



# 5 trends

that are  
shaping **modern**  
**BRAND RESEARCH**

**Columinate e-book**

“Five trends that are shaping modern brand research”

February 2017

# About Columinate



Columinate is the full-service, modern market research agency that's known (and awarded) for making clever simple. Using a range of cutting-edge methodologies, we help our clients to understand, satisfy and engage with their customers.

And we're modern because we prefer to do everything digitally – via consumers' mobiles, tablets, laptops and PCs and at their convenience. No awkward phone calls or shoulder taps. We offer a variety of market research services, visit our website to learn more.

# About the Author: Dr Henk Pretorius

I'm the co-founder and CEO of Columinate, where I lead the company's expansion by consulting on key projects and developing proprietary research tools. In 2008, I conducted the first online research community in South Africa, a method we continue to use to lead this sector countrywide.

My qualifications include a B.A. in Psychology and English, Honours in Psychology, a Master's Degree in Research Psychology and a PhD in Cognitive Psychology, and I have completed a research internship at Harvard University.

I'm a registered research psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and a full member of the South African Marketing Research Association (SAMRA), as well as a past director of the Brand Council of South Africa (BCSA). I am passionate about cognitive psychology and brands. Merging the two is what really excites me.



FIVE TRENDS that are shaping modern brand research

# The 90s called. They want their research back.

Brand health measurement is not a new concept.

Brand owners have relied on consumer-based assessments of brand health for a long time, seemingly agreeing with management author Peter Drucker who is quoted as saying that

*“you can’t manage what you can’t measure.”*

However, that does not mean that traditional brand research has stood the test of time. In many ways it has been due for a refresh of its ideas and methods. So, in this short review I identify five trends in brand research that are redefining what contemporary brand measurement is.



# 1 Link measures to business outcomes

There is no shortage of things to measure about brands: brand awareness, liking, commitment, satisfaction, share of associations, favorability...the list goes on. But do these things really matter? **Modern brand research needs to measure things that relate to significant business outcomes such as purchasing, loyal spending and switching.**

This is crucial since there is a well-documented concern about the weak link between intentions and behaviours. A credible brand research program establishes links between its measures and what really matters to the businesses who own the brands. Sometimes this will take the form of proprietary validations and other times this will be through existing evidence in peer-reviewed publications. Regardless of the form it takes, modern research users aren't expected to accept brand research simply because a researcher says so.



## 2 Connected data collection

In the evolution of market research data collection telephonic interviewing overtook face-to-face and mail (yes, that is traditional snail mail) surveys because they improved on how quickly and cost-effectively a large sample of people could be reached. Now device agnostic mobile and online surveys are taking over for the same reason.

Relevant brand research collects data in a modern way through connected devices. Mobile phones and computers are great ways of asking large samples of people how they think, feel and behave towards brands. These new methods have the advantage of lower cost and rapidness, but also offer other advantages like interactivity and close-to or in-the-moment experience capture. Future-proof brand researchers are expected to be increasingly comfortable with these new modes of data collection.



# 3 Automation

In some form or another automation is redefining many industries. The brand research industry is no different. Digital data collection made it possible to largely automate fieldwork without the need for interviewers. Statistical programs are increasingly allowing even novice users to analyse data effectively. Reporting and dashboarding tools have improved the time it takes to put the insights into a visually appealing format. There have also been improvements in text analytics without the need for human coding.

These innovations have been a great assistance to researchers, but a larger leap in the automation of insights is underway. While previous automation providers have improved parts of the research cycle a larger ambition is to automate the entire research process. This involves an automation on an altogether different level. From a research user perspective the experience should be comparable (or better) to dealing with a set of research experts. The automated research tool would handle everything from the briefing of the problem, to the selection of the methodology, through to data collection and analysis and reporting. Even the recommendations and actions are parts of this full-scale automation.

For some this level of automation causes concerns. A first concern is that a cookie cutter approach would make insight generation stale and inflexible. However, this will only likely be a concern for inflexible tools, since the ultimate goal is have automated flexibility. There are also concerns about the job security of brand researchers should automation take over. However, I think a redefinition of roles is more likely. **In this automated future brand researchers are freed up to become subject area experts, great communicators and strategists after insight delivery.**



# 4 Psychological insight into consumer-brand relationships

Marketing research has always had generous helpings of psychology in our methods, theories and concepts. As the field of psychology has developed it has become necessary to update our frameworks in marketing research.

One such example where an update is required is our recent understanding of weakly conscious processes such as habits and implicit attitudes and beliefs. Instead of believing that conscious things are the only things the mind does we now know there is a great deal of unconscious processes that come into play. In order to fully integrate this understanding the future of brand research will include approaching research with more deriving and observing, instead of solely asking.



# 5 Social meets survey

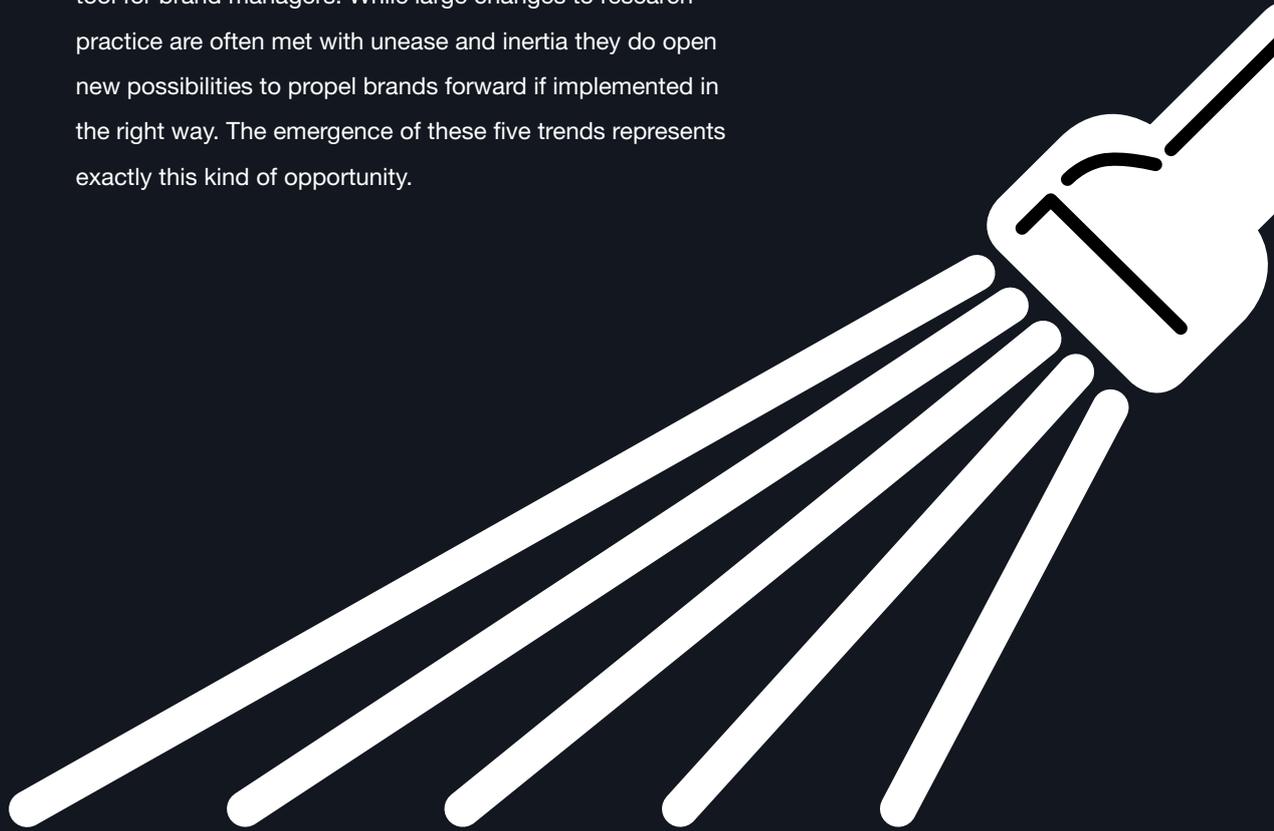
Social platforms host millions of comments and conversations, many of which are relevant to brands. As a result, social listening tools that enable monitoring of these conversations are becoming increasingly popular. However, fusing social data about brands with consumer-based surveys is not widely done. This is a missed opportunity since the two data sources are highly complementary.

Social data is often the first place where urgent issues arise - just ask any brand that has gone viral for the wrong reasons. However, this data is often not representative of the full market since opinionated sharers are often a biased segment. Another problem is that not all brand issues get explored equally on social channels since people share what they feel like, not necessarily what brands want to know. For these reasons, larger scale surveys with questions posed by researchers deliver a more balanced and complementary view of how a brand is perceived. Blending social and survey data will be an increasingly common trend in future brand research.

So in

# conclusion

I believe that brand research will continue to be an important tool for brand managers. While large changes to research practice are often met with unease and inertia they do open new possibilities to propel brands forward if implemented in the right way. The emergence of these five trends represents exactly this kind of opportunity.



Let

**us** HELP **you**

do modern brand research

Columinate has several specialised and validated research systems that incorporates this new school of thinking into brand research. If you are interested in brand research or any market research for that matter please .get in touch with us now by emailing [elna@columinate.com](mailto:elna@columinate.com).

**E** [info@columinate.com](mailto:info@columinate.com)

**T** 011 782 7246

**W** [www.columinate.com](http://www.columinate.com)

**t** @Columinate

 **columinate**®