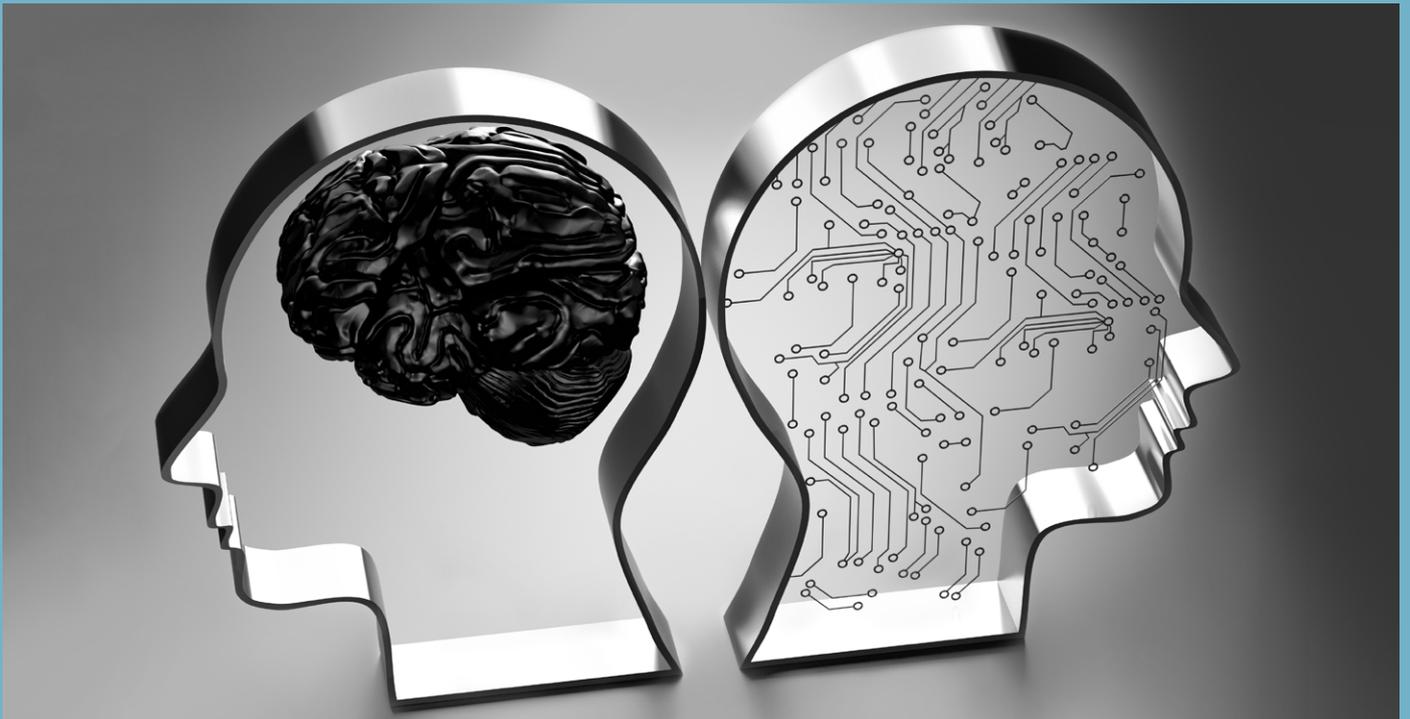


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# IPSOS VIEWS

## Human Curation in an AI World

Radhecka Roy



## Infobesity and the rise of curation

Businesses today are bombarded with information from a complex set of sources: ongoing research programs, archives of past research reports, business analytics, transactional data, industry reports, incoming data feeds, competitive activity, social media data and much more.

It is a veritable explosion of data, creating unique challenges for organisations to manage, let alone harness the data for insights and action.

This is the premise of infobesity: **we are information rich but knowledge-poor.**

Unsurprisingly, there has been a dramatic increase in the need for curation. After all, curation is about finding patterns in large, disparate and often messy data, and then creating a story that is insightful for clients' businesses.

We have found that some organisations have started to recognise and articulate the need to continuously build on their learnings, explore new ideas and seek 'meta insights'.

We are living in the times of over-information, which has shaken up the foundations of market research. Here are the key milestones of our journey from information scarcity to abundance:

The **classical market research era** when the onus was on well-designed elicitation instruments and access



The **advanced and consultative era** when elicitation became standardized and the emphasis shifted to analysis, frameworks and modelling



The **digitalization era** of open information and the use of technology to elicit data differently and combine it with advanced frameworks for insights



Our current times of *Infobesity*, in which we have a detrimental oversupply of information, requires an **era of curation**

### What is Curation?

- The process of synthesizing data and information from multiple sources with or without primary research.
- Methodologically agnostic, drawing on different and diverse data sets.
- A way to make data use and management easy-to-digest and actionable.

## Enter AI: friend or foe?

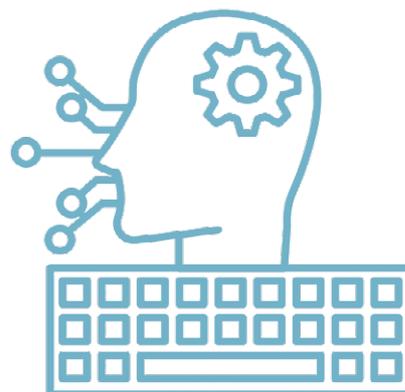
As a natural progression of this evolution, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning are used as one means of curation. AI-based curation refers to the use of algorithms to process huge volumes of data, deciphering meaning and patterns. AI works by analysing user data to make sense of user intent, thereby helping marketers address consumers better.

In this way, a critical part of AI-based curation is designing the algorithms which the machine can then refine and adapt as it learns. The machine is taught to work with contained data sets based on how we define the success, such as what drives sales or engagement. Based on this definition, the machine then identifies the 'winning' patterns for success.

And naturally, this presents a very tempting proposition where the machines can be fully automated to continually plough through mountains of data at very high speeds to churn out nuggets of success drivers that can help businesses win in the market place. And as a corollary, there is strong pushback against the need for human involvement at all. It would seem that AI curation can do all that humans do, handling more data, faster, cheaper and more efficiently.

So is there need for Human Curation in these times of AI?

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**AI presents a very tempting proposition where machines can plough through mountains of data to churn out nuggets of success-drivers.**



### Looking beyond the market research industry

We will look briefly at two examples of how companies and researchers are successfully using technology and a human touch to tackle data:

**1. Netflix** has in many ways disrupted and reinvented the entertainment industry. It has a legendary system for big data, analysis and algorithms around content viewing. But this alone does not drive the breakthrough innovations that Netflix delivers. All this data is harnessed to service a 'point of view' which informs what to do and how to experiment with established industry norms.

Combining big data and ideas has helped Netflix to lead with disruptive innovations, often reinventing its own business. This is also expressed in how important Netflix views culture as the underpinning driver for all its strategy – making it a human business, not one led indiscriminately by data alone.

**2. McKinsey** conducted a study with the Cannes Lions and the Association of National Advertisers on the topic of combining data with creativity. Based on research among more than 200 firms, it was found that enterprises that integrate data and creativity were growing two times faster than their peers, a 'substantial' difference of 10% vs 5% according to Brian Gregg, Senior Partner.<sup>1</sup>

The McKinsey study foregrounds the need to combine top data analytics, algorithms and AI with something human that delivers the end product or service – taking the data and insights to activation and impact.

These examples indicate the power of human curation: we start where machines stop by bringing in the deep human connection to data. The marriage between human and AI curation helps to explore connections, ideas and hypotheses on a large scale, with high speeds in near real-time.



## Curation at Ipsos

At Ipsos, we go beyond the classical definitions of curation as organization, arrangement, synthesis, maintenance, archiving or collection of data or even insights. We believe that curation works not just with client data, but also the entire data ecosystem around its consumers (i.e. what they are exposed to and engage with) to transform client data and build consumer centric insights that can drive sustainable business impact.

It is an approach that seeks to provide meaning behind the data, contextualize it to business issues, and define opportunities and strategies. And more importantly, to deliver these opportunities in a way that is easy to digest, share and apply with multiple stakeholders.

This means that to be truly impactful, curation must make use of the necessary skills of:

**Simplification** - where less is more. Paring down information to reveal the simple truth. And this skill of simplification comes from use of judgement to glean the insight, fusing consumer knowledge with an understanding of the client business

**Data hybridization** - connecting messy, discrete, varied sources of data to generate the deep consumer insights. Or in other words, fusing data with creativity. While the judgement required on how to hybridize comes from human curation, AI can play a role to carry out the hybridization at large scale and at high speeds

**Personalization** - to show what it means to the consumer at a human level, making it uncompromisingly consumer-centric without being blinded by marketer/brand/product bias. This is what helps us drive consumer empathy and connect for our clients

**Story-telling** - to make the insights easy to digest for stakeholders and bridge the consumer insight to business implications in a memorable way

**Activation** - to think of all the possible ways the insights can be activated and what it means for business and business impact - with case studies, examples and multi-media visualization

Ipsos has designed a proprietary framework to lead us through the main stages of curation:

Distillation

Socialisation

Activation

And we are investing in expert talent with Lead Strategic Curators who partner with clients to mine existing data from multiple sources and bring the insights to life in a compelling story that drives real application and business results.

We've also developed our flagship curation platform, *Insight Cloud*<sup>3</sup>, which provides a unique, bespoke interface for clients to work with collective intelligence for ongoing inspiration and activation.

We believe that technology can make us more effective and efficient and therefore are evolving our offer to include AI-enabled Human Curation.



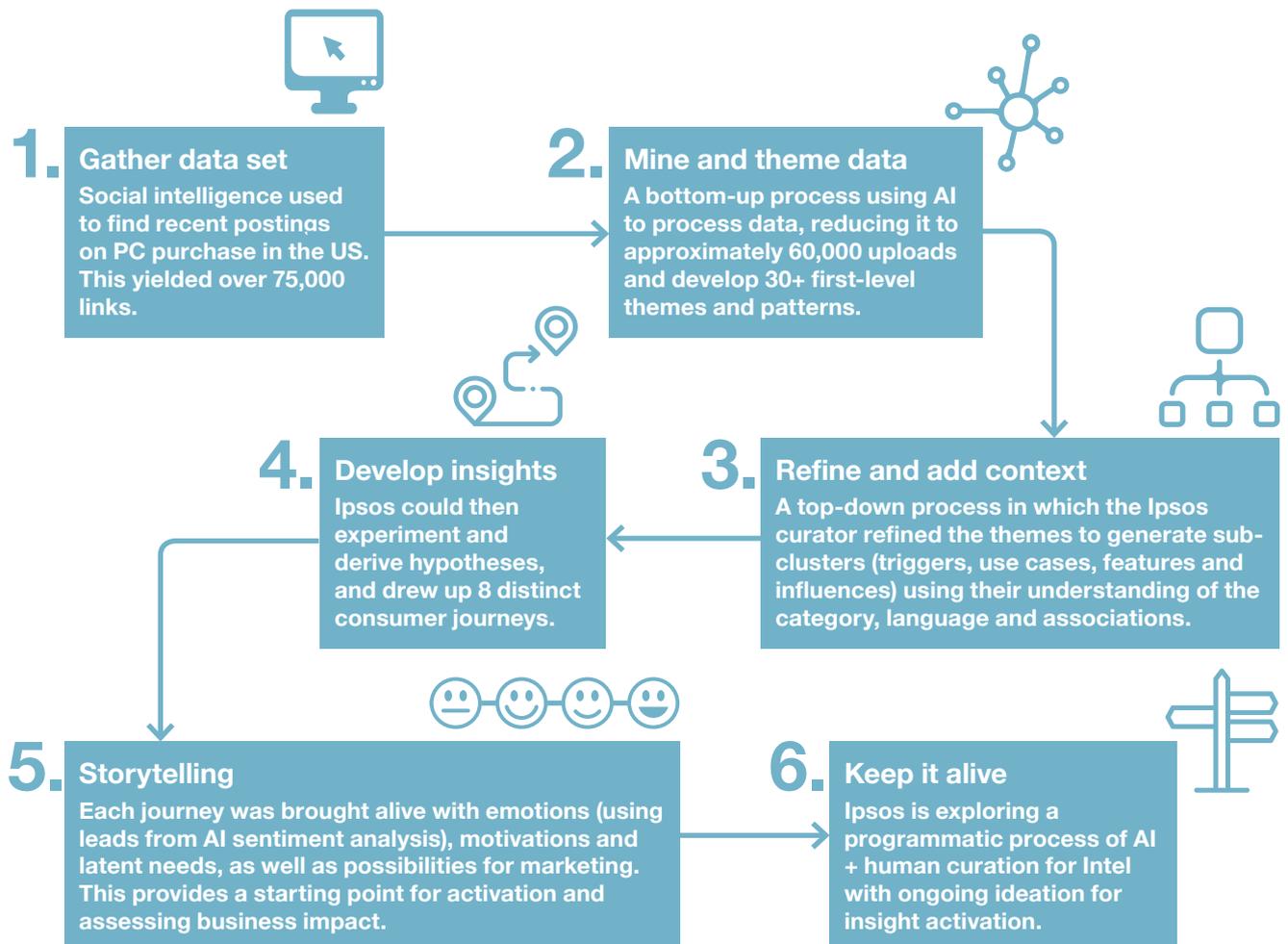
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**We start where  
machines stop  
by bringing  
in the deep  
human  
connection  
to data**

### A pilot to fuse AI and Human Curation

To put our approach to the test, Ipsos embarked on an experiment with *Intel*, the global technology and computing giant. The pilot aimed to identify Path to Purchase journeys in Personal Computer (PC)

purchase using a large volume of data by employing a combination of AI synthesis and strategic human curation.<sup>4</sup>



From this pilot, we understand the power of a cohesive, integrated and iterative curation process fusing AI and human curation, where AI helps us scan from huge volumes of high velocity data and synthesises themes and clusters, then human curation builds meaning onto the analysis, to identify opportunities and, finally, enables activation and impact.

“  
**Data is not magic.  
You need to know  
how to connect it and  
bring it to life.  
As audiences become  
fragmented, we need  
an agile system that  
helps us make real  
time decisions.  
And AI with Human  
Curation makes a  
great combination  
to deliver that.**

- Sunita Venkataraman, Global Director of Global Insights and Analytics, Intel, United States.

## Complementary (not competing) Curation

We learned that the role for the two types of curation are very different and in fact offer great potential when seen as complementary rather than as competing. The notable differences are:

**1. Human Curation is fuelled by curiosity** – AI is looking to analyse the patterns from contained sets of data, further subject to our definition of success. Human Curation on the other hand has one of the great advantages here - the ability to build context. As a result, it can:

- **Discern potential impact.** Even if it is for minority view and themes, examining not just the dominant aspects but also exploring outlying signals helps us go beyond description to potential
- **Assess when there is missing data,** not just looking at dominant, prevailing data
- **Apply ‘discretionality’** where more is not necessarily right

**2. Human Curation is about building cumulative intelligence and exchange.** Matt Ridley, a well-known British journalist and businessman, says that nearly all of the big technological innovations today come from cumulative intelligence of diverse skills and minds working to deliver an innovation<sup>5</sup>. And this is a uniquely human process where ideas are exchanged and ‘mated’ to procreate something larger and more impactful than the sum of the parts. This is also one of the biggest limitations for AI-based curation today where by its very process, AI works within contained contexts.

**3. Human Curation can take into account even those things that cannot be measured.** One of

the areas where human curation really shines is when we take the basic sentiment analysis and the more refined emotional associations of AI curation to explore motivations and intensity. Using this with personal anecdotes, human curation is able to paint compelling stories that brings alive how the sentiments can actually play out in a human context.

Successful leaders rely on the power of personal experiences to understand the real issues. Amazon head Jeff Bezos reads emails from customers to help him to see the real picture and notes that “when the anecdotes and the data disagree, the anecdotes are usually right.”<sup>6</sup> Sentiment or emotional aggregation by AI is only half the story. The true value comes from understanding the dynamic and layered factors of emotional context and motivational forces, and how these can be leveraged for business activation. We believe that this will always remain in the domain of human curation.

**4. Human Curation offers uniquely human skills** such as wisdom, reflection and fairness. It does not depend on a precise protocol and indeed works in an iterative manner, subject to judgement from the curator – based on various dynamic aspects including client business workings, consumer empathy, social culture and imagination. In the current context ethics takes on even greater importance.

And no less than Jack Ma, the founder of tech giant Alibaba, talks about honing human skills that are not replicable by machines with his three quotients for success:

- Intelligence quotient (IQ), which is purposive and rational, and can be done by machines
- Emotional quotient (EQ), referring to complex and dynamic concepts which can only come from human insight

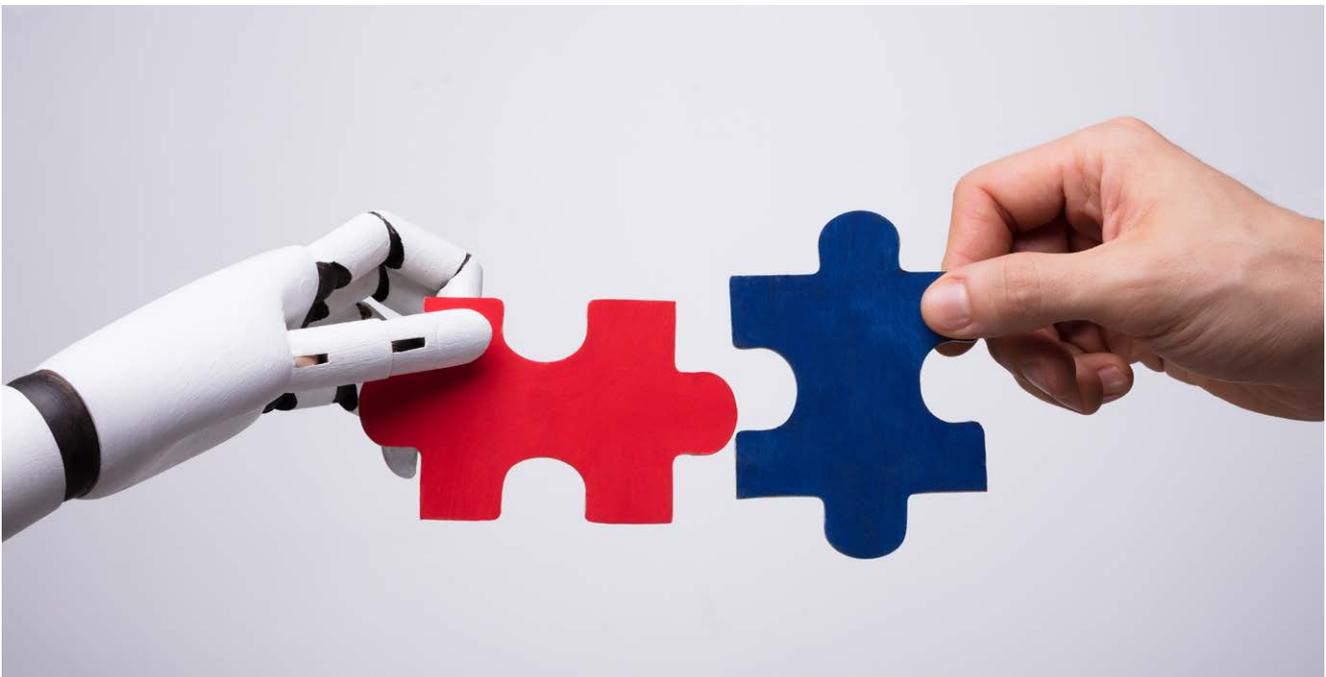
- Love quotient (LQ), which comes from the power of human connections and bonding and is out of bounds for machines (for now)<sup>7</sup>

**5. Human Curation to explore possibilities and opportunities.** Human Curation does not stop at insights – these are the entry stakes. Going beyond insights is where human curation becomes most critical. Landing insights and designing activation requires a deep understanding of the client business contexts, the learning culture at client organizations and the individual client stakeholders. It requires the ability to join the dots to harness and leverage all the diverse skills that go into activating for opportunities.

The key differences and complementary qualities of AI and Human Curation:

AI CURATION	HUMAN CURATION
Patterns	Curiosity
Answers	Questions
Specific	Holistic
Behaviour	Motivation
Output	Impact
Data	Culture
Knowledge	Wisdom





At Ipsos, we understand the power of Human Curation is about applying insights to create action points that drive business impact.

That is why our approaches embrace AI, while deploying a structured protocol for curation and overseen by experienced lead strategic curators.

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#### References:

<sup>1</sup> "To See the Future of Competition, Look at Netflix", Bill Taylor. [https://hbr.org/2018/07/to-see-the-future-of-competition-look-at-netflix?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=hbr](https://hbr.org/2018/07/to-see-the-future-of-competition-look-at-netflix?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=hbr)

<sup>2</sup> McKinsey identifies benefits of fusing data and Creativity: WARC Event Reports, Cannes Lions, June 2018

<sup>3</sup> Visit the website to find out more about Ipsos Insight Cloud: <https://www.insight-cloud.com/login>

<sup>4</sup> Read more about this study "Post-Truths Insights; Driving Business Impact" by Radheeka Roy and Sunita Venkataraman. (Forthcoming December 2018)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.ted.com/talks/matt\\_ridley\\_when\\_ideas\\_have\\_sex](https://www.ted.com/talks/matt_ridley_when_ideas_have_sex)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.businessinsider.com/bezos-explains-his-dreaded-one-character-emails-2018-4>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmvQDbHE-q4&feature=youtu.be>

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