

Predicting future consumer behaviour

By [Diane Gantz](#), issued by [Kantar](#)

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The insights industry is transforming in order to remain relevant in a new fast-moving world where consumers have easy access to endless choices.



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Digital Transformation is a must. According to [Forbes](#), “Disruption will continue to be an increasingly common occurrence in the next few years, and companies unable or unprepared for those changes will quickly fall to the bottom of the pack”.

Technological tools will be increasingly used throughout 2018 to keep the finger on the consumer’s pulse, and provide a granular understanding of consumer behaviour, preferences and experiences – as they occur. Technology and new analytic tools will also be used to become more forward-focused in predicting consumers’ attitudes, behaviour and preferences – which will guide actions required to grow and maintain successful brands.

Technological tools and innovation extend throughout the research process...

Structuring the research process more optimally

Automation is globally the biggest focus of all according to the [GRIT 2017 \(Q1_Q2\) report](#) – it enables significantly quicker turn-around times – often in real time – having a direct impact on an organisation's ability to move fast, adapt, adjust and relaunch.

Automation is being implemented across the entire research process – from templated design for quick turn solutions, scripting, quality checking, data analysis such as text and image analytics and reporting. It frees up time, which can be reallocated to value-added insights and consulting. Business growth will be fuelled by streamlined processes which enable faster decision-making.

Digital survey data collection and use of alternative data sources

Paper-based surveys are now redundant (with a few scary exceptions), while digital means for collecting consumer data have been adopted by all reputable insights agencies.

Mobile surveys have proven the ability to fast-track quality consumer insights, within budget. And, in 2018, will become the new 'chosen' survey-based data collection methodology in South Africa, while the expectation is for take-up in markets like Nigeria, Kenya and Francophone to increase significantly as penetration of smartphones increase and databases become more representative. The focus now is more on being device-agnostic, but designing with a 'Mobile First' mind set. Whatever the method of data collection, shorter and more engaging surveys will be the order of the day.

Alternative data sources include, amongst others, behavioural data like social and search/passive measurement; and client or third party data sources.

Observing social media and search behaviour, and overlaying findings with survey data will make for a broader, more in-depth view of the consumer. Tapping into how people search can unlock powerful insights of intent. By analysing this data one can better deliver relevant messaging when it matters to consumers most. It can also yield insights on brand dynamics in a competitive context.

Passive measurement of what people do when, will become increasingly important to observe, as it eliminates inaccuracy of claimed behaviour. Insights obtained through passive measurement will feed into broader strategy planning, and when coupled with analytics, enables the prediction of future consumer needs and behaviour.

The Internet of Things (IoT) will need to be explored further by research agencies to determine how the vast amount of data collected from IoT can help drive actionable consumer insights.

Qualitative data obtained from digital platforms, including conversational platforms, chatbots and digital discussions will also continue to add value and depth of information on consumers.

It is clear that the insights industry is shifting from relying on survey data only to becoming fully data-agnostic, partnering with clients and third parties to find the golden nuggets that will ensure future success.

New data analytic approaches

The use of various data sources requires new and advanced data analytic approaches to make sense of multiple data streams. Agencies are already and will continue to invest heavily in data analytics and new data analytics tools to deliver deeper insight.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is still one of the top technological trends according to [Gartner](#). Research agencies will also dabble in the waters of AI to enhance business decision-making. By using machine learning, together with other data sources, marketers can understand consumers better. Machine learning capabilities allow one to use intelligence at every

step of the customer journey and to create personalised experiences with brand interactions. It also helps to better predict and anticipate consumer needs writes [Yang](#).

To summarise, the insights industry is moving towards providing real-time, affordable and actionable insights. By leveraging various technological tools in 2018, research programs will become far more agile and modular in nature to allow for this to materialise.

Automation throughout the entire research process will remain a key priority. Using device-agnostic survey data and drawing on a diverse set of client or third party data sources will be an increasing focus. Lastly, employing the relevant data analytics tools to make sense of multiple data sets and focusing on predicting future behaviour, will all be key trends in 2018.

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