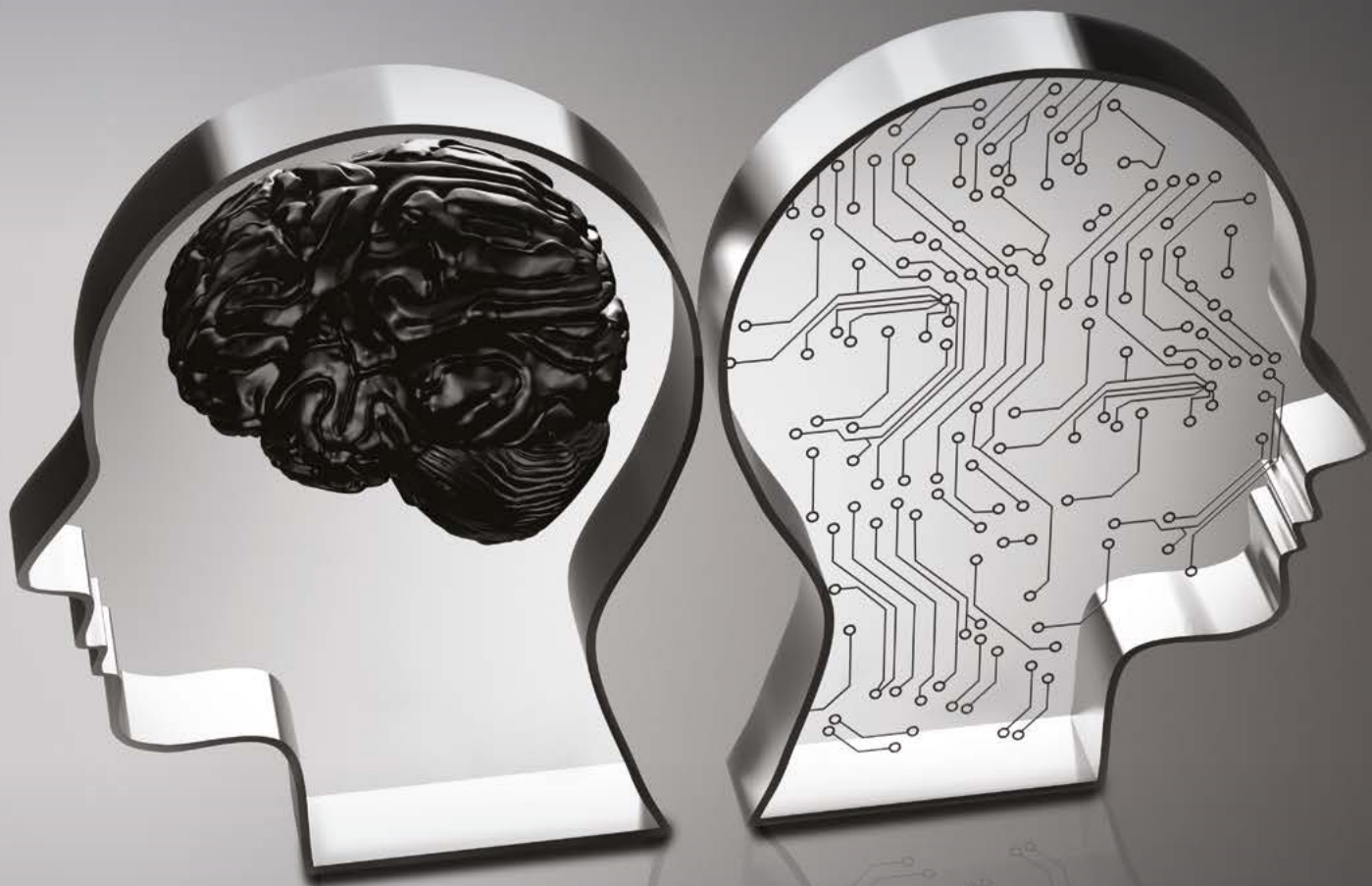


# HUMAN CURATION IN AN AI WORLD

Radhecka Roy | January 2020



**IPSOS  
VIEWS**

GAME CHANGERS





# INFOBESITY AND THE RISE OF CURATION

Businesses today are bombarded with information from a large set of sources, including ongoing research programs, archives of past research reports, business analytics, transactional data, industry reports, incoming data feeds, competitive activity and social media data - to name a few.

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

This is the premise of "infobesity", where we find ourselves to be **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 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 and decipher meaning and patterns. AI works by analysing user data to make sense of user intent, thereby helping marketers to 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.

Naturally, this presents a very tempting proposition in which machines can be fully automated to continually plough through mountains of data at high speeds to churn out nuggets of success-drivers for businesses. There is strong pushback against the need for human involvement at all.

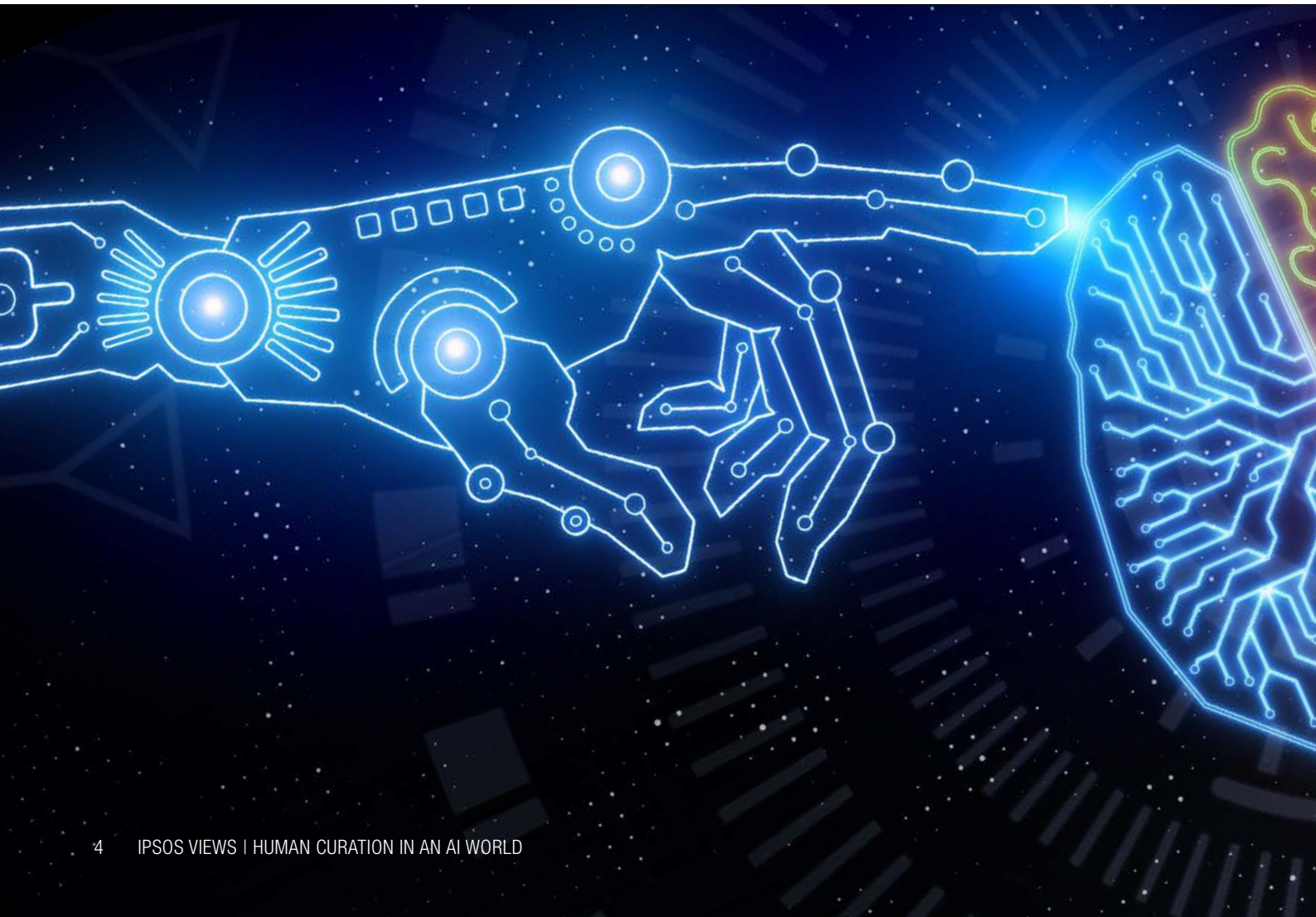
It would seem that AI curation can do all that humans do, handling more data, faster, cheaper and more efficiently.

So, is there a need for human curation in these times of AI?

### LOOKING BEYOND THE MARKET RESEARCH INDUSTRY

We can see how companies and researchers are successfully using both technology and a human touch to tackle data in the following examples:

**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.

**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>2</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, in this way 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, at high speed, and in near real-time.

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**The marriage between human and AI curation helps to explore connections, ideas and hypotheses on a large scale, at high speed, and in near real-time.**



# CURATION AT IPSOS

At Ipsos, we go beyond the classical definitions of curation as the organization, arrangement, synthesis, maintenance, archiving or collection of data (or insights). We believe that curation works not just with client data, but also the entire data ecosystem around its consumers (such as 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 following vital skills:

**Simplification** - Less is more. The skill of simplification, where information is pared down reveal a simpler truth. requires the exercise of judgement, combining consumer knowledge and 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** - Showing what it means to the consumer on a human level, making it uncompromisingly consumer-centric without being blinded by marketer, brand, or product bias. This is what helps to drive consumer empathy and connect for our clients.

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

**Activation** - Think of all the possible ways that insights can be put into action and what they mean 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**

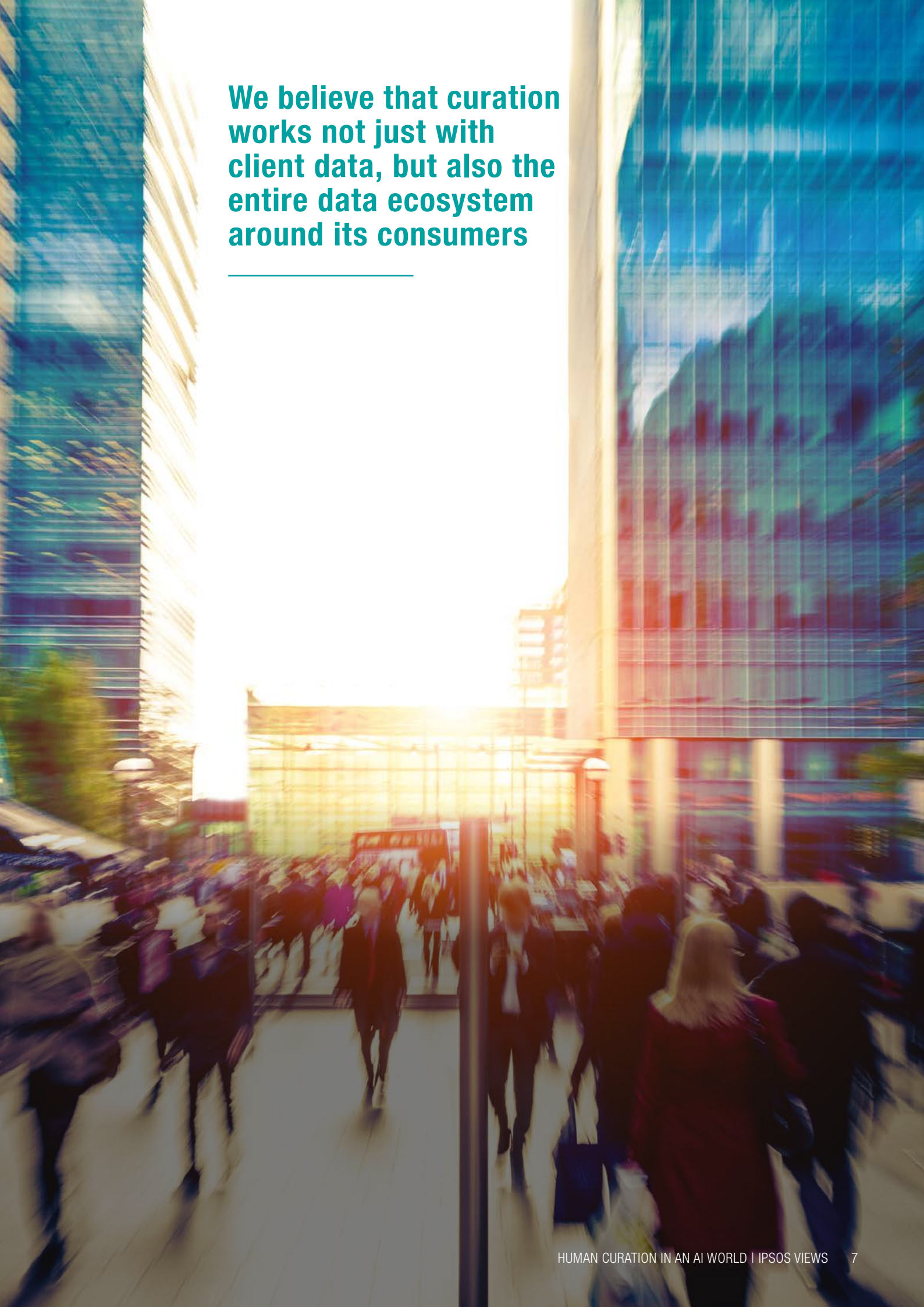
**SOCIALISATION**

**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.



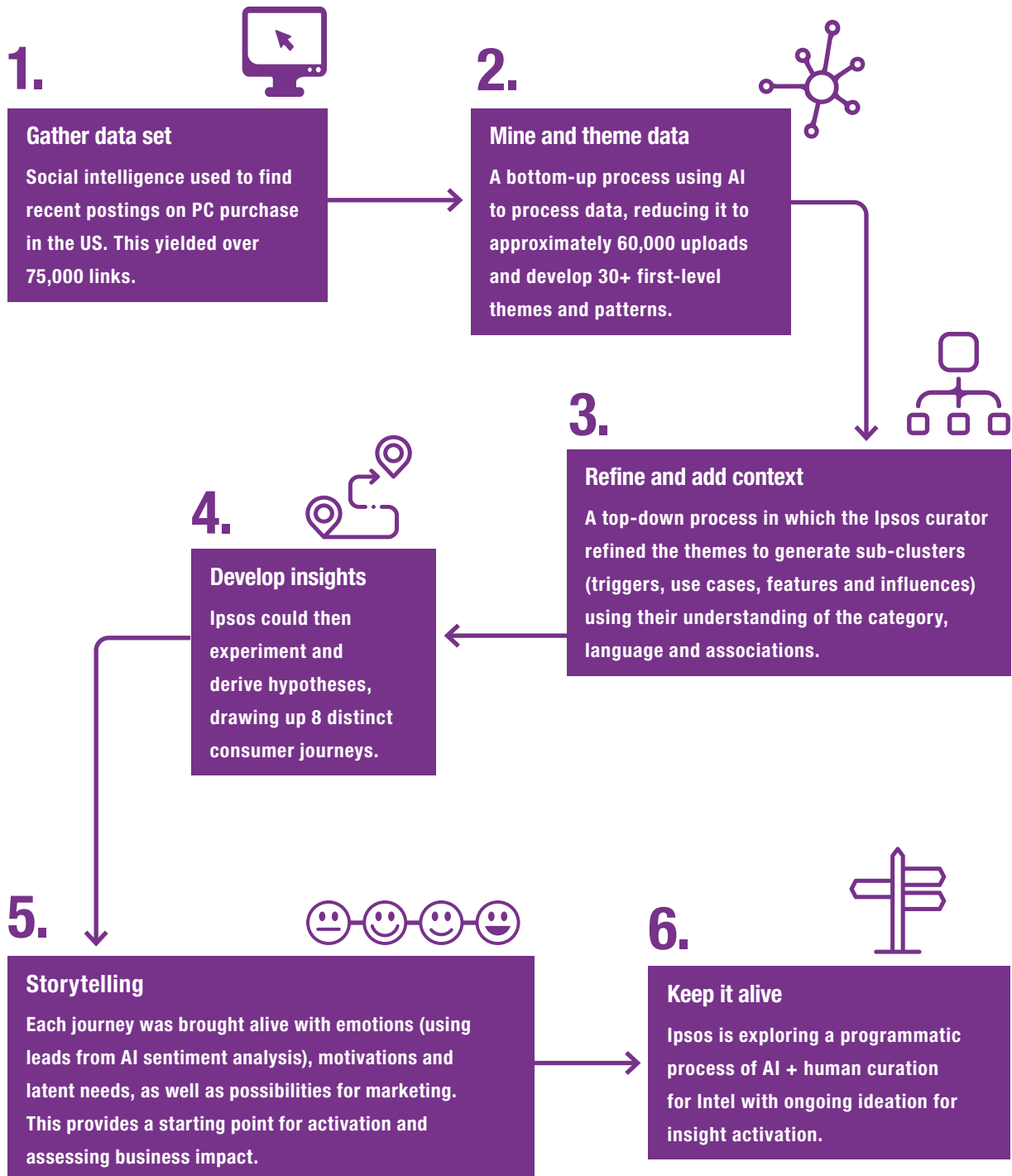
**We believe that curation works not just with client data, but also the entire data ecosystem around its consumers**

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# A FUSION OF AI AND HUMAN CURATION

To put our approach to the test, Ipsos embarked on a pilot experiment with Intel, the global technology and computing giant. The pilot study aimed to identify path to purchase journeys in personal computer sales by applying a combination of AI synthesis and strategic human curation to a large volume of data.<sup>4</sup>

From this pilot, we found evidence that a cohesive, integrated and iterative curation process fusing AI and human curation can be powerful. AI helped us to scan huge volumes of high velocity data and synthesise themes and clusters. Human curation then built meaning onto the analysis, identifying opportunities to then, finally, enable an effective approach to activation and impact.





## 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 (summarised in figure 1) are:

**1. Human curation is fuelled by curiosity** – AI looks to analyse 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 - the ability to build context. This means it can:

- **Discern potential impact.** 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'.** More is not necessarily better

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

**3. Human curation can take into account 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 personal anecdotes, human curation is able to paint compelling stories that bring to life how the sentiments can 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.**

These include wisdom, reflection and fairness. The process does not follow a precise protocol and works in an iterative manner, subject to judgement from the curator. This may depend on various dynamic aspects including the general workings of businesses, consumer empathy, social culture and imagination. Indeed, in the present-day context, ethics takes on even greater importance.

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**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.**

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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 can 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. These steps require a deep understanding of business contexts and learning cultures. It requires the ability to join the dots to harness and leverage all the diverse skills that go into activating for opportunities.

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, all overseen by experienced lead strategic curators.

Ipsos has launched an AI-enabled curation offer to combine the power of its curation practice with the strength of AI automation in collaboration with in-house social intelligence and analytics experts.

**Figure 1** AI vs. Human Curation

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

*Source: Ipsos, meta-analysis based on pre-testing results*

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**GAME CHANGERS**

