

Our Shopping Experience Reimagined - Part 1

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BRADLEY HOWARD (BH): Hello. You're listening to Tech Reimagined, I'm Bradley Howard and today we're focusing on reimagining the way we shop. Joining me are two guests, Thomas Beetschen, the global tech director of Media Digital Consumer Experiences for Mondelez International, and my colleague, Jeremy Mayes, VP of Strategy Acceleration at Endava. So, let's get right into it. Thomas, what's the biggest shift you've seen in consumer behaviour this year?

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THOMAS BEETSCHEN (TB): Hi Bradley, for me I think it's the fact that a very large portion of the population and therefore consumers, are just getting used to the digital tools by basic video conference, by using their mobile. So, I think on one hand it's brilliant, because it really democratized the kind of the access to that technology. Yet, we also starting to see how much of a divide that creates because increasingly we have the people that who can afford them, and people who can't.

So, it's a double-edged sword but just basic access to what were probably tools that were just for people like you and I, who work a lot with technology absolutely everywhere, and my memory its better than me as Facetime and that for me, that's a milestone.

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BH: And Jeremy, what ways has technology changed the shopping experience, from both a seller and a buyer perspective?

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JEREMY MAYES (JM): I think maybe to answer that question in the context of 2020, in the context of COVID. I think, you know, if you imagine COVID hitting us 10 or 20 years ago, things would have been pretty radically different, right? Some of the changes that I've seen in consumer behaviour that are relevant here, I think, have been a fairly predictable focus and shift toward safety and security, right? I think, you know, safety people have changed the channels maybe that they shop in, and having goods delivered more often, taking advantage of things like, you know, buy online, pick up at the store, that sort of thing.

And I think, you know, if we talk about the types of goods they're buying, certainly at the beginning of the pandemic, people were scaling back, you know, maybe purchases of luxury goods and entertainment and things that weren't really staples and needs, but and really focusing on the things that they felt that they needed to make themselves and their families feel safe.

If this hit us 10 or 20 years ago, you wouldn't have had the things that have enabled those kinds of customer experiences, right, contactless payments, buy online, pick up in store. So, it would have been, I think, a very, very radically different experience. When I think about a little bit, there's a few examples that come to mind, Starbucks, for example, in the US, they've made an investment decision about five years ago to enable customers to order via its mobile app, which kind of complimented their existing mobile payment capabilities. And I think, you know, that's been something that's been, that's certainly helped them this year, because like most businesses, they've lost a lot of money in 2020. But this ability to buy in the app and pick up and sort of contactless payments, and feel safe and all that sort of thing, have actually helped them not lose as much as they really would have, and I think things like that just wouldn't have been possible, you know, 10 years ago, 12, 15 years ago.

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(BH): You've raised some good points there, so Thomas, where does director consumer come into play?

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(TB): I think we need to answer that question with the angle of what is the expected shopper experience, rather than, you know, the channel of the technology. So, we've seen some very interesting times during some of the lockdown periods where normal access to what is then the better shopping experience, which is, I need some chocolate, I want to get them, were stopped, people just couldn't go to the shop.

And I think in those type of circumstances we've seen a spike. So, people kind of revert, or discovered some of those new type of channels, because just the primary channel, and they want to remain the best channel, just wasn't available. So, there's an element of short-term substitution, and that's fine. But I think there's also an element of, again, what is really the shopping experience that is being changed by the consumer. And I work for a company who does snack, the best snack in the world, and we all kind of consume some of those. And when we are out and about, just coming out of the park with the kids, and just want to kind of stop and buy a packet of biscuits, we kind of want the biscuits now, and we don't really want to go and say, I'm going to place an order and some guy on a bike is going to go and find me and pass it to me, etc., etc.

So, again, what we see is some very specific activities like gifting, for instance, like personalisation where there is a real reason to actually do and execute that experience online in a DTC place. It makes a lot of sense, and I think this is, we're going to see more and more of this because the technology, the channel opens up opportunities that were just not easy to do before.

But I think those shopping activities that don't relate, that don't really apply are unlikely to be superseded. And I think again, direct to consumer can be looked into two different ways, there is these brands directly selling online, and again, for those very specific shopping experiences. And then there are retailers going mobile and going kind of DTC themselves. And that again, for brands and manufacturers, that's another dynamic.

So, we know that that's a growing part of the market, a lot of it is driven by convenience, and we know the consumers are behaving slightly differently, they've got the same intent, but they behave slightly differently with, obviously there is no store, so they are having to be a replacement for the shelf and the store. And there there is adaptation that we need to do, but I think the reason why people go onto those kinds of retailer DTC are unchanged, they are still trying to do their weekly shop, or their semi-weekly shop, and they have a pretty good idea of what they wanted to buy. And our job of our brands is make sure that we meet the need. And then when the need wasn't completely obvious then we actually propose a very interesting opportunity to buy.

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(BH): And for the immediate impulse purchases that you were talking about before for snacks, do you think there'll be a bigger role for some of the delivery companies to take a lead on that, that you might end up ordering a chocolate bar to be delivered to your house?

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(TB): There might, I look at it and I think that's bordering creepy, so I don't think it will be. But I think what I can see happening is consumers having like a primary view of they wanted something. So, that might be they wanted the pizza and then they wanted a dessert, or that might be they actually wanted a number of snacks because they've just remembered that they have, you know, four of five of their children's friends coming up after school.

I think there will need to be an element of bundle, for it to make a lot of sense. Personally, I'm not yet sold on the let's order one bar of chocolate online and let the drone land it in front of me. I just don't really see where that sits in the lives and the daily kind of experiences of consumers, there will be some various niche that we want that.

But otherwise, I'm not completely sure. I think the challenge really is, it's like this immediacy and then real immediacy. So, there's a big difference between having to go to the shop and getting in the car and getting to the supermarket and coming back, and that's, you know, for most people that will be like a 30 minute type of experience. And you go, OK, well then, I'm not going to go and buy straight away.

But when you really want the bar now because you're on the go, etc., etc., I don't think the kind of online piece will beat the corner shop any time soon, and if it doesn't then there is no reason for the consumers to get it. If he does then it's really quickly. So, I think there's going to be a tension here.

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(BH): Jeremy, what's –

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(JM): Yes, if I may, I agree with everything Thomas said, I think he made some very good points, especially around the idea of bundling products together, I think that's where the real value could potentially be realised, I think that right now, you might have some DTC sort of unicorns that have impressed them market and done pretty well. But I think the competition is increasing constantly and all the economics are really changing.

I think what the companies are struggling with is just making the economics work, and if you're not sort of doing more than just sort of these one-off purchases for individual products, a lot of times the economics do not really work. I think, I tend to be somebody who looks into the far future or, you know, maybe mid term future to try to see, try to imagine where I think ultimately things will go, because I think if businesses do that, if they can imagine what's the world going to be like with technology in, you know, around these issues in five years, 10 years, 15 years.

At least if you have an idea, that you have some level of confidence in, you can start to work towards that in small ways every single year. And when I think of retail in general, what I see, fairly far out probably, is that you have essentially an AI assistant that does all of your shopping for you, right, it understands your preferences, it understands your consumption patterns, it knows your inventory, it knows which products may interest you.

It can time and bundle purchases and scour the internet for sales and discounts to increase your buying power. It might even be able to collaborate with others from informed like networks, right, almost like Groupons, or like labour unions in order to kind of harness their collective power to affect markets in pricing and things like that.

And I think at some point in the future, in our lifetimes, I believe, you'll have most of your needs and wants sort of taken care of for you by something like this, and I think that's going to be where things are really interesting, because I also think on the retailer side, and maybe the CPG side, there's going to be a bit of an ongoing battle in trying to, I don't know, out smart that or work with that or, you know, it's going to be a whole new set of challenges.

But I think that's when you'll have things like direct to consumer really kind of coming to their own because at that point, like most technologies, there'll be a lot of pressure to eliminate the

middleman, right, a lot of pressure to intermediate the sort of equation, just to, you know, control costs and things like that. And I think it will be really interesting there.

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(TB): The point about, you know, the assistants ordering for us, I think for me, and I agree looking forward that's important. The challenge that led me in two directions, one is everybody buys vanilla, because then the machines are always optimising to do the most common denominator. So, suddenly then, everybody gets the same product.

Or, we are just personalising to the personal assistant, which is kind of the same thing anyway. So, to me there is an element of actually the choices will continue to be the same whether the decision making process shifts a little bit. The other piece is, and I think there it's important to have product consideration.

Ultimately, what is the product about. And if the product itself is not just in our case, for instance, you know, a biscuit or a chocolate, but it also can be act of affection from them to their children, a gift from, you know, a grandchild to their grandparents. That becomes really, really difficult to let go and give that responsibility to a personal assistant or a piece of AI.

I think there will be always, you know, in the end we are human, and the food is consumed by human, that's one thing that is a pretty, pretty good certainty for quite a foreseeable future. I think in food, we will continue to have, you know, human at the centre of everything, they get surrounded by tech, but they're still there.

I think there will be other industries where that's not the case, I can imagine my washing machine doing some stuff on its own because I don't think we need to get too involved in some of the activities. But I think for food, the humans aren't going anywhere any time soon.

[00:12:39]

(JM): And I think that's an excellent point, I think you're right in that obviously, food is a requirement for humans, right, but I think, as such, we've evolved in a way to have this affection for everything about food, and cooking and it's just an experience, right? Even shopping for food is an experience that I think really speaks to something in our brains that is quite, you know, ancient maybe.

And I think that it will be a lot of ways that that won't be affected, but I do think that technology will assist that in ways, and give you the ability to sort of say where I want to be engaged, and where I don't, right? Like maybe I do want to be engaged when we're talking about the dinners that I cook on the weekends and things like that, because that's when I really get to exercise that sort of innate desire that's in the back of your brain.

But maybe, I don't know, breakfast cereals or things like that, you know, I don't really care much about and you know my inventory, you know my consumption patterns, just make sure that I always have a box of Cheerio's in my pantry, right?

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(TB): Well, we'll see, we'll see. I think, I give you another example where the choice is made for you, so, you know, I don't watch a lot of TV but when I do, I tend to kind of like go towards Amazon Prime and Netflix. The one piece that infuriates me the most is the fact that the algorithm gets it wrong all the time.

It just doesn't give me anything interesting, and the number of times I find myself 40 minutes on the sofa, haven't watched a single film yet, because I'm trying to find a way to get to the stuff that I thinks going to be cool and, you know, I'm French, so it should be easy for the algorithm to kind of

say, the guy is French, let's go find some French recent film and try to put on default, and neither of them have managed to do that yet.

So that's what I say, but what it does give me is the top 10 of everybody else who watched, and I'm like, I'm better than that. I want to see something that is better. So, I think the machines going to have to deal with some of that but I'm not sure they will because there is hardly anything that tells us that they will be capable of, you know, replicating what is a human brain and what is a human kind of sensory system. So, I'm just a little bit not as bought in in data as others, that's probably why I don't work in a technology company at the moment.

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(JM): In your defence, I may be overly bought in, I'd like to read, and I'm sure we'll get onto this a bit later, I like to read things like books by Ray Kurzweil on things that have a very overly optimistic view in the future and artificial intelligence and all of that. So, I will openly admit that that's the side of the spectrum that I'm on.

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(BH): Thomas, back to your point about Amazon and Netflix, how do you think that CPG companies are helping customers to discover new products, because as we're all finding at the moment, when you do your supermarket order, or your subscription order, it's the same thing all the time, and you talked about the vanilla products before, so how do you promote new products?

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(TB): There's a couple of things that comes into play, first of all there's the nature of the product itself for us, the obvious basis is always better to bring the easter egg around Easter, and the Christmas calendar around Christmas, that helps. But those are in effect new product at the point in time during the year.

So, I think some of it is driven by event, and things like that. And I think the rest it's a lot about, on one hand, following how the taste and the needs evolve, so the creation of the new products come from, you know, a company identifying an emerging need or a change in the need. So, the question is not how do you promote, the question is how do you make the consumer aware.

But the promotion is just then an act of doing that. Really the way I look at it is in that sense, you know, advertising is just news as a consumer, if there is a new product you kind of need to know it exists so that you can buy it. You may want to try it. So, a lot of it is about awareness and just being in the consciousness of the consumers with the relevant messages, and advertising.

And this is where I think shops and retailer are really, really important for CPG, because one of the primary jobs of the retailer is actually to showcase the products that are there for sales when you, you know, imagine when you walk through the biscuit aisle at Tesco, there's just no way that you could have received an advert for every single of the SKU just there, you know.

When I was working closely with friends, we have some aisle where there is 800 SKU and that was just our company, so when you get into that complexity, just being visible through advertising on the shelf, through the packaging. A lot of it is state, it's about attracting the attention and then a lot of the things that we will do as a, you know, at Mondelez is then you strike a balance, you strike a balance of what are distinctive assets.

So, think of, you know, for those of you that are in the UK, Cadbury, or in the US, Oreo, etc., etc., those assets are relatively constant. And that helps the consumer recognise that this is a product that belongs to a family of product that people will have liked before, so that's the reassuring piece of this, not all new.

And yet when the new product comes up, then the packaging, the shape and the claim or whatever is the information, will be then carried through a whole raft of medium, whether again, it's the advertising, it might be on the website when we come in. Or it will be on the packaging in the shop.

So, it's a really complex piece, and that's what drives really all of the introduction that comes with a new product. And technology helps because technology now gives us more ways of bringing those messages to consumers at a time that is good for them, that is relevant for the product and relevant in their life.

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(BH): So, are you helping supermarkets and retailers in general, trying to make more customers aware of your new products now that many people are shopping online?

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(TB): Of course, and CPG organisation have been doing that for decades you know, it's helping the retailers understand what's the best way to organise the shelves, you know, and would consumer expect to find, you know, the chocolate biscuit next to the chocolate or next to the biscuits, that's not obvious. And there are choices that need to be made, so we've been doing that forever with retailers. And when retailers go mobile, or go online, then the same principle happens but the way it's getting the SKUs is therefore different because there is no physicality of the shelf because there is an infinity of the shelf.

And because we don't browse with the eyes, we browse with the search and that drives a completely different behaviour and then we need to be able to exploit that, you know, in the best way. I mean, unless you guys do that, but I've never walked into a supermarket, pick up my phone and says, find me the Cadburys.

I kind of get to the aisle and then I find them because they're all purple, and it's fine, I'm OK, I'm where I wanted to be. That's much harder to do or that's done very, very differently, you know, on an online shopping solution from a retailer.

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(JM): Thomas, do you ever see that experience being replaced digitally somehow, the experience of walking down the aisles and again, it is a very emotional sort of experience, right, that is, like you said, isn't really easily replicated, at least today, online. I know that a lot of companies have explored the idea of using like VR and things like that. But do you ever think that that will be, there'll be an adequate replacement from a digital perspective?

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(TB): Yeah, no and I think again it's, it's going back to the different categories. Some of the car manufacturers are replacing the showroom visit extremely well digitally, because you can configure your car, you can get into it through your screen actually without having the car salesman just giving you the speech that you're hoping that you won't have to listen to. So, I think I've seen the car industry doing it very well. The airline industries, you know, when we could travel probably doing some decent job, it's kind of giving you an idea of what the business class or the first class would be, for instance. I think L'Oréal just recently just came out with some of their product around, you know, just kind of like the virtual make up for Zoom and things like that.

But even without that, if you think of the act of, and I apply very, very little make up as Bradley will tell you, but for people who do, I think this is a private moment, and this is a moment where you want to be not with everybody, so the last thing you want to do is be in the shop. And you want to

see yourself, and the device is a perfect kind of tool to do that because it has a camera, it has a screen and it has the ability to then actually, to some extent, make you try make up without trying it.

So, but that' because again, the interaction of the human and the product is then different when you do make up, when you buy your car, when you kind of buy chocolate. So, I'm not saying it's not going to happen in kind of like, you know, the snack industry, there's some cases where we can, on personalisation for instance or, you know, helping people choose again the best possible kind of gift for a relative, or something like that.

But it really has to be looked at with the angle of what's the product, what's the consumer need and what's the shopping occasion, and environment.

[00:22:08]

(BH): Thomas, you're responsible for the marketing tech solutions as well as the digital experience for customers and consumers. How are you using the data generated by these platforms to influence product and technology decisions?

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(TB): The way I look at it is I try to make it relatively straight forward. Life is becoming very digital, very connected. That connectivity is happening through technology, whether it's a mobile phone, whether it's an email, etc., etc. And the reality is that technology cannot operate without creating data, creating traces. And within the structure of what is legally right, what is compliant, what it ethically right, there is some data that nobody should access, and there is some data that it perfectly fine to be used, because they are an element of how the transaction happened.

What we try to do is to say, among those set of traces that are OK for us to use, then how much are there, a bit of a proxy of actually what happened during a specific occasion, whether it was an order being placed, whether it was a delivery being made, whether it was somebody watching an ad. And what we try to do is to take some of those signals, not at all use them and say OK, Bradley you've just seen an ad, let me send you another email in case you didn't get the message.

We try not to do that. But what we try to do is say, OK, at scale, when we look at all of those interaction, can we use those data traces and aggregate them into performance signals, and into insights. So, really for me, it's an opportunity to get the pulse on what consumers, or sometimes not consumers, customers and other things, actually are, and we then aggregate this, and we then drive that towards product decisions, which new products should we do, advertising decisions. Who should we advertise what to who? And then technology in the sense of having as little dilution of that important information is the key, so finding the right platform, the right product, product kind of software, so that really the hands on are similar in terms of the data. That is probably the most important piece for us in terms of some of the kind of high-level technology architecture that we make.

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(BH): I liked how you described that in the question as to get the pulse of consumers, that was really nice. And sorry, Jeremy?

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(JM): I was just going to say that was fascinating to hear Thomas talk about, I think maybe this is an area where there is a bit of an art to it, it's not completely science, you know, I do believe in following data.

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(BH): Right, we'd like to have a quick fire round where we get short answers that say a whole lot, are you both ready for this?

(JM): Let's do it.

(TB): Yes Bradley.

[00:25:01]

(BH): We're going to start with guest first, so we'll start with you Thomas, what was your best recent shopping experience Thomas?

[00:25:07]

(TB): So, I live in the UK, so this is kind of a bit UK specific, and one of the big supermarkets, it's called Tesco. The kind of self-scanning piece at Tesco for me is just like near nirvana. I go in, I get my little kind of scanner, I pick what I want and then I get out, it's brilliant, I keep only the piece that I really like of the shopping experience, and I leave out kind of the paying piece at the, you know, away from the journey and I love it, self-checkout and self-scanning at Tesco.

[00:25:41]

(BH): And for international listeners, it's really important to say when Thomas says he skips out the paying part, he still actually pays for it. And Jeremy?

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(JM): Yeah, you know it's funny, I have the exact same answer. In the US, you know, we have a pretty wide variety of different grocery retailers, there's one that I use frequently in New Jersey called Stop and Shop, and the same exact thing. You come in, you scan your loyalty card, get a little scanner, scan everything and bag it as you put it in your carts, and then, you know, contactless payment and all that and you're done.

And to me, just the convenience of not having to do that at the end of trip, what just seems like a big hurdle when you have a full shopping cart, the ability to sort of see your ongoing tally of what you're going to be paying, and you know, savings and things like that, as you go.

[00:26:33]

(BH): And Thomas, what's one piece of technology you couldn't live without?

[00:26:36]

(TB): So, I am like proper old school when it comes to some kind of tech. So, I actually went all the way back to a very basic kind of analogue watch, that I have on my wrist, and it's very interesting because my problem was, I need glasses now, so for people to know, so I was really struggling to see what was the time, so I needed some dials, and then I needed some light.

And then I wanted to do that without being connected, because my watch is something that tells me the time, not for me, kind of how hard my heart is beating, and definitely not, I don't want anybody to know about when I'm sleeping and not sleeping. So, I absolutely love this watch because it does what a watch should do, it gives me the time whether I've got my glasses or not, or whether I've got lights or not. And this is just brilliant.

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(BH): Excellent, and Jeremy?

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(JM): Yeah, you know, I wish this wasn't my number one answer, but it is, my phone, and you know, I think the reasoning for me is I'm old enough to remember a time where when we didn't have the world's knowledge at our fingertips 24 hours a day. I would say number two for me, this may come as a surprise, is a 3D printer I have, which I think as a sort of product person who works in technology a lot, it's good for me to flex the same kinds of neurones in my brain that, at a sort of like tangible physical level when thinking of new product ideas. So, it's kind of a hobby but still one I think that I couldn't live without.

[00:28:14]

(BH): Thank you. And Thomas, what's your favourite snack?

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(TB): Ah, well, it is Cadbury Dairy Milk white, this is brilliant for me, it's a product that we've recently brought in the UK. Again, being French, kind of white chocolate was there in my childhood and I was kind of missing that, but the combo of Cadbury Dairy Milk white chocolate is just the best ever.

[00:28:41]

(BH): And Jeremy?

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(JM): This is a really difficult question for me, you know, and I want to say wine but that doesn't really sound like a snack, so I'm going to go with maybe Oreos, oddly enough. I think they're amazingly delicious, they are something that are just devoured in my household, mainly by my children, I try to exercise some restraint, but I just feel like they're kind of a perfect little cookie.

[00:29:05]

(BH): There are only a few snacks where it's impossible to have just one isn't there, Oreos are definitely up there. So, besides your respective employers, what's the most innovative company that inspires you?

[00:29:16]

(TB): So, it's interesting, my immediate reaction is to kind of go towards some tech company, but actually I'm not going to do that. I'm going to go with the pharma's right now. I am just absolutely in awe on how teams out there are coming up with development times that are 10 percent of what they would be before for support, you know, vaccines and some of the cure that we all hope will come soon.

But the ability to kind of find every single piece of time that might not have been absolutely critical before, just take it out and finding an innovative way of doing that. I think, to me, that is absolutely mind blowing, and if we can do that with the vaccine, that means that some of the other type of product development we see in the future will find a way to save a massive amount of time. So, pharma's for me.

[00:30:08]

(BH): Oh, thank you. And Jeremy?

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(JM): I'm continually inspired by Apple to this day, I think that when I think about what they could do with their war chest of cash, I think that they could feel a lot of pressure to release way more products than they do. And I think the amount of restraint they generally exercise, and the ability to sort of edit and keep things simple, even at the scale that they're at, is impressive to me. I think

that there are times where they make mistakes, but I still continue to be impressed for the most part. And Bradley, this might be, might give you a laugh, but I'm also a big Tesla fan.

I picked up a model three earlier this year, and I'm still in love with it, I think that they've really thought a lot of parts of the driver experience in very positive ways.

[00:30:55]

(TB): And can I ask you a question on this?

(JM): Sure.

(TB): On the Tesla experience, there was some news in the UK, where people were saying, one of the things which is, they don't know whether it's good or bad, is they're getting overnight updates to the car that fundamentally change the way the car behaves, now on one hand its brilliant because you don't have to go to the dealer anymore for the servicing and stuff like that. On the other hand, it was like bordering the unexpected change of behaviour of a product that I bought earlier, where do you sit on that as a Tesla kind of user and owner?

[00:31:29]

(JM): I think its an excellent question, I'll tell you that I think my experience, and I think I've sort of become part of an online Tesla community, I think it's generally the experience is very positive, I think people look at it like, I don't know, when you get excited about an update maybe for IOS, or Android or something, that brings in new features and new capabilities.

Sometimes they're really great. I do think there is, I think, Tesla tends to live fast and take chances sometimes, which might be a little terrifying when we're talking about the safety of passengers in a car. But, you know, I think that it's a different experience.

[00:32:04]

(BH): I think we could talk about your Tesla all day now, because I've got a whole load of questions about reliability, which I hear all different things about, but -

(JM): - sure.

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(BH): We should have a separate podcast about that Jeremy.

(JM): Yeah, they're not without, they're not without problems that's for sure.

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(BH): It's amazing how they are sometimes slated for reliability, but they have such amazing customer loyalty at the same time, which is quite rare in any brand.

So, my last question is, if you could have dinner with one person dead or alive, who would that be? And we'll go Jeremy first on this one?

[00:32:37]

(JM): Sure. This one is easy for me, I'm a huge science geek, and I would pick Albert Einstein and, you know, my reasoning there is, I think to come up with an idea like relativity it's so counter intuitive to human experience and so incompatible with our every day lives, that I think you have to have a truly special mind to go down that rabbit hole essentially. So, I think I would pay a lot of money to, you know, go out to the pub and have a few beers with him, if he were still around, and just try to, you know, let one tiny little sliver of that capability rub off on me.

(BH): And Thomas?

[00:33:19]

(TB): It would be Alan Turing because I want to know if he's a guy or a machine.

[00:33:28]

(BH): And on that bombshell, I think that we could probably end up discussing so much more all day long. But unfortunately, that's all we've got time for today. Please stay tuned for part two, which will be available next week, where Thomas and Jeremy will be telling us more about how they got to where they are today. Thank you.