,

news, scores, et cetera, when the TV is on and even when it's off, if people so choose. Telly is offering programmatic advertising with plans to introduce its own self-serve platform as well. Around 250,000 people in the US have signed up to get Telly sets in the first week, that they were offered in May. Telly planners to ship 500,000, half a million, by the years end.

For Blake, a billboard for the living room. What's the point?

Blake Droesch:

I think the feature itself really isn't all that terrible, at least from a personal perspective. Like, if I'm working from home and I have the news on in the background, then I wouldn't actually mind seeing a stock ticker or sports scores flash across the bottom of the screen. But if the value proposition for Telly is reaching the non-TV audience, so the younger audience, I wonder if that type of behavior is really common enough to make it work. I think having the TV on in the background all day is kind of an older person's habit, and younger people don't really use their televisions that way.

I also think it's weird that the TV has a sensor in it, that detects whether people are present, and in what quantity the article says. I think that's really going to freak people out. And I think it's also going to disappoint advertisers, because if the point of this, like I said, is like having that TV on in the background, they're going to realize how much of their ad spending on TV is just wasted on an empty TV screen. No one's watching.

Marcus Johnson:

Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

The article did say you can have the bottom on without the TV being on, it's just a different setting. The truth is that, I am never going to be an entrepreneur because I think this is a horrible idea. I can't imagine that you would want to have a running sort of billboard style mechanism in your house that has a camera, like Blake was saying, a sensory that can watch what you're doing. It just doesn't make sense, for me.

I think gone are the days where TVs were so expensive, that people didn't want to buy them. Like, I can't even imagine how they got those 200,000 people. They did say that the average household income was 50,000 and more. And so, even that is... That's maybe not everybody's target market, that household income, right? I think it's all very confusing.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay, Carina, you are up.

Carina Perkins:

Okay.

Marcus Johnson:

I have to stress brevity.

Carina Perkins:

Brevity. So, I actually love this, and I think it's a really great example of the value exchange when it comes to data privacy.

I think what I really like about it is that, we're being tracked by brands and companies every time we use our smartphone. And I just love the fact that they're being really upfront about it. It's like, we are going to track you, we are going to take this data from you, we're going to put a camera on it, but you get a free TV. So, people have the choice then, don't they?

And I think, actually, a lot of Gen Z, in particular, they're quite comfortable with sharing their data, as long as the people are kind of truthful about how it's going to be used and they're really upfront about that value exchange. So, I think, actually, it's quite a good idea.

Marcus Johnson:

Nice folks. Well, the halfway mark. Let's count the scores. Everyone's on five. Carina had three points in the first round, to Blake and Suzy's two a piece. And then, Blake and Suzy had slightly better answers in the second round, so they get the three points. But we tied up on five, heading into round three.

We start with Suzy for round three. Our Gen Z upending the purchase funnel. A recent Edelman Trust Barometer report thinks so. Julia Hood of our sister company, Business Insider, writes that the purchase is often the starting point for the brand relationship, not the final step, running counter to the traditional purchase funnel model. The Edelman report notes that Gen Z's true relationship with brands often begins at purchase, and is too dynamic for a linear funnel.

Suzy, Gen Z is upending the purchase funnel. What's the point?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I think the title is a little bit off in the article. What I do think, though, which is an interesting concept as we talk a lot about how the path to purchase is no longer linear, that now it's much more... Lots of different ups and downs before you make a final decision, lots of different touch points before you get there. I like the idea of it being a loop in that, sometimes, brands forget that once the purchase has been made and you've converted them, to keep them engaged with your brand. I think the way they talk about the relationship post purchase is a little bit inaccurate because you will never get someone to buy from you, unless they feel strongly about you. Of course, if you're bred or some sort of... Even that is no longer basic, right? If you're some basic item, then the relationship doesn't matter. But nothing is basic anymore.

So, I just think that phrased inaccurately, but the idea of the loop is very interesting and one that everybody should be aware of.

Marcus Johnson:

Carina.

Carina Perkins:

To be honest, I'm not convinced that purchase is the endpoint for any consumer anymore, regardless of age, to be honest. And I think the funnel collapsed in on itself a little while ago, and that consumers relationships with brands have been dynamic for quite a long time.

For me, the really interesting point here was the kind of expectations that Gen Z have around ethical and social issues. And they were more likely to stay than any other age group, that they want companies to make their values clear. And I think that's a really difficult point for brands because we've seen some brands trying to market on social issues or environmental issues, and then run in trouble with that.

So, I think that's a real kind of conundrum, and I think it really comes down to just being truthful because if a brand has a value that they're willing to stand by, then that is something that will attract Gen Z. And also, if they do get a backlash, they can kind of truthfully stand by it.

Marcus Johnson:

Blake.

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, I agree. I think the article does definitely take some liberties in assuming that Gen Z doesn't also find things that attract them or make them loyal to the brand before they make the purchase. And it also doesn't show comparisons to other generations to detail how different they are.

I think what it does get right is that, while discovery and awareness are still super important, so is it that the brands leverage social and other digital activities to keep customers engaged with the brand after they make a purchase? Because that's just a way to build long-term brand affinity that wasn't really possible 15 years ago. And the way it is now, you can try really hard to get someone who's purchased a product to keep coming back to your website through things like email marketing, whatever. But social media is just such a powerful touch point that I think that's really the takeaway from this article, that post purchase engagement. There's just more opportunity for it now.

Marcus Johnson:

Very nice, folks. Still all tied up. Seven the piece, sending into round four. Double points, round four, of course. We start with Carina. We're talking about why Airbnb doesn't have a loyalty program like everyone else, which was a piece written by Alison Pohle of the Journal. She points out that, travel loyalty programs are popular with consumers who enjoy flight upgrades and booking hotels with points. But up until now, Airbnb has held out for one reason or another. However, a new rewards program from the Expedia group, which owns vacation rental site, Vrbo and Hotels.com, could put pressure on Airbnb.

But Carina, Airbnb not having loyalty program, what's the point?

Carina Perkins:

For me, this is really about the fact that Airbnb thinks that it's too successful to bother with a loyalty program. And in some ways, I think it's kind of right. It doesn't have a loyalty program where some of its rivals do, but it recorded its best fourth quarter ever in 2022, and it continues to grow and dominate the competition. And I think that's just because it's really focused on its unique brand proposition and a great customer experience, and it really proves that loyalty programs are an element of loyalty, but they're not everything to loyalty. It's not

all about offering discounts to loyal members, it's also about offering just a really, really good product that people can't get exactly the same elsewhere. And I think that Airbnb is doing that.

Marcus Johnson:

Blake.

Blake Droesch:

I don't know if I agree that Airbnb has a fantastic customer experience strictly because of the fact that, within the home sharing model, a lot of the experience is up to the relationship between the host and the person renting or staying at the location. And in that sense, I think that rewards points are actually a great way to improve the quality of the home sharing model, because guests could get additional rewards points for higher ratings, which would incentivize good behavior while hosts could have their own rewards network that might be look a little bit different and reward points for higher ratings, which would incentivize them to provide a better quality of stay. And if those things sort of come and meet together through some sort of program, then that actually could rise the tide and make the quality of Airbnb experiences across the board a lot better than it is now.

Marcus Johnson:

Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

My take is a little bit hybrid in that, I do agree that Airbnb thought... It was a little bit naive in that they thought they were the first mover. They didn't really identify their competition in the right way. It's not just home sharing, but it's also RV rentals and it's camping and it's hotels. So, I think their view was very narrow and they were very successful. But it's not enough anymore. Budgets are tightening, the experiences are not always consistent. I hadn't thought about the double reward system, but I was thinking like, can you reward consumers for their loyalty, without it being points? Like, flowers in the room or bottle of champagne or some other sort of... Special pillows that you love. Something that helps you feel, as a consumer, known, recognized, loved, and rewarded that is easy to do, that is still within their business model of the Airbnb. Because like Blake said, it's all about the hosts, right? I do think that, as times are

changing, competition is increasing for share of wallet, that Airbnb is going to need to do something to stand out from all these other competitors.

Marcus Johnson:

Very nice, folks. Heck of a game plays. This might be some of the highest scores we've had, ever. If not, in a while.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Carina, this is just for you.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. So, we count the scores. And at the end of the game... A drum roll that Victoria puts into the show. Thank you for that.

Blake is this week's winner of the game of the week. 13 for Blake, Suzy and Carina with 11 a piece in a joint seconds. And just for the listeners, before we hit record, Carina said she won't come back on, unless she won. So, this is goodbye from Carina. This is last you'll hear from her.

Carina Perkins:

It was nice to be on.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

No, write in-

Marcus Johnson:

You can see Carina on other shows such as *Around the World* and *Reimagining Retail*.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Or write in and protest, so that she comes back.

Marcus Johnson:

You don't have to do that. We don't read any of the messages.

Okay. I'm kidding, we read them more. We get one a year.

So, Blake, you win. Congratulations. Very close at the end, though. Some great suggestions. Blake, your point about Airbnb and the rewards, if you... The more stars you get, maybe the more points you get. And then, Suzy, I like your idea about unique ways to enhance the experience, whether that is flowers in the room or some kind of additional experiential perk. We quite call Blake get the championship. And of course, the last word.

Blake Droesch:

Well, I will say that I did pander a little bit to Marcus in that last response because I know that he travels frequently and likely uses Airbnb.

Marcus Johnson:

Maybe.

Blake Droesch:

And he values human decency, so...

Marcus Johnson:

Exactly.

Blake Droesch:

And good behavior.

Marcus Johnson:

When you said pandering, I thought you were going to talk about a conversation last week when you were finally admitting that the English do some good foods, one of which is the sausage roll.

Blake Droesch:

I never said that. I never said that. I don't know what-

Marcus Johnson:

Don't do that, Blake.

Blake Droesch:

... you're talking about. I never said-

Marcus Johnson:

I recorded it.

Blake Droesch:

... such thing. No, you didn't. That was-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I thought it was Shepherd's pie?

Blake Droesch:

The conversation that you're alluding to, in which I may have made some remarks that... That's not totally accurate. That was a non-recorded private meeting that we had, that I didn't know was on record. All right?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

What is a sausage roll, anyways?

Marcus Johnson:

So good.

Blake Droesch:

A sausage roll is-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Like a pig in a blanket?

Blake Droesch:

Yeah. It's basically like a pig in a blanket that you have with brown sauce.

Marcus Johnson:

Let's move on. It's time now for Dinner Party Data.

It's the bar of the show where we tell about the most interesting thing we've learned this week.

Blake, one. Here goes first.

Blake Droesch:

So, this is some data from Instacart that, in honor of July being National Ice Cream Month, they released some data on the top selling ice cream flavors from each US state. Now, vanilla was hands down the most purchased ice cream flavor in every state. So, this is actually a list starting at number two. And actually, pretty surprising that moose tracks is the top ice cream flavor in 12 states. That was the highest number two. I don't even really know what is in moose tracks. I think it's like chocolate with... It also has marshmallow and nuts in it, but it's weird. And then, the four-way tie for third place was between rocky road... I mean, that's mediocre. Green tea. Hard pass on green tea. Coffee, yes, but you have to be in the mood for it. And birthday cake, yeah, sure.

I just thought it was weird. And then, I obviously looked my home state of New York and found that pistachio was the most popular.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh, yeah.

Blake Droesch:

Lot of variety here. Can't say it's a very appetizing list.

Marcus Johnson:

Crowds of New York? No.

Blake Droesch:

Or... Yeah.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I'm shocked that chocolate, strawberry, like those ones aren't on it.

Marcus Johnson:

Moose track?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Nobody even knows what that is.

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, moose tracks.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Chocolate chip.

Marcus Johnson:

That sounds horrible.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I mean, there's so many other more... And-

Marcus Johnson:

What are our favorites here? Suzy, favorite?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Chocolate chip. I also... Peanut butter and chocolate.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, yeah, you were... It was nearly good. Carina?

Carina Perkins:

Mine, mint choco chip or pistachio.

Marcus Johnson:

Mint choco chip? Yes, pistachio.

Carina Perkins:

I'm with New York.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Hazelnut is really good, too.

Marcus Johnson:

No. Blake?

Blake Droesch:

There's a ice cream place in New York that makes its own ice cream, and they have an olive oil based ice cream that they usually mix in with fruit flavors, like blueberry or like blood orange. Best ice cream you could ever have.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

What is it called?

Marcus Johnson:

Very nice.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Or tell me later.

Blake Droesch:

It's called... No, I'll say it on the podcast because it's gotten very popular over the last couple of years. It's called Caffè Panna.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh, I know it.

Blake Droesch:

It's on Irving.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I totally know it.

Blake Droesch:

And if anybody from Caffè Panna is listening to this free promotion that I'm giving, I'm open to-

Marcus Johnson:

Blake [inaudible 00:37:28].

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, I'm open to free ice cream.

Marcus Johnson:

There we go.

Blake Droesch:

I'll keep talking about it.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

We just went there like two weeks ago. The lines are ridiculous.

Blake Droesch:

Well, like going to the movies, you need to order online ahead of time.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh, they do-

Marcus Johnson:

Thank you, Blake, that's how-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

... online ordering?

Marcus Johnson:

... normal people do.

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, they do. Yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

The answer we were looking for was vanilla. Vanilla, folks. Unfortunately, no one wins that round.

We move now to Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

This week is a very famous, globally famous person's 80th birthday. Can you guys guess who?

Marcus Johnson:

Mick Jagger.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Yes. I was shocked. He was born in 1943. Obviously, the lead singer of the Rolling Stones. I think and Googled their best known for, the song, Satisfaction. That was released 1965, when he was 22.

So, can you guys guess what was one of the world changing events according to a fun fact website that I found? Nachos were invented in Mexico in 1943. Did you-

Marcus Johnson:

Wait, how did we end up there?

Carina Perkins:

How did we get from Mick Jagger?

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Because I was doing-

Marcus Johnson:

That was when he was born.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Yeah, he was born. You guys, come on.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, okay. Also in the year he was born. Okay.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

How did you not follow?

Marcus Johnson:

Lost me as well, Carina. I don't know what she was talking about.

Carina Perkins:

My first ever live gig was the Rolling Stones at Wembley Stadium.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh, wow.

Carina Perkins:

Ruined me for live music for the rest of my life.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh, yeah.

Carina Perkins:

I can't get any better than that.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

No, he's probably 70 then. Yeah.

Carina Perkins:

No, I'm not that young.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Did you-

Carina Perkins:

I didn't see my first gig at 30.

Marcus Johnson:

Sorry, Suzy, go ahead.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

No, that's okay. I just have two more. Did you know-

Marcus Johnson:

Okay.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

... that due to the war, there was a shortage of American football players, so the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Philadelphia Eagles merged into a team called the Steagles.

Marcus Johnson:

The Steagles, yeah.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

And the most famous American that year was Betty Grable, who had 42 films, grossed over a hundred million dollars, was the best paid, highest paid actress and actors that star in Hollywood. And in 1943, she had two movies. Whereas, now, our stars take like five years to make a movie. She had two movies in 1943.

Marcus Johnson:

Very nice. Very nice, indeed. Carina, you're up.

Carina Perkins:

I've got some global facts for you. So, the first one is that, the Eiffel Tower can be 15 centimeters taller in the summer than it is in the winter due to thermal expansion, which heats up the iron and the particles gain kinetic energy and take up more space.

Marcus Johnson:

Who's measuring that? Someone at the very top is gone.

Carina Perkins:

There's someone that sits there. Yeah. That's 15 centimeters above what it was in November.

Marcus Johnson:

And someone says, "Gary, get down from there. No one cares."

Carina Perkins:

Still, no one cares. My second one, which is my favorite one, is that, Australia is wider than the moon.

Marcus Johnson:

Wow.

Carina Perkins:

So, apparently, the moon is 3,400 kilometers in diameter. And Australia, from east to west, is almost 4,000. And I love this because from a really geeky eCommerce point of view, that must be an absolute nightmare for fulfillment. And it, perhaps, explains why Amazon Prime members in Australia only get two-day delivery, not next day, unless they live in certain postcodes in Sydney and Melbourne.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. Trevor, who's delivered in Australia, anytime he gets pulled up by his manager, "I'm not getting things to people fast enough." He's like, "It's bigger than the moon."

Carina Perkins:

Bigger than the moon.

Marcus Johnson:

"I'm doing my best."

Suzy Davidkhanian:

You know what I took away from that?

Marcus Johnson:

That's a good excuse.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

That the moon is gigantic. I had no idea how big the moon was. No.

Marcus Johnson:

Suzy's like looking out into the...

Suzy Davidkhanian:

It looks like a penny-sized, and the moon is not even the biggest star.

Marcus Johnson:

It's not.

Blake Droesch:

It's not a star.

Marcus Johnson:

It's not... No. Yeah.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

It's not a planet. Then, what is it?

Blake Droesch:

It's a moon.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Stop.

Blake Droesch:

Like, it's not the moon, it's a moon. We just refer to it as the moon, because it's earth's moon, but other planets have moons.

Marcus Johnson:

It's the moon.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Victoria, take this out. I cannot have my nieces hear this.

Marcus Johnson:

Yes.

Blake Droesch:

I hope they're not coming to you for homework advice. My goodness.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

No, they're probably Googling it. They're asking Google.

Blake Droesch:

Yeah, as they should.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

No, they're not. They're absolutely not. They believe in the honor code of their school and are doing their homework by themselves.

Blake Droesch:

Well played.

Marcus Johnson:

All right. I've got one for you real quick. It's by museums around the world. It's a three facts. One, The Art Newspapers Visitor Figures 2022 reported that, 141 million visits were paid to the top 100 museums in that year, in 2022. That's twice as many as 2021, three times as many as 2020. But it's just over 60% of pre-pandemic 2019 levels when 230 million people were reported to have visited the top 100 museums in the world.

Point two, before the pandemic in 2019, the top five most visited museums in the world were... You guys guess one?

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Yes. The Louvre?

Marcus Johnson:

Yes.

Blake Droesch:

The Louvre, the Met and the... I think it's the national gallery in China.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

And the one in London.

Carina Perkins:

The National History Museum.

Marcus Johnson:

Wow. You guys nearly got all of them. So, number... I'll go in reverse order. Number five, the British Museum. Number four, the Met in New York. Number three, the Vatican Museums. Number two is the National Museum of China. And number one is the Louvre in Paris. That was then as of 2022, though, because of travel restrictions and people still not traveling as much as they used to.

As of 2022, the Louvre is still in number one, Vatican Museums jumped into second place, London's Natural History Museum is now moved onto the leaderboard at three, the British Museum in London is up one place to fourth, and rounding out the new top five is Washington DC's National Museum of Natural History.

The third fact is that, the Louvre or the Louvre Museum, the National Art Museum of Paris in France is the world's most visited museum. In 2019, the Parisian landmark was pulling in nearly 10 million visitors a year. That's 3000 visitors each of the six days of a week they're open. That would be 4,000 visitors per hour, 61 per minute. Well, put another way, one person visits the Louvre every second they are open.

Carina Perkins:

Does it expand in the summer, though?

Marcus Johnson:

Gary?

Carina Perkins:

Otherwise, I'm not interested.

Blake Droesch:

We've made a lot of jokes about buying your tickets ahead of time on this podcast, but please, for the love of God, if you're going to the Louvre, buy your tickets ahead of time.

Marcus Johnson:

Yes.

Blake Droesch:

Because you cannot just walk into that place.

Marcus Johnson:

Although the one time I've been, I did just walk in. I think, maybe, it was like free. It was like a free-

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Oh, yeah, they do that.

Marcus Johnson:

... weekend. I don't know what was going on. Maybe I wasn't supposed to be there. It was a private event. I definitely just walked in. But yes. Well, everyone else, you will need to buy them ahead of time. Visits at the museum are about to 80% of pre-pandemic levels. So, they are getting there.

That's what we've got time for, for this episode. Thank you so, so much to my guests. Thank you to Carina.

Carina Perkins:

Thanks, Marcus. I might come back.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. I can hear it in your voice. She's not happy. Thank you to Suzy.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Thanks for having me.

Marcus Johnson:

Of course. Thank you to this week's winner of the game of the week, Blake.

Blake Droesch:

Thanks, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

And thank you, of course, to Victoria who edits the show. James, who copy [inaudible 00:45:08] who runs the team. Thanks to everyone for listening in. You can head to [behindthenumbers_podcast](#) on Instagram to say hi to us if you'd like.

I won't, but Bill Fisher will overly see you guys on Monday for the Behind the Numbers' Around the World Show, and eMarketer podcast made possible by Verisk Marketing Solutions. Happy weekends.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

I do have a friend that moved to Australia and said it's quicker to order from the UK.

Marcus Johnson:

You said, move to the moon.

Suzy Davidkhanian:

Move to the moon, and said it's quicker to order from the UK than it is to order from some Australian.

Carina Perkins:

First of all, can we please say, move to a moon and not to the moon so we don't confuse people?

Marcus Johnson:

Amazing.