DISRUPT AND NURTURE

Cultural historian and business leader Sonat Birnecker Hart, Ph.D., is changing legal landscapes, transforming work-life options for women and homeschooling two sons, while building a global luxury spirits brand.
Sonat Birnecker Hart walks away from a successful academic career to disrupt the spirits industry, elevate the perceptions of women in the workplace and continue a family tradition of pioneering their own unique paths in the U.S.

The hand drawn logo and siren graphic artifacts connote the artistry and musicality that goes into the creation of each wine.

**FINDING ITS SOUL**
**BY KEITH LORIA**
The process behind the new branding-and-marketing strategy for Siren Song.

**DIVING INTO THE MARKETING MIX**
**BY KATIE GRAVELY**
Professionals share their experiences on marketing strategies.

**LOVE IN BLOOM**
**BY CHRIS AUMAN**
Love Grown hopes to blossom after rebrand.

**THE DEBATE**
**BY LINDA CASEY**
A preview of an upcoming discussion with leading business and branding executives exploring the intersection of modern analytics and innovation.

**EDITOR’S LETTER**
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THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES ANALYTICS PRESENT TO THE INNOVATION PIPELINE

How is the use of analytics for delivering more innovative brand experiences changing?

Argumentum ad Populum, Latin for “If many believe so, it is so” is the sometimes unavoidable fallacy that attempts to contend that what is measured and expressed via advanced, expensive analytics is the answer to everything, including the alleged insight that some use to defend what they believe and others mistake for innovation. The real question should be whether reliance on analytics, in isolation, actually always stimulates products or brands that are demonstrably superior to what exists. Analytics are tools that can lead to innovation; they are not innovation themselves. Hence, the real answer to your question is whether advanced analytics help or hurt the ability to take the risks that are the hallmark of innovation.

Analytics, no matter how sophisticated, are not always reliable or predictive without the mitigating creative leap of marketing professionals who also consider cultural, socio-economic, political and the all-too-often real yet unspoken needs of consumers. The world has enough need; analytics should not be the cause of creating artificial new ones. In contrast, they should focus on how existing needs can be better addressed.

Take the new operating system for the Apple iPhone: I lost my ability to easily download my CDs so that I can listen to them on the go, but I can now take better underwater photos? That’s just dumb—not to be confused with innovative.

I would love to see the analytics that prompted the above change. All too often, analytics are used as the ultimate cover-your-behind safety net. So, the answer to your question is that analytics alone, do not promote meaningful innovation. It’s the interpretation of the analytics in a broader context and the very human creative leaps that stimulate innovative products that matter.

More than analytics alone, direct collaboration through any...
number of new interactive digital mechanisms and a resurrection of event marketing or experiential marketing as it is now called are gaining speed as enlightened brand discover the power of consumer touch.

Analytics are suggestive not definitive and have the capacity to hurt as much as they help. If analytics were the answer to new product innovation and related ROI and ROO (return on objectives), why would an estimated 40% to 80% of all new, fully researched, products fail? P&G, a company that played great lip service to innovation, has gained a reputation for systemization and a regimented process based heavily on analytics. Not even P&G hits the nail on the head every time. One wonders whether the measurement of the measurements might have been better allocated to more human direct interaction.

Yet, the film, Titanic, almost went direct to DVD because it did not test well. Analytics did not take into account that the film would find an audience who would pay to see the movie, again and again and again.

We’ve just come off a hotly battled Presidential election in which the sheer magnitude of failed analytics shocked even laymen. The same was true for Brexit. The surprise of both these political outcomes should cause many researchers to go back and question how and why advanced analytics failed to predict two

The world has enough need; analytics should not be the cause of creating artificial new ones.
of today’s most recent analytically overloaded, marketing catastrophes. In short, analytics are not what drive innovation. They are enzymes that only work within an eco-system of consumer understanding and appreciation. The answer to your question is deceptively simple, the answer to how analytics is escalating innovation is that they don’t—at least not by themselves.

How can brands collect better data for use in superior brand experience creation and design?

First, we must reconsider the definition of data. Popular culture, bad magazines, museum exhibits, experimental theater, political shifts and everything that touches consumers’ lives are data.

Marketing and creatives must be students of life. The modern consumer is a living performance of self—one broadcast on a digital stage. I have taken designers, marketing and business professionals on urban field trips to locations in their own cities they did not know existed. Many are surprised to see the innovation so often found in boutiques and public art among other things. Many a fashion designer has never seen one of their designs on a size 22 human body; it’s high time they did.

It is if many of these highly paid professionals, the same ones I take on field trips never leave their offices, relying instead on numbers; analytics to drive innovation in a world that they may not even know. Those charged with innovation must respect the cultural innovation that lives just below their noses and juxtapose what they see with the statistics they are provided.

How can marketers and designers become better at collaborating with data scientists?

This question should be reversed. Data scientists are not without bias and almost always draw sweeping conclusions based upon interpretation of data which may or may not have been posed to the most appropriate populations or may contain very nuanced observations that may be too subtle and thus ignored. Product development should isolate hypotheses, based upon actual cultural and consumer behavior, and use these observations to make creative leaps towards identification of what would or would not constitute innovation. Only then should the real collaboration begin—a map by which both the data scientists and innovative marketing and creative professionals test and retest technology and other product attributes that correspond with real consumers’ lives.

Today’s Fortune 500 marketing executives and agency strategists are largely recruited from Ivy League universities. Sadly, this tendency may be less appropriate for roles requiring innovation and a propensity towards creativity than liberal arts colleges or one of the many fine design schools. This is why the term “design thinking” has been coined. As recently as two years ago, when vying for a senior global creative director slot at a very reputable agency, I was told that my portfolio was too creative. That kind of thinking is not unusual particularly in consumer packaged goods. It explains why undirected data mining is another potential foil to innovation. If one were mining for diamonds and found emeralds instead, one would be foolish to discard the emeralds. Today’s market throws away an awful lot of emeralds.

Innovation requires looking beyond numbers and unrealistic expectations of the speed necessary for consumers to adopt ground-breaking products and brands. Every piece of data assessed by research should be accompanied by real anecdotal observation. For every statistical finding, we must take the liberty of creating hypothesis related to causality. Why
do millennials averse to buying things still buy things? Why is it that during the last recession that it was the solid gold Rolex among the range of less expensive Rolexes that sold the best?

Finally, whatever one mines is generally buried. What we measure today was probably prompted by events and attitudes that occurred or prevailed at least a year ago. Together, data miner and marketer must discover new methods to measure “now.” Right now, the nature of the process measures yesterday. Now is the closest thing we have to tomorrow. And, in the end, fully understanding today is not truly helpful in creating the innovation that will shape tomorrow in the form of brand or product artifacts that are markers of a specific time and place. Again, there is no substitute for the creative leap.

**How can marketers use data as part of a brand’s storytelling device?**

What marketing and those who perform and deliver analytics often forget is that in this era of consumer empowerment and instant communication—a free, continuous focus group, via social media, available to us. However, ...

Read the full interview with Raymond Nadeau and other design and branding leaders in the next issue of Brand Experience.