# From Big Data to Big Insights

# The Proliferation of Big Data

The impact of Big Data on the marketing world has been significant, as have the challenges. Companies large and small are investing considerable resources into systems and processes that leverage Big Data as a way of helping them understand their customers better. As a result, marketers, rightly so, are asking research professionals some very big questions:

*"How are you using Big Data to help me make better decisions?"*

*"With so much 'real' data around, do I still need to use survey data?"*

We are heavily engaged in this dialogue, both internally and collaboratively with our clients, to ensure we are using the most appropriate types of data for a given engagement. **We always begin our work with clients by taking a data agnostic approach, giving weight and value to each data source, ensuring that we build our action plan by incorporating the right data for the business challenge.** Importantly, we assess each business challenge to understand where Big Data or survey data alone is most advantageous, and where we can marry Big Data with survey data to ensure we provide a more comprehensive and holistic approach.

# Handling Big Data — An Overall Perspective

Whether in combination with survey data or used by itself, one of the biggest challenges of using Big Data (sales data, customer data, social media, or data from other sources), is that the volume of information available is massive — and increasing rapidly. We have worked closely with clients to apply sophisticated sampling techniques to Big Data sets, along with advanced analytics techniques. **These rigorous sampling and analytic methods allow us to cull these data sets into more usable and representative bases of information.**

Our goal is to use precise means to extract a sample from the data universe that allows for accurate representation back to the total data universe, and ensures usability with existing advanced computing techniques. Leveraging this more traditional technique from the survey research world enables us to effectively wrestle Big Data to the ground, and in the process, develop winning insights that drive our client's businesses forward.

## PUTTING BIG DATA INTO ACTION — SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

While there are occasions where Big Data can lead to valuable insights on its own, maximizing the impact of Big Data and achieving actionable insights often means marrying this information with survey data. Outlined below are examples of situations and initiatives where Radius has found that integrating Big Data sets with survey research has created the most effective outcome and path forward for brands and businesses:

# Branding

Primary market research offers the best single approach to analyzing a brand's position in the marketplace, but when combined with external data, one can considerably add to the power of that learning. Customer data, if married to primary research, can enhance the diagnostic value of brand data and provide greater strategic direction for marketers.

Social media can provide early warning of branding issues, thus triggering the need for a deeper dive through primary research. Social media also provides external validation for primary brand measurement - acting as a proxy in between brand tracking waves or driving new questions to include in a primary brand measurement program. User Generated Content (UGC) can also provide a wealth of information to guide brand positioning decisions.

As an example, a large media client partnered with Radius to understand their unique brand value/brand proposition. By reviewing thousands of UGC, we used textual analysis to code these comments on multiple dimensions. We then conducted survey research in which we tested mathematically-generated comments in a conjoint analysis to understand which UGC was most valuable in building the brand. By fusing both survey data and UGC data, we were able to help the company enhance their business and marketing understanding, elping the media company to strengthen their brand and build loyalty.

# Customer Satisfaction

While there can often be a wealth of consumer comments or product reviews online or in social media that relates to consumer satisfaction with a brand, product or service, the information can often be polarizing, as either those extremely satisfied or dissatisfied with their experiences tend to take the time to comment or post information. Partnering this information with primary research conducted among a representative sample of your customers provides clearer context for assessing how critical and prevalent the feedback you're seeing through these sources may be.

Keeping in mind that the loudest voices may not always be truly representative of the majority of your customers, it's critical to ensure that both primary research and Big Data are partnered together to provide a holistic and realistic view of your customers' experiences.
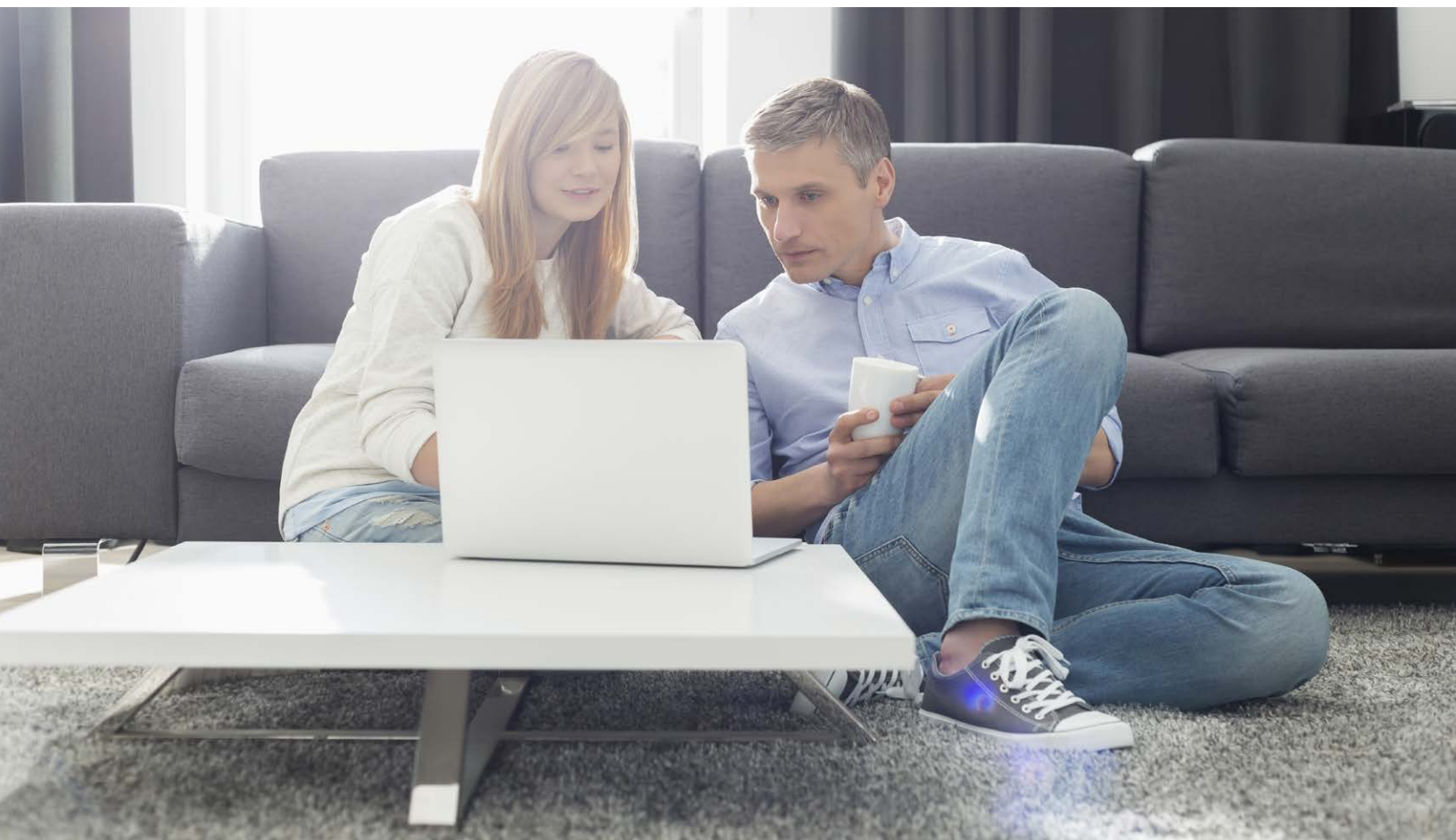
# Segmentation

Sophisticated data mining techniques offer great promise for their abilities to identify valid, measurable, and reachable segments of customers within large behavioral data sets, whether customer data, transaction data, or other sources. These techniques are limited, however, in their abilities to interpret the actions of customer groups — that is, the wants, needs, attitudes and other motivations behind the customer's actions. A blended approach using primary research with database information overcomes this limitation, thus producing a more powerful segmentation structure.

For instance, a large software client had an incomplete database that included current and canceled clients. They needed to segment this database into three categories: current customers who could be upgraded to more valuable products, "at risk" customers who might shortly leave the company, and "lapsed" customers who could be persuaded to come back if given the right offer.

By employing a primary survey to a subset of those in the database and fusing the survey metrics to the database, we were able to identify key customer groups and sub-groups. For instance, we identified groups of customers who cancel subscriptions because of price, those who cancel due to features, and those who only need the product temporarily. The client was then able to apply these segmentation outputs/tags to all consumers in their entire database increasing the effectiveness of their marketing efforts.

# Customer Journey

Big Data can tell you some things about a customer's journey based on online behaviors, info obtained through mobile devices, or even some in-store data. It's often a good source for understanding how they learn about products and services. By itself, however, it falls short of connecting all the dots and offering a true picture of the "purchase pathway." This is mainly because this information fails to offer the "why," "what for," and "when" behind how these touchpoints link together during the process, limiting actionability of the work.

Incorporating primary research techniques into journey mapping exercises enables clients to understand how all of the online and offline touch points come together, what role they respectively play along the path, and how they prioritize in terms of driving a decision. This allows brands to get a clear picture on what really matters and, importantly, enables them to better size the most significant touch points.

The end result of this integration of Big Data with primary research is an ability to identify the various paths to purchase in a category and a more realistic map of the different journeys your customers take. Ultimately this leads to a more accurate understanding of which touch points along the journey are most influential and how these change in different situations.
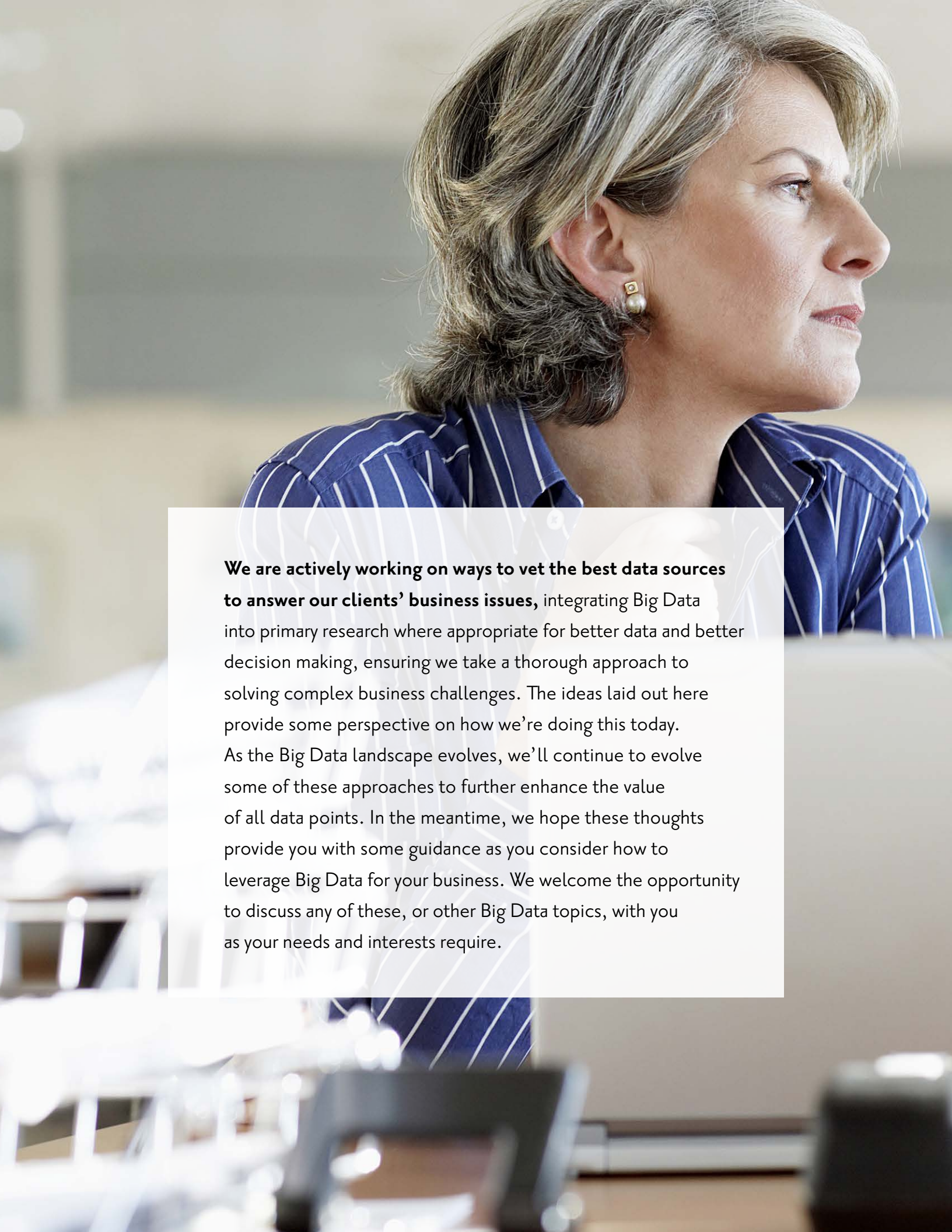
# Innovation

Tapping into consumers as collaborators through online communities, and culling and tracking social media and online news can provide a wealth of information to fuel a company's innovation pipeline. However, this information alone is often not enough to direct companies to the right innovation spaces or territories for their business. When used in conjunction with traditional market structure and market landscape research, which helps identify and size white space territories and determine fit, we can create a powerful combination to drive new thinking and spark winning ideas.

**We are actively working on ways to vet the best data sources to answer our clients' business issues,** integrating Big Data into primary research where appropriate for better data and better decision making, ensuring we take a thorough approach to solving complex business challenges. The ideas laid out here provide some perspective on how we're doing this today. As the Big Data landscape evolves, we'll continue to evolve some of these approaches to further enhance the value of all data points. In the meantime, we hope these thoughts provide you with some guidance as you consider how to leverage Big Data for your business. We welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these, or other Big Data topics, with you as your needs and interests require.

● Looking to drive performance for your brand?

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