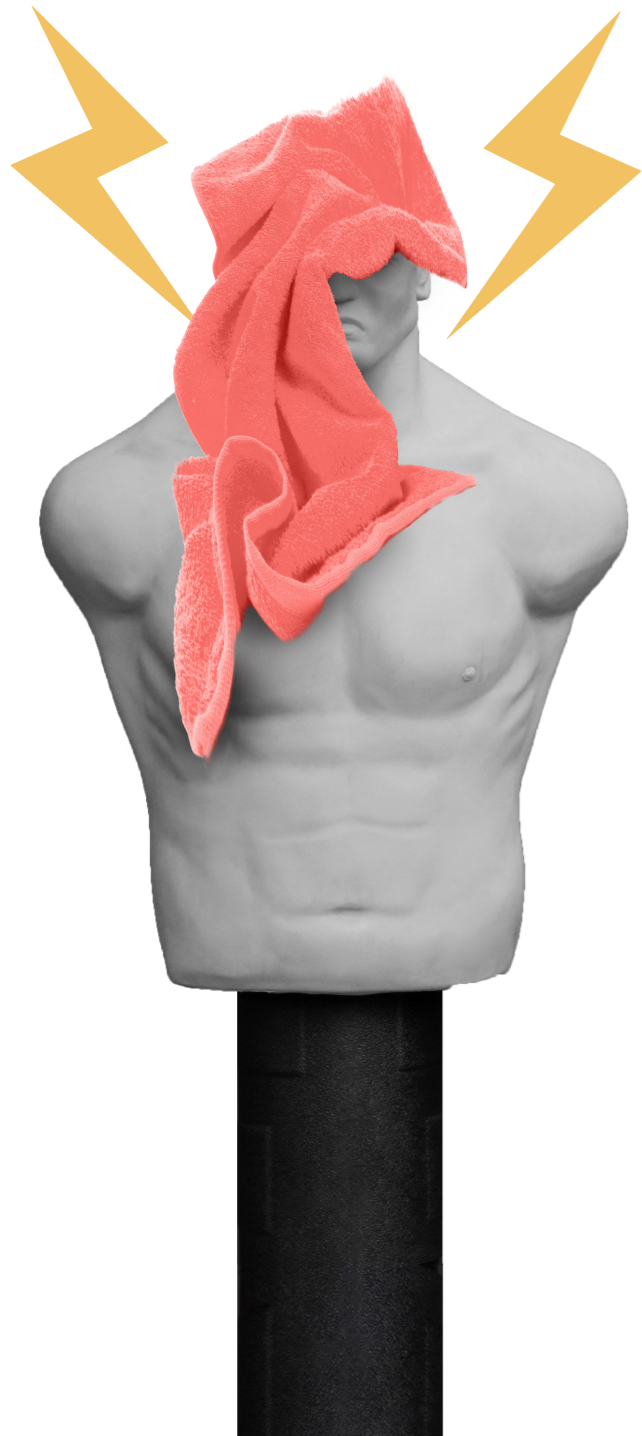




HOW TO FIGHT BACK

**NURTURE YOUR BRAND'S
MENTAL NETWORK**



In these impatient times brand building often falls victim to short-termism. The shift from brand building to relentless sales activation is damaging organisations' potential to realise the more valuable long term benefits delivered by strong brands (more penetration, better retention, more share, better price sensitivity, more profit), as well as diminishing the power of creativity*.

But, brand is more important than ever, providing people with a 'shortcut' to easy, safe decision making. The key to success in brand building is to nurture a 'Mental Network', full of relevant and distinctive associations that help you be thought of and noticed in the moments that matter.

WHAT IS A BRAND MENTAL NETWORK?

Brands exist in the mind of an individual as a haphazard and chaotic network of thoughts, feelings, images, associations, colours, sounds, symbols and memories; this is the Brand Mental Network. It is built up over time by people's experiences of your brand, and amplified and reinforced via your communications, word of mouth and advocacy. Brands are not fixed entities and different associations are triggered depending on circumstance and context, with each network unique to an individual.

WHY IS IT THE KEY TO BRAND GROWTH?

Having a strong Brand Mental Network, full of relevant, distinctive, positive and connected associations ensures that the brand will instinctively come to mind in decision-making moments. It does this by underpinning both **memory (being thought of)** and **attention (being noticed)** salience.

So, if it is your job as a brand builder to ensure the Brand Mental Network is enhancing the chances of the brand coming to mind first at the crucial moments, then we need to find ways of revealing it:

- to help you understand if your brand building is working.
- and identify what you need to refresh, reinforce or change in this network to make it even stronger.

That is where the Ipsos Brand Mental Network approach comes into play.

To get to them, we simply get people to give us spontaneous feedback via carefully crafted open ended questions and then employ text analytics to create the key themes that underpin brand associations in the category. This creates the Brand Mental Network, full of the prominent associations that define what people associate with the brand in its rawest form.

This gives you a true people-first perspective of genuine associations with your brand, free from brand owner and researcher biases of what is important to people in a category.

The example in Figure 1 is a collective Brand Mental Network for Virgin Atlantic, based on the responses of more than 1,000 people who have flown from the UK in the past year.

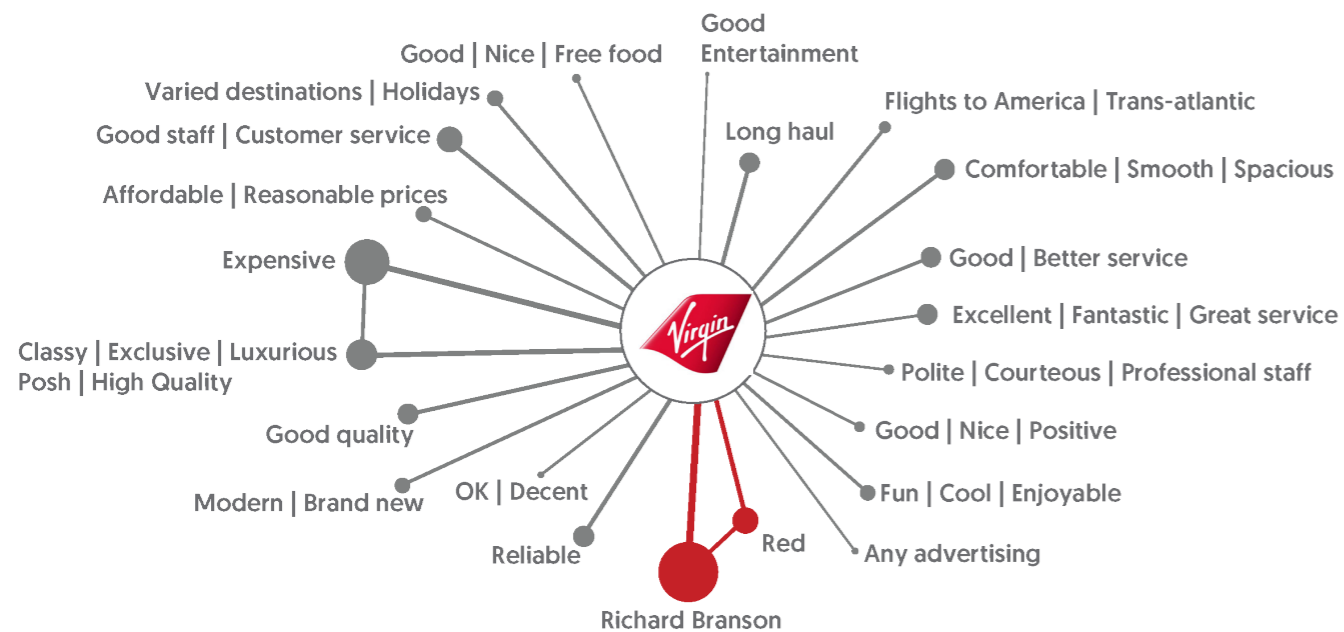
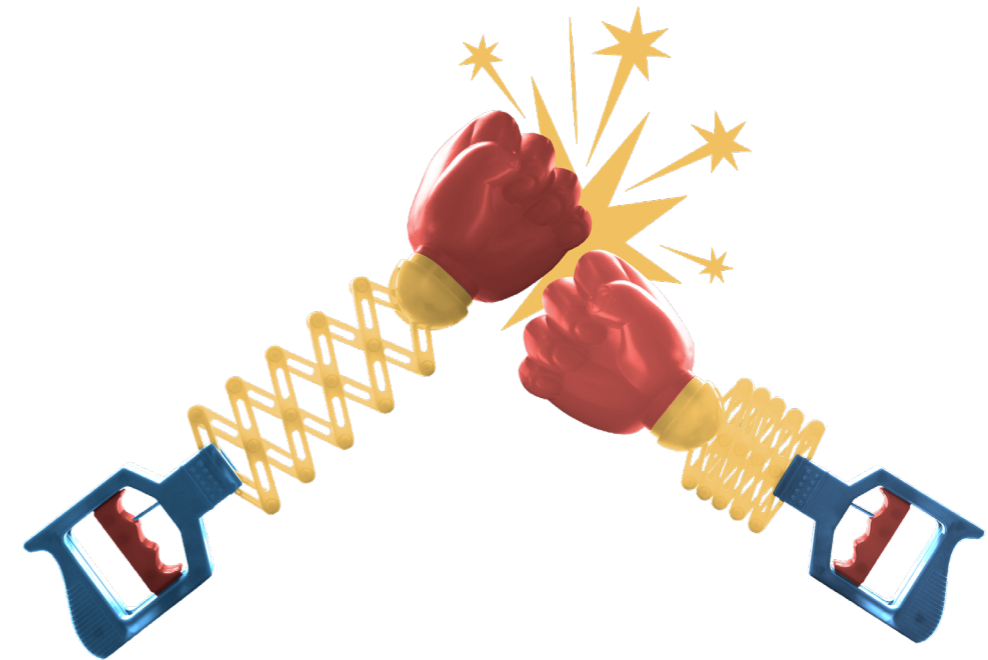


Fig 1 – Source: Ipsos MORI R&D.
April 2019 Base: N=1105. Flown with any airline in the past 12 months. Aware of Virgin Atlantic



These outputs should not read as correspondence maps, proximity doesn't matter. The key factors are the size of each bubble and the thickness of the lines, as this shows the strength of associated themes. For example, Richard Branson emerges as the most prominent association in the Virgin Atlantic network.

Connections between associations are also important as, if themes are linked, reference to one is likely to trigger thoughts of the other. In this case, references to Mr Branson are often mentioned alongside the Virgin Red.

If they are prominent enough, we get both image associations (such as luxurious, special and fun – and expensive), and communications and distinctive assets (such as the Virgin red and the ubiquitous owner). So, presence in the network is a true test of whether your brand's marketing activations are sticking with people.

We can also see how positive the experience with a brand is based on personal anecdotes. It is easy to imagine in a sector such as airlines, other carriers have strongly negative associations, including: delays, unreliability, and hidden costs present in their brand mental networks.



WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF A STRONG BRAND MENTAL NETWORK?

We consistently see three core elements that characterise a successful brand in a mental network:

1) DENSITY

A dense network will be full of rich, connected, and diverse associations and themes which cover: functional and emotional benefits, visual brand cues, icons, etc. This will help the brand to be thought of and noticed in as many choice contexts as possible.

2) DISTINCTIVENESS

Some distinctive associations should be present. If they are uniquely linked to your brand, this will ensure that your brand will be triggered and not the competition's.

3) CHOICE PRIMERS

It should also be full of critical category choice primers, the things that everyone needs to deliver on, but that you want to dominate. These are the things that will draw people to your brand because they have developed a sense that you will do the job they are looking for, and that are also redolent of simple positive outcomes and emotions.

There isn't an equation that tells you the key to success, but having all three will mean an incredibly strong brand.

BRAND BUILDING SUCCESS STORY

Direct Line has a Brand Mental Network that wins out on all those criteria vs its rivals, testament to a focus on long-term brand building as described in their 2018 IPA Gold winning paper 'They went short – we went long'**.

THE DIRECT LINE STRATEGY

In 2014, faced with declining quotation volumes and a weakening presence in home and car as consumers were lured to price comparison sites, they fought back with a powerful brand campaign.

This involved introducing Harvey Keitel pastiching his Winston Wolf role from 90s classic Pulp Fiction, with the moniker 'the Fixer'. This campaign played a part in rebooting the brand by delivering a bold, confident and humorous depiction of 'hassle free insurance that just works'.

They also invested heavily in the customer experience, recognising that poor experiences would undermine their brand promise. This included putting together a string of marketing-led propositions to reinforce 'the Fixer' positioning. Offers like 'car fixed in 7 days, or you get paid £10 a day until the job is done'. These were tangible demonstrations that they will deal with the fundamental anxiety at play with insurance, when things go wrong they will be there to help you fix them – something the whole organisation could rally behind.

THE EVIDENCE

Aside from the multiple ROI and business outcome measures evidenced in the IPA paper, we also see the long-term success of the campaign in our data sources.

They are in first place overall on our measure of brand desire in a crowded and cluttered market place (figure 2). Expressed as a percentage out of 100, this shows how much somebody wants to be or remain a customer relative to other brands in the market.

When we focus on the top five brands, it shows that Direct Line customers have a higher desire to **remain** than the customers of the other main brands, and their non-customers also have the highest desire to **become** a customer vs the other major players.

So, five years after Fixer started, Direct Line are winning in the retention and acquisition battlegrounds.

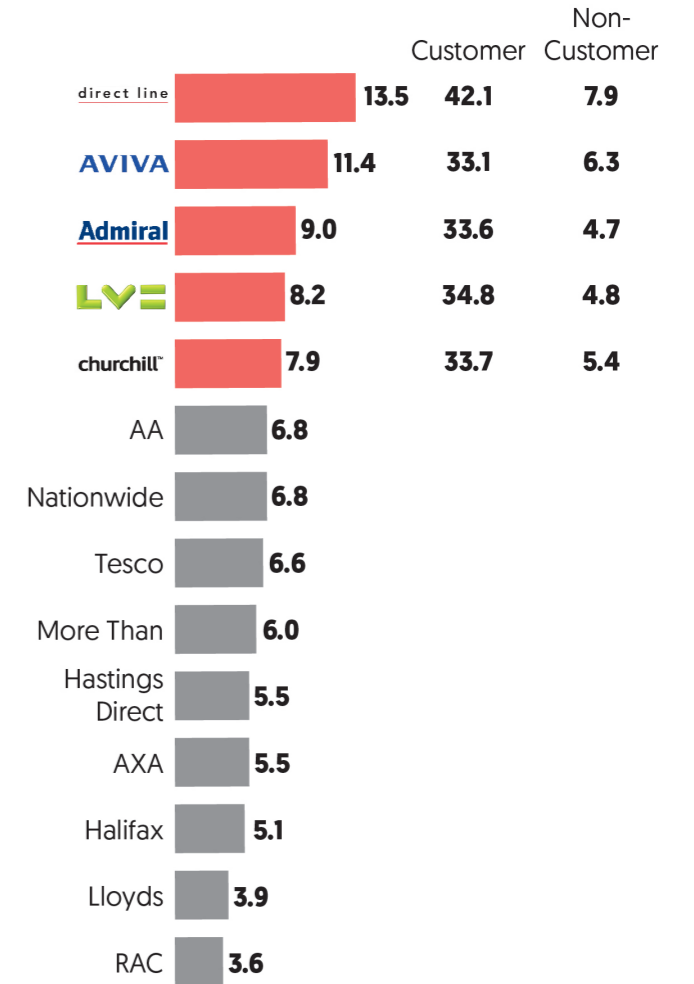


Fig 2 - Source: Ipsos MORI R&D, April 2019. Base N=1903. Sole or joint decision maker for financial products. Currently hold either home or motor insurance.

DIRECT LINE'S NETWORK ENCAPSULATES THEIR SUCCESS

The success of this brand building effort is encapsulated in their mental network:

THE FIXER

- 'The Fixer' campaign is a dominant presence reflecting the sustained levels of investment over time. This has ensured that the brand has many relevant, lively and distinctive advertising associations, helping the brand to remain salient in this exceptionally cluttered category.

DISTINCTIVE ASSOCIATIONS

- Things that are uniquely attributed to Direct Line, the iconic brand symbol of the red telephone and their long-held position of not being available on price comparison sites, are a strong presence in the network.

CRITICAL CHOICE

- As are critical choice primers such as 'reliable', 'solid' and 'well known'; fundamental to creating a sense that you are a safe choice in this category.

BRAND PROPOSITION

- The brand proposition has effectively been embedded too. We see strong value associations and they are as much about fairness and customer centricity as they are about price. This is testament to how they have moved focus from price and cover at the point of purchase, to considering performance at the time of need.

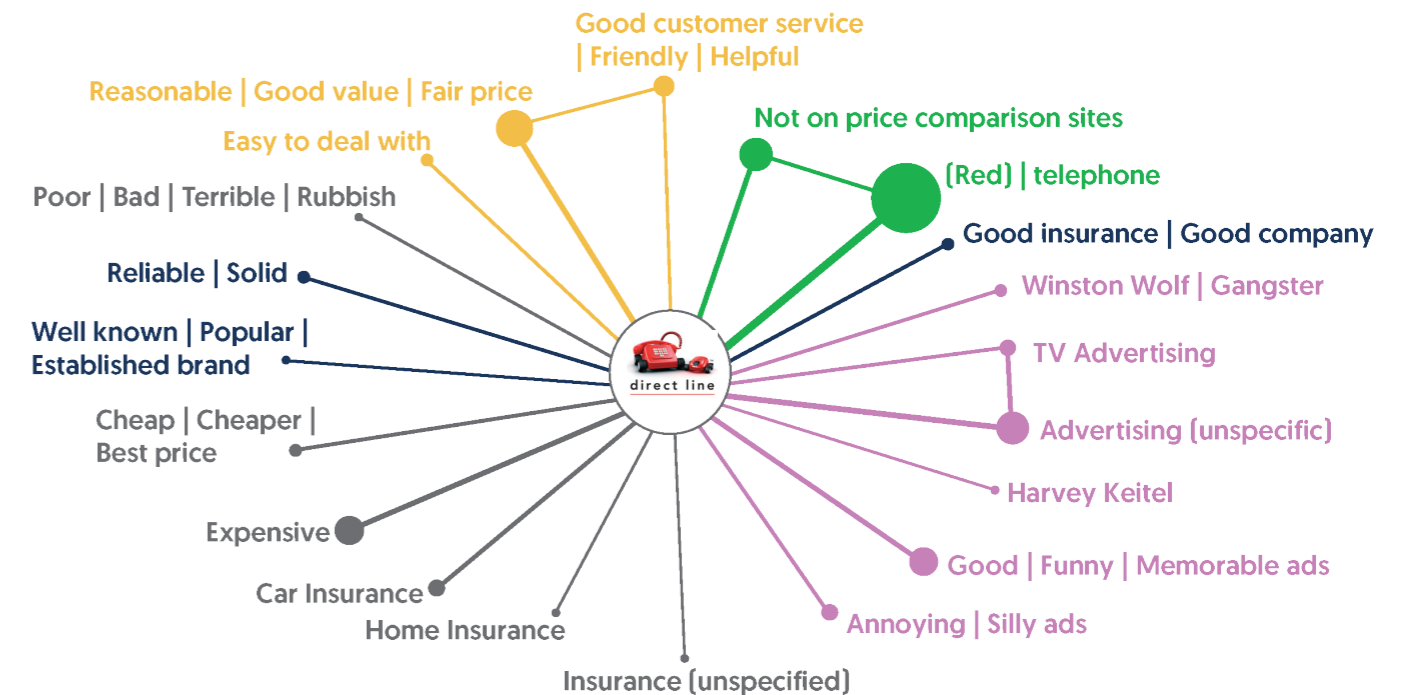


Fig 3 – Source: Ipsos MORI R&D
April 2019 Base N=1903. Sole or joint decision maker for financial products.
Currently hold either home or motor insurance. Aware of Direct Line.

THE ROLE OF 'DENSITY' IN CHOICE

Returning to our three characteristics of a successful Brand Mental Network, clearly Direct Line has distinctive associations and the critical choice primers, but what about density?

We can look at this via the map below (Figure 4), which summarises the density of Direct Line's Mental Network vs its main rivals.

The horizontal axis represents the number of associations every participant has on average

for each brand, the vertical axis is the average strength of those associations. The quadrant essentially summarises the diversity and strength of the associations that we see in the network.

The final aspect here is the size of the bubble, which represents the brand desire score.

The map confirms what we often see, that the brand with the richest, most diverse

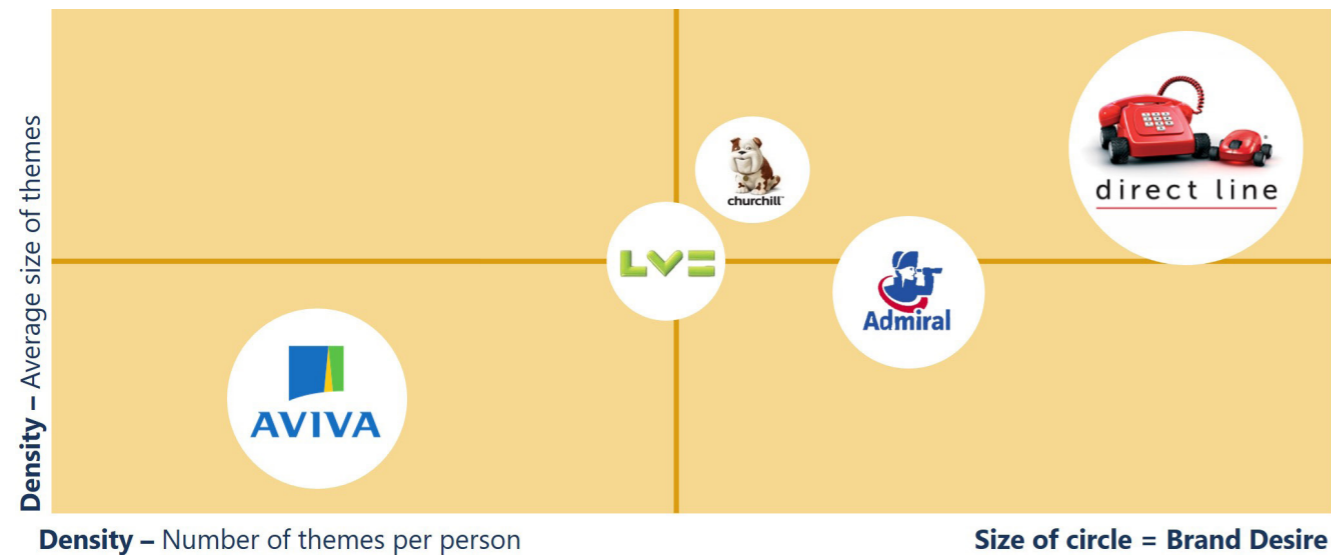


Fig 4 - Source: Ipsos MORI R&D. April 2019 Base N=1006. Sole or joint decision maker for financial products. Currently hold either home or motor insurance.

mental network is the brand with the strongest levels of desire. Direct Line is on its own in the top right quarter.

Interestingly, Aviva lags behind both Admiral, LV and Churchill on network density, despite being second in the market overall in terms of brand desire.

This is because brands like Admiral and Churchill have great attention salience associations driven by their communications, which will help with familiarity when people are making choices against smaller, cheaper players on Price Comparison Websites. Conversely, Aviva does not have those types of associations, but has built a reputation for being a solid, reliable and safe choice across a range of insurance options and wins out on customer service, too. This shows that relevant associations will often beat attention salience alone. When people are making more considered decision Aviva often wins out as a result.



THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

Direct Line have provided a great example of how brand builders can fight back against the ever-rising tide of short-termism and we can see the fruits of their success in their Brand Mental Network. Successful brand building entails creating dense, connected, distinctive, and relevant associations that will prime people to think of you first. They did that by recognising that in service-based categories you need to act first and talk later. Experiences build the brand, subsequent communications then give you salience and publicise the experiences you are giving to everyone beyond your customer base. They succeeded because they also recognised that if you want to reap rewards in the long term there is no substitute for committed investment in brand building activity and consistently strong creative.



Mental Networks bring the strength of the brand to life. Brands with the richest, most relevant, interrelated networks, full of positive associations, are more likely to be retrieved and chosen vs rivals in the moments that matter. So, nurture your Brand's Mental Network and see it grow!



Jon Harper
Head of Brand Health Tracking
jon.harper@ipsos.com
+44(0)7886 235 158

* Les Binet and Peter Field: Effectiveness in Context & Media in Focus, Peter Field: The Crisis in Creative Effectiveness
** Advertising Works 24 (IPA Effectiveness Awards 2018). Direct Line Group. 'They went short. We Went Long'. Carl Bratton and Ann Constantine, Direct Line Group; Nic Peitersma, Ebiquity.



Ipsos MORI

ABOUT IPSOS MORI

Ipsos MORI, part of the Ipsos group, is one of the UK's largest and most innovative research agencies, working for a wide range of global businesses, the FTSE100 and many government departments and public bodies.

We specialise in solving a range of challenges for our clients, whether related to business, consumers, brands or society. In the field of data science, we have a large and diverse team of experts including mathematicians, statisticians, data scientists and behavioural economists. We are constantly seeking to break new ground in the understanding and application of large and complex data sets.

We are passionately curious about people, markets, brands and society. We deliver information and analysis that makes our complex world easier and faster to navigate and inspires our clients to make smarter decisions.

