The power of co-creation

Bulbshare

Executive summary of the key findings from our report

Co-creation: When brands and organisations develop products, services and campaigns in collaboration with their audiences.

Our white paper on the burgeoning trend of co-creation has revealed a major disparity between brand perception of how good their customer connection is, and how their customers or audiences actually feel.

In our survey - carried out with over 300 representatives from within brands and organisations and 500 members of the public - we discovered that while brands overwhelmingly feel they are very good at connecting to and understanding the needs of their audiences, those audiences actually feel comparatively disconnected to the brands they use.

Furthermore, our survey found that people consider brands that collaborate with their audiences - involving them in decision-making, asking their opinions and co-creating content and campaigns alongside them - to be more authentic, more transparent and more trustworthy.

Many brands are already using co-creation to connect with their customers, democratise how they make decisions and create products and services that better reflect the wants and needs of their audiences - and we have included case studies of those that are pioneering these practices in a variety of different markets.

While the brands and organisations we spoke to largely acknowledge that audience collaboration is key to improving business performance, they cited lack of budget, lack of technology and lack of capability as barriers to being more collaborative.

Bulbshare has defined its own model and toolkit for implementing co-creation into business practice in order to better connect to audiences, with four key stages: understand, ideate, create, advocate. Our report highlights how putting agile, innovative and cost-effective technology at the heart of this problem - driving deeper, more meaningful interactions with customers, engaging them in constant conversations and creative partnerships with your brand or organisation - is the key to unlocking the challenge of better audience connection.

For a demo of the Bulbshare technology - showcasing how we've used our co-creation model to improve business performance for a multitude of major international brands and organisations - contact Michael Wylie-Harris on **michael@bulbshare.com**.

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Co-creation: The future for brands

"The co-creation process gives voices to real people, empowering them to create richer brand experiences and develop products and services that better resonate with themselves and their peers."

Co-creation is the future for brands. As audiences increasingly seek two-way conversations, collaboration and the opportunity to create their own content, brands must adapt to survive. The smart ones are those that are prepared to shift the balance of power: democratise, give audiences a say, realise they need to put consumers at the heart of their brand. The brands that will own the future, are those that co-create.

In an age when audiences are increasingly cynical towards brands, trust, authenticity and transparency are all key. Co-creation is the most direct way of achieving this. For a more savvy, entrepreneurial generation of consumers – with the technology at their fingertips to connect to brands when and where they want to – the brands to trust, the brands to love, the brands to recommend to friends are those that treat them not as customers, but as colleagues and collaborators.

Co-creation is about leveraging the voices, ideas and opinions of real people in order to create better products and services, as well as brands that are more in touch with their customers. Done right, it reduces the distance between company and consumer, drives brand loyalty and reduces the cost and risk linked to new product development.

In Bulbshare's exclusive co-creation survey, carried out with over 300 representatives from within brands and organisations and over 500 members of the public, 81% of our respondents said that brands that collaborate with their customers are more authentic, 86% of people said brands that co-create are more trustworthy, and 79% of people felt that being involved in a brand's online community would make them feel more involved with that brand.

A new era

This is the era of co-creation. Consumer attitudes have changed and marketing messages that seek to interrupt and sell rather than interact and engage are falling on deaf ears. According to the Harvard Business Review 2017, 'trust in brands is an all time low'. There are currently 200 million users of ad-blockers worldwide, according to Business Insider, and 33% of online adds don't generate awareness or drive any lift in purchase intent (Nielsen 2016).

Co-creation is all about that one, very simple idea:
that working together is better.

A direct reaction to this trend, co-creation doesn't treat customers as mere consumers - it allows them to add value by putting them at the core of the business. Modern audiences are no longer passive, they are active creators of content and insight with the ability to promote, market and advertise your brand on the most public and affective of forums - so why not leverage that power? Co-creation is all about that one, very simple idea: that working together is better.
The thought that when we collaborate, when we listen to each other, when we embody a community spirit, we'll create something far better than if we don't listen, if we work in silos, if we resist the collaborative process. It goes beyond asymmetrical relationships where a brand sits on the one side and the user or customer on the other. It's about acknowledging that all parties bring different expertise to the process, and that these different forms of expertise are of equal value and fundamental to this collaboration.

Many forward-thinking brands are already reaping the benefits of co-creation (see our Co-creation in practice section on page 17), but while most companies consider themselves to be customer-focused, the vast majority are still yet to fully understand the importance of being truly collaborative. In our co-creation brand survey, 69% of respondents from within brands said they considered their company to be extremely customer-centric, and 69% said they think they know what their customers really think about their brand. Yet 77% of respondents from our consumer survey said they felt that brands do not listen to their feedback, opinions and ideas - presenting a stark contrast between brand perception around customer connection and the reality of how consumers really feel about their interactions and experiences with brands.

A force for good

Co-creation turns your customers into stakeholders, marketeers and creative partners. Blurring the lines between creator and consumer and empowering people to influence the decisions their favourite brands make doesn't just lead to customer-centric products and services, it also has the potential to transform brands into a force for good in the world. And as they begin to understand the power of listening to their audiences, we'll increasingly see brands that care, brands with a conscience and brands with a level of transparency that was previously unheard of.

Co-creation brands are outperforming their competitors - with a return four times higher.

The remarkable shift that Paul Polman has taken across the portfolio of Unilever brands is a case in point and one that signifies that this isn't just a periphery fad – he's made it central to the brand story of a corporate giant. Better still, it's contributing to the bottom line. According to the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan (USLP) annual progress report, about half of Unilever's growth in 2016 came from its sustainable living brands, which grew 30% faster than the rest of the company's business.

The recent Iris Participation brand index report also recognised that those companies putting 'customer participation' or co-creation at the core of their brand offer are not only increasing workforce retention, they're also outperforming competitors with a return four times higher than that of the bottom 20 brands.

Tech-enabled

As ever, technology has also been a driving force behind the growth of co-creation. The advent of big data, alongside the evolution of social media and mobile technology has enabled new levels of brand-consumer connectivity and inspired heightened audience expectation around how brands behave. Social media opened the door to facilitating two-way conversations and interactions between brand and consumer, but, with 65% of people from our survey saying they do not feel that social media is a place where they can truly say what they think, it no longer provides a deep enough level of insight. For those that want to go beyond social media, co-creation tech is already out there: solutions that allow brands to connect with their audiences on-the-move, gaining valuable consumer insights and feedback, creative ideas and user-generated content - just like Bulbshare. These platforms create closed communities of targeted consumer groups, then let brands share

questions, ideas and briefs to a specific community, getting responses from people they value and trust. While this kind of activity has existed for a long time via social media, the new wave of co-creation technology marks a transformative shift in how brands can connect directly with their audiences in a private, targeted space. Despite the availability of this technology, our survey shows that many brands remain unaware of its existence. While 88% of our respondents agreed that collaborating with their customers drives revenue, 64% cited 'lack of budget' as a barrier, 44% cited 'lack of capability' and 33% said that 'lack of technology' prevents them from properly connecting to and collaborating with their customers.

Generation co-creation

In recent years, the rise of a newly empowered, entrepreneurial and media savvy generation of consumers has meant brands have no choice but to co-create. Gen Z has its finger on the pulse when it comes to social media brand marketing, and with mounting pressure being placed on businesses to reinvent themselves for the Snap-Chat generation, brands must leverage those expertise if they're to create meaning with a generation of which 77% are more likely to buy through peer to peer recommendations (Nielsen 2016), as opposed to traditional marketing messages. Make no mistake, co-creation is being driven by consumers, not brands.

*This is a massive new consumer group
that doesn't like being advertised to.*

The role of the brand must shift to become that of a conversation facilitator, rather than a conversation leader; they must listen rather than speak and be prepared to be guided by the behaviours of their young audiences. Gen Z (sometimes called 'Generation Me') has grown up with the ability to broadcast its voice and opinion to thousands of followers and friends on social media, and brands must take heed of this. This is a massive new consumer group that doesn't like being advertised to and that won't tolerate being told what to think. Rather, they expect to dictate - or, at the very least, take part in - the conversation.

Results from our survey suggest that brands are aware of this shift and that they believe they are doing everything they can to properly connect to this new generation: 94% of our respondents from within brands said that understanding their customers is 'extremely' or 'very' important to their overall business performance, 75% said they believe their brand has a genuine connection with its customers, and 63% rate their organisation as 'best in class' or 'really good' at understanding customer needs in order to shape business strategy. But despite this, 65% of people we spoke to said they don't feel at all connected to the brands they use, and 60% of people do not think that brands care what about their customers' opinions.

Co-creation: The opportunity

Essentially, co-creation is a brand's gateway to creating better and more relevant products, services and campaigns. Companies that co-create display trust, authenticity, respect and openness, gain loyal brand evangelists and are seen as democratic and progressive - while at the same time driving increased customer connection, increasing sales and reducing product development risk. Research firm Nielsen tells us that businesses with customer communities at their core display a 33% bigger growth rate than their peers, while industry news website Business Insider cites a 19% increase on customer spend when people join an organisation's online community, and confirms that 97% of marketeers agree online customer communities improve business.

Now is the time to co-create...

Our co-creation white paper includes: insight from key experts; the findings of our brand and customer poll; case studies on the brands and organisations that are pioneering audience collaboration; Bulbshare's unique co-creation model; and a step-by-step toolkit on how to best build co-creation into your business operations. Now is the time to leverage the power of your customers, now is the time to co-create.

The statistics

Our co-creation survey was carried out with over 300 representatives from within brands and organisations and 500 members of the public. We asked respondents from within brands about how well their organisation connects to its customers; and talked to the real people who use those brands on a daily basis about their experiences. These are our findings...

The statistics

How customer-centric is your brand or organisation?

69% of respondents consider their organisation to be extremely customer-centric.

And...

70% of respondents think they know what their customers really think about their organisation.

Yet...

77% of people feel that brands do not listen to their feedback, opinions and ideas.

How important is understanding the needs of your customers?

94% of respondents say understanding their customers is 'extremely' or 'very' important to their overall business performance.

And...

75% of respondents actually believe their organisation has a genuine connection with its customers.

Yet...

65% of people don't feel at all connected to the brands they use.

To what extent does customer insight inform business your strategy?

63% of respondents rate their organisation as 'best in class' or 'really good' at understanding customer needs in order to shape business strategy.

Yet...

60% of people do not think that brands care what they think.

Do you favour brands that collaborate with their customers?

77% of people favour brands that collaborate with their customers.

Yet...

Only **37%** of respondents from within brands and organisations say they collaborate with their customers in order to develop ideas and strategy.

Are brands that collaborate more authentic?

81% of people think that brands that collaborate with their customers are more authentic.

And...

86% of people think that brands that collaborate with their customers are more trustworthy.

Do online communities make you feel more involved with brands?

79% of people feel that being involved in a brand's online community would make them feel more involved with that brand.

Is social media a place where you can truly say what you think?

65% of people do not feel that social media is a place where they can truly say what they think.

What are the barriers to understanding your customers' needs?

When asked about the main barriers to understanding the wants and needs of their customers...

64% of respondents said 'lack of budget'.

44% of respondents said 'lack of capability'.

33% of respondents said 'lack of technology'.

What the experts say

We spoke to a panel of experts from the fields of academia, journalism, insight and industry, gaining a taste of what they think about the co-creation movement, where it is headed and how it is set to change the way brands and consumers behave in the future.
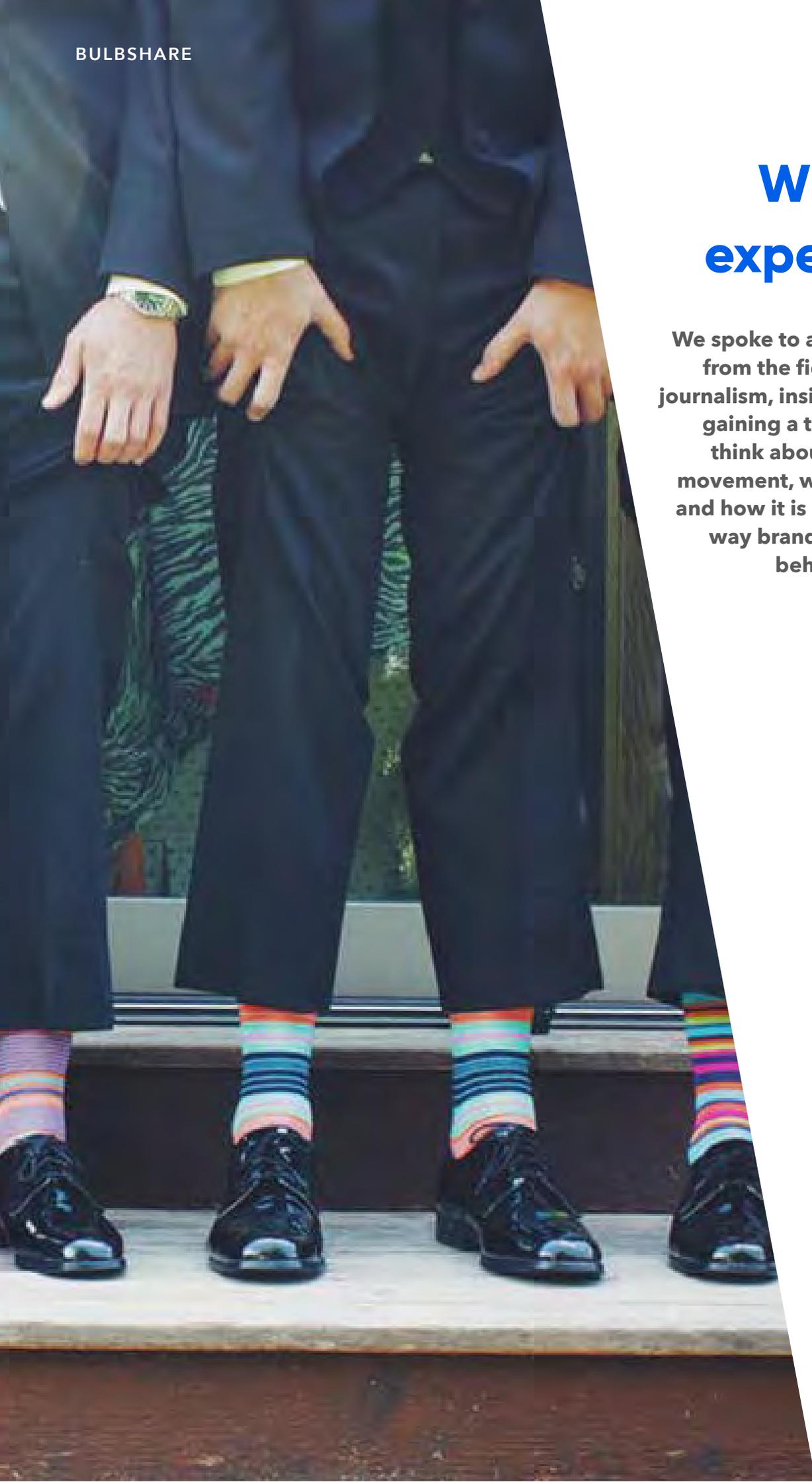
The brand consultant

Peter Firth

Peter Firth is a consumer trends editor and brand consultant who has worked for the likes of M&S, Estée Lauder, Microsoft and Harrods. A regular commentator on television and in the national media, he has appeared on the BBC World Service, Bloomberg TV and in the pages of the Sunday Times Style, City AM and The Guardian.

On the rise of co-creation...
"Co-creation is already becoming the 'norm'. A marketing manager is unlikely to understand as much about his or her audience as the audience themselves. Inviting members of a specific movement, social group or target audience in to work with the brand will always yield good results if the brand is willing to listen, and is coming from a place of integrity. If it is done well, there is no doubt that it closes the gap between the brand and the customer."

On working with influencers...
"Brands are co-opting the talents, reach and influence of their audience in order to speak more appropriately to those that they want to connect with and sell to. I think that we are seeing this come to the fore significantly in brands that engage with the youth and Gen Z segments. A lot of work has been done in recent years of course with 'influencer' marketing. There are also compelling stories that brands can tell if they have been able to give a young struggling creative a leg up or more profile in a specific industry."

On connecting to millennials...
"In today's pious millennial collective consciousness we all like to think we are doing things for the cause, the spirit, the passion, rather than the money or status. Therefore you are dealing with people who don't view themselves as consumers. They like to think of themselves as participants rather than recipients."

On the power of peer-to-peer marketing...
"Who are people more likely to listen to: Unilever or Beyonce? People believe in other people more than they do in companies. If you look at how customer complaints are almost totally played out online and in the pubic sphere now through Twitter etc, the power balance is shifting in favour of consumers, as their voices are louder and more networked."

"A marketing manager is unlikely to understand as much about his or her audience as the audience themselves."

The academic

Yvonne Richardson

Yvonne Richardson is a marketing consultant and senior lecturer on Fashion Marketing and Branding at Nottingham Trent University, with a specialisation in consumer behaviour and innovation. Her multi-disciplinary background includes more than 20 years of experience in brand marketing and planning with senior positions held within prominent blue chip international companies within the beauty and healthcare industries.

On winning brand loyalty with Generation Z…

"More than their predecessors, this younger generation desires opportunities to interact with brands and wants brands to allow them to influence their products. They are the content creation generation. Thinking about what this generation want most – they want honesty, personalisation and involvement. Giving them an opportunity to get involved via co-creation, you meet their intrinsic needs to stamp their mark on brands, make a real difference and actually customise their experience. The upside of this for brands is that you get their attention and if done well, their loyalty."

On the potential pitfalls of doing co-creation badly…

"I think there is a danger of co-creation being abused and brands jumping on the band-wagon. Co-creation is about letting in the right people for the right challenge. In the area of innovation for example, you need to target the right co-creators rather than taking a blanket approach. All consumers are not equal when it comes to innovation and tapping into the ideas of Mr and Mrs average may lack richness and originality. In the early stages of innovation, tapping into early adopter and innovators will be more effective in generating new and original ideas."

On the 'UGC bandwagon'…

"Another watch-out is brands jumping on the band-wagon and just curating user generated content (UGC) and hashtag campaigns to create buzz. Where these activities fall short is that they don't truly satisfy millennials' and Gen Z's desire to actually create. This is a generation who are incredibly marketing savvy and hard to please. They want to know what's in it for them, they want to feel special and get recognition. The message to brands here is exploit this generation at your peril!"

On the challenges of connecting to 'Generation Me'…

Today's consumers are bombarded with more commercial messages than ever and have learned to filter these messages by using ad blockers, etc. Research suggests that these digital natives don't like being advertised to explicitly; that they don't like the pushy and inauthentic nature of a lot of traditional advertising. From a brand perspective one of the challenges this creates therefore is how to connect with this group and cut through the clutter. Another stereotype often levied at this 'younger generation' is that they are 'generation me', fuelled by social media and the numerous opportunities it creates for self-promotion and reflection. This is a generation that has grown up used to having their voices heard. Whilst not all millennial stereotypes hold up to closer examination, this generation really did grow up being told they were special and their opinions matter.

*"Thinking about what this generation want most –
they want honesty, personalisation and involvement."*

The industry insider

Mark Baxter

Currently a managing partner at boutique growth consultancy Fika, **Mark Baxter** started his career at Procter & Gamble and has gone on to hold positions such as Head of Marketing & Strategy and Head of Global Strategic Category Marketing at Tesco. Having worked with a wealth of major international FMCG brands, he is an expert in the fields of commercial strategy, marketing, pricing, customer loyalty, digital and product launch.

On how co-creation means getting back to basics...
There is a push by customers for brands to be clearer (and more transparent). The market is shifting and consumers are demanding more from their products; it will be interesting to see how the established brands compete. Co-creation, simply put, is understanding who you are as a brand, creating products that you love and want to use, sticking to your principles and having conversations with your advocates. It's a democratic approach to marketing and product development. It's how brands originally evolved.

On the consumer trends that are driving the co-creation shift...
Supermarkets are favouring private label and customers are favouring local brands - avoiding global markets and looking to protect local communities, farmers and tradesmen. There's a regenerated appreciation for local and trust and transparency sit at the heart of that. Customers want to associate with likeminded people who will listen to them. The issue for brands is how to compete in this post scale economy, the balance between giving customers what they are seeking and making these options cost effective. In the past five years, large global brands have lost share to small brands and start-ups in 77% of categories. Consumers crave unique and authentic brands that share their personal preferences and are researching and seeking out products rather than responding to traditional advertising. This erosion is happening in almost very consumer category.

On Mergers and Acquisitions vs. Research and Development...
M&A has replaced R&D in many large FMCG companies and it will be interesting to see if these large brands are able to preserve the quality and authenticity of their acquisitions. (A principle isn't a principle until it costs you money - particularly as many customers see propaganda replacing marketing.) The big question is whether its better (read easier and more profitable) to innovate or acquire. I think the balance is tipping, but the large FMCG companies are acquiring disrupter brands at a premium with the aim of competitive neutralisation. Going forward, those that develop this skill will obtain competitive advantage, which will drive growth and competitiveness. We're not quite there yet but the time will come.

On the changing expectations of millennials and Gen Z...
They're not loyal to brands, they're loyal to principles and values – that's why brands are hurting. They're turning down high paid city and corporate jobs and are pursuing fulfilling careers. The opportunity is to tap into this, however if that isn't your natural state as a brand, it can be perceived as disingenuous. Successful brands and companies need to become truly customer-centric, which means listening and having conversations. The challenge is how to to this at scale without diluting the ethos.

"The big question is whether it's better (read easier and more profitable) to innovate or acquire."

The insight expert

Tom Kenyon

Tom Kenyon is the Director of Insight, Innovation and Strategyat the world's leading co-creation agency, Latimer Group. With a background in innovation strategy for major broadcasters and non-profits organisations, Tom has developed award-winning digital campaigns for the BBC, Jamie Oliver, Channel 4 and ITV, and has recently headed up a multi-million pound programme on digital innovation in education for UK Think Tank, Nesta.

On why we're seeing a need for co-creation…
"The agency world has traditionally been built on the idea of the rock star creative – the Don Draper figure crafting perfect broadcast moments. But the truth is, unless it's the John Lewis Christmas ad or a Superbowl spot, broadcast moments reach fewer and fewer people. In a world of distinct audiences projecting different personalities on multiple platforms, Don Draper cannot save you. Young people in particular want content that doesn't feel like broadcast; content that is relevant to their specific context, needs and interests. Co-creation offers a route to achieving that. Content by the audience, for the audience. This is why smart brands are moving towards more inclusive creative strategies."

On how co-creation isn't just for young audiences…
"Millennials and Gen Z have never had to ask permission to be published. Creating video and photo content is as natural for them as writing. Equally, brands have always had direct channels of communication – there is an expectation of open access. Co-creation could be seen as a response to these trends. However, it would be a mistake to think that co-creation only works for younger audiences. There has been a lot of work in public services such as Nesta's People Powered Health programme that shows co-design and co-creation techniques can be an effective way to work with any audience that needs communication to meet their distinct needs."

On a future where co-creation is ubiquitous…
"Co-creation is a symptom of wider trends (led by technology) towards inclusiveness, open-ness, disintermediation, transparency and hyper-targeted content. In the future if a brand's messages and personality are built behind closed doors, people are going to wonder why. It will be understood that part of your brand message is going to be one of exclusion. And before anyone counters this with the old Steve Jobs quote that 'People don't know what they want until you show it to them', bear in mind that (a) the Apple Store design was absolutely based on a co-creation process, and (b) Android's open system has 85% of the international market share."

On being 'part of the conversation'…
"We are living in an age where brand identities are more in the hands of consumers than ever before. You can craft a public image and brand message as much you want – if the right influencer re-mixes your ad or goes viral with a comment, that becomes your brand identity. The only way to keep on top of that is to be part of the conversation (rather than lead it) and, increasingly, to have values or a purpose that is wider than the product itself."

"We are living in an age where brand identities are more in the hands of consumers than ever before."

Co-creation in practice

Meet some of the leading brands and organisations using audience collaboration to leverage the power of their customers and transform the way their businesses operate.
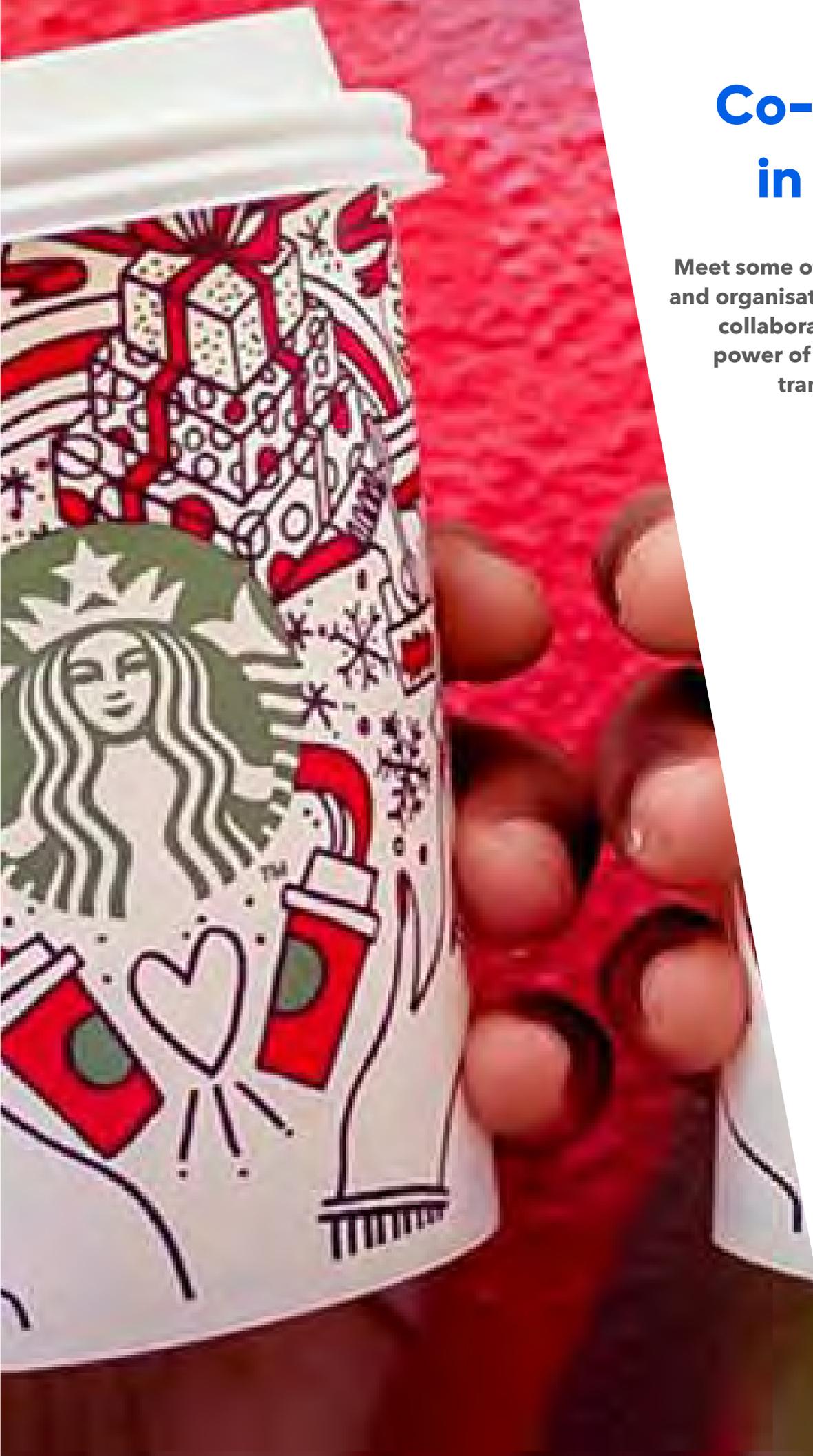
Co-creation in practice

Heineken: The nightclub of the future

The Dutch beer company Heineken wanted to connect to its customers through a pioneering pop-up nightclub space that reflected the wants and needs of its audiences. Through a global insight project that connected to communities from 12 cities around the world, Heineken worked with 120 club-goers as a springboard for idea generation and design inspiration - and created an internally crowd-sourced design team out of young designers who uploaded their portfolios via social media.
The pop-up concept club travelled the world. It gained mass global coverage including 533 news pieces and four million online views, and resulted in a 40% sales increase for Heineken in best practice markets.

DHL: Customer-led innovation

Through a series of insight workshops, parcel delivery giants DHL realised that its customers wanted the brand to rethink its supply chains, and that this would improve business performance. Understanding that innovation should be customer focused, the company built international innovation centres in Singapore and Germany where targeted customer groups could collaborate with DHL employees in order to share ideas and co-create solutions. From over 6,000 employee customer engagements taking place in DHL, numerous innovations and changes to process have been developed including AR glasses that have improved warehouse picking efficiency by 25%, robotics applications and a drone delivery project. Since launching the project, DHL's entire approach to service development has become much more transparent, collaborative and customer-centric, and as a result more efficient, innovative and successful.

Starbucks: Crowdsourcing idea generation

The US coffee company Starbucks has been co-creating for nearly ten years now. With the tagline 'Share. Vote. Discuss. See.', My Starbucks Idea has crowdsourced over 190,000 product, service and in-store innovations since 2008 - with almost 300 being implemented by the brand. Without My Starbucks Idea, we wouldn't have Cake Pops, Hazelnut Macchiato, and free Wi-Fi, to name but a few innovations generated by the initiative.

GE: Co-creation for open innovation

Electrics company GE has launched its own open innovation platform called Fuse, in order to source ideas and co-create innovations in direct collaboration with not just its customers, but with other start-ups. Through the Fuse project, anybody can sign up to join a community of engineers, coders or developers and take part in incentivised challenges that drive idea generation and innovation. GE are pioneers of open innovation and a new approach to company culture that is much more about collaboration and transparency. Through Fuse they will often share information about the internal workings of their products with outside communities, but their ethos of co-creation prevents them from being nervous about this - preferring to see the positive side of enhanced innovation through the power of the community.

LEGO: Customers at the heart of a brand

In recent years, co-creation has been a big part of the success of Danish toy company LEGO, with its IDEAS community that allows customers to co-create new designs. The website was set up for LEGO enthusiasts who can both create, vote and give feedback on new projects - with projects that receive over 10,000 votes going into a review phase by senior LEGO employees. If the product is approved, the creator will receive 1% of the net sales of that product.
Consumer insights are now a core part of a LEGO strategy that enables staff to make consumer-led decisions. The LEGO Friends play set was designed through the process of co-creation, and came from the insight that young girls prefer designs with bright colours and environments that have emotional connection. The company conducted 13 research studies over a four-year period, which involved their target market creating new products in collaboration with designers. The insight lead to one of the biggest commercial successes in LEGO history, with a new product range that attracted new customers that they had previously not been able to connect with.

Budweiser: Project 12 Beer

Budweiser's Project 12 Beer asked consumers to vote on their favourite concoction, from 12 flavours created by the brand's team of in-house brewmasters, at numerous in-person local events such as music festivals - with brewmasters being on-hand to receive direct feedback from consumers. More than 25,000 consumers gave their opinions and the drink that garnered the most favourable attention was a golden amber lager called Black Crown. Such was the success of the project that Budweiser launched Project 12 again the following year, with beer flavours being designed and launched in collaboration with customers.

Giffgaff: A brand built on collaboration

Giffgaff began with transparency, democracy and co-creation at its core. Allowing its customers to participate in both a proprietor network forum and a broader social media strategy to provide feedback on product features and support, it's a brand that's effectively run by its audience - with customer ideas leading directly to new product development and innovation, and the customer community even dictating pricing structures. The product and service development process not only includes customers, but rewards them for their contribution.

Jameson: First Shot film competition

While Jameson's First Shot isn't a direct example of co-creation, it does show a brand that empowers communities to create content. Now in its sixth year, the First Shot competition asks film makers to take part in a short film contest, with the support of the brand - with winners getting the chance to work with professional Hollywood film crews and actors, and access to wider opportunities within the industry. The competition generates a wealth of user-generated content that is forever linked to Jameson and a great PR story around a brand that supports creative communities.

Our co-creation model

Bulbshare has a defined and proven process for co-creation, all delivered by the technology within our app and analytics dashboard.

Our co-creation model

4

Advocate through audience

By collaborating directly with your audiences, you will create an army of empowered brand ambassadors.

1

Understand your audience

Develop actionable insights in real-time to develop a deep understanding of how your customers think and feel about key brand issues.

Utilise technology

Empower and democratise

Engage with the right communities

3

Create with your audience

Create community-generated content with your audience and ask them to share that content across their own social media channels.

2

Ideate with your audience

Ask your your audience to develop ideas for solving issues within your business, ensuring more customer-centric plans.

Our co-creation toolkit

Our ten-step guide, broken down into the core principals and key pillars of our co-creation model, will show you how to utilise a collaborative approach in order to build a brand that is truly customer-centric.

Our co-creation toolkit

Core principles

1 Utilise technology that facilitates audience collaboration and co-creation. Social media is no longer the only platform on which to connect with consumers; co-creation specific tech is out there, and it will make the co-creation process easier, more efficient and more effective.

2 Empower and democratise. Set creative challenges to your audience communities and create campaigns that both inspire and empower people to get involved and have a say. Encourage your audiences to get onboard by really communicating how much their ideas and opinions matter to your brand.

3 Engage with the right communities that have knowledge and experience of the products and services that you want to gain insight or content around. Connecting to targeted groups of people that actually use those products and services will gain far more relevant and valuable feedback.

Understand your audience

4 Be transparent. Invite your audience into the heart of your brand by being honest and open about the decisions you make and the way you operate. Transparency builds authenticity and trust, and should be a key part of defining not just how you communicate with your customers, but with your employees as well.

5 Be 360 in your approach, conducting customer-led insight and journey mapping around every part of your business in order to define a blueprint for processes and customer experience. CX should be central to how your brand is run and should be defined by direct customer feedback.

Ideate and collaborate with your audience

6 Involve your audiences in a constant conversation, gaining insights, feedback and ideas relating to every product and service you launch – and engaging them at every stage of the decision-making process. Customer contributors are motivated by immediate and constant feedback, so ensure you have teams in place to respond to every piece of customer feedback.

7 Leverage the power of peer-to-peer. Create communities which allow your audiences to like, comment on, share and validate each other's ideas about your brand. Better ideas come from community collaboration.

Create with your audience

8 Act on feedback and implement customer ideas into the way you run your brand or develop your products and services. If the insight, feedback and content generated from your engagement mechanic is actually taken onboard, people will see that you are serious about listening to them and democratising your business.

9 Work together on creative products. Employ mechanics that allow you to review ideas that your customers submit, make comments on them then invite your customers to develop those ideas further. In this way, you are acting as a creative director to your team of customer creatives.

Advocate through audience

10 Don't limit co-creation to just problem solving or new product definition; use it to define how your brand grows and the new markets it grows into. Co-creation can come to define your brand identity, being part of its brand positioning and marketing strategy. Just as you involve your customer communities with product development, you should allow them shape your brand strategy and positioning - which will lead to deeper, more far-reaching brand advocacy.
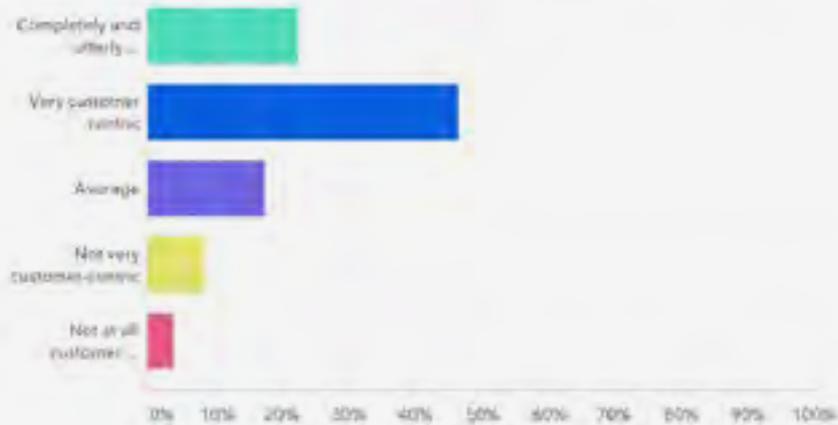
Appendix

A graphic breakdown of all of the results from our co-creation survey - carried out with over 300 representatives from within brands and organisations and 500 members of the public.
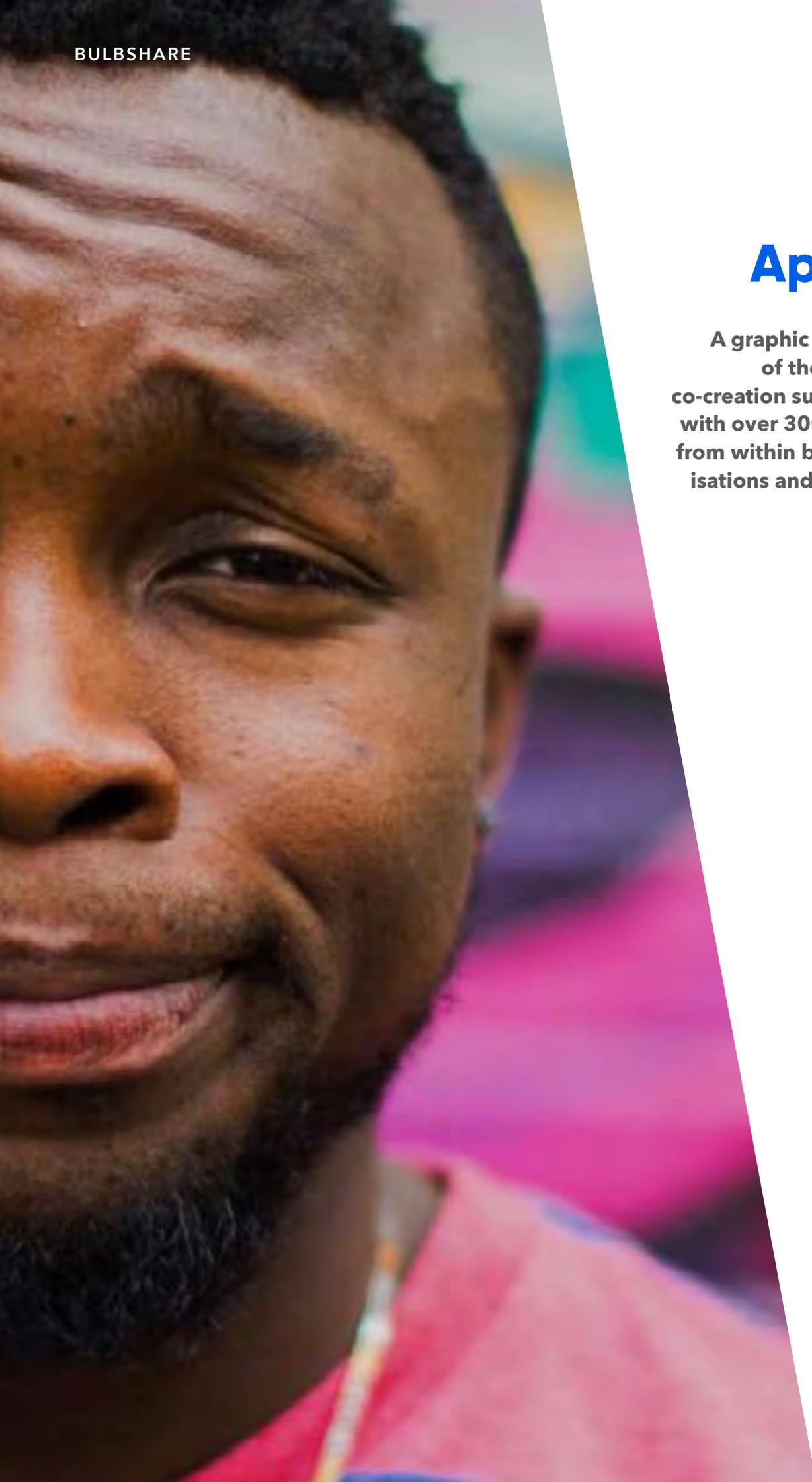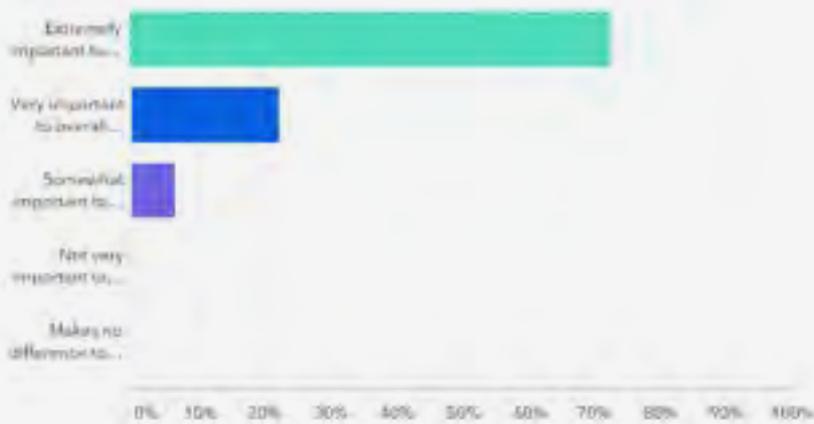
Appendix

How customer-centric do you consider your organisation to be?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Completely and utterly customer-centric	21.88%
Very customer centric	46.88%
Average	18.75%
Not very customer centric	9.38%
Not at all customer centric	3.13%

How important is the understanding of your customers to your overall business performance?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Extremely important to overall business performance	71.38%
Very important to overall business performance	21.88%
Somewhat important to overall business performance	6.25%
Not very important to overall business performance	0.00%
Makes no difference to our overall business performance	0.00%

How would you rate your organisation on understanding your customers to shape business strategy and development?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▾ We are best in class	18.75%
▾ We are really good	43.75%
▾ We are OK	34.38%
▾ We are not very good at all	3.13%
▾ Terrible	0.00%
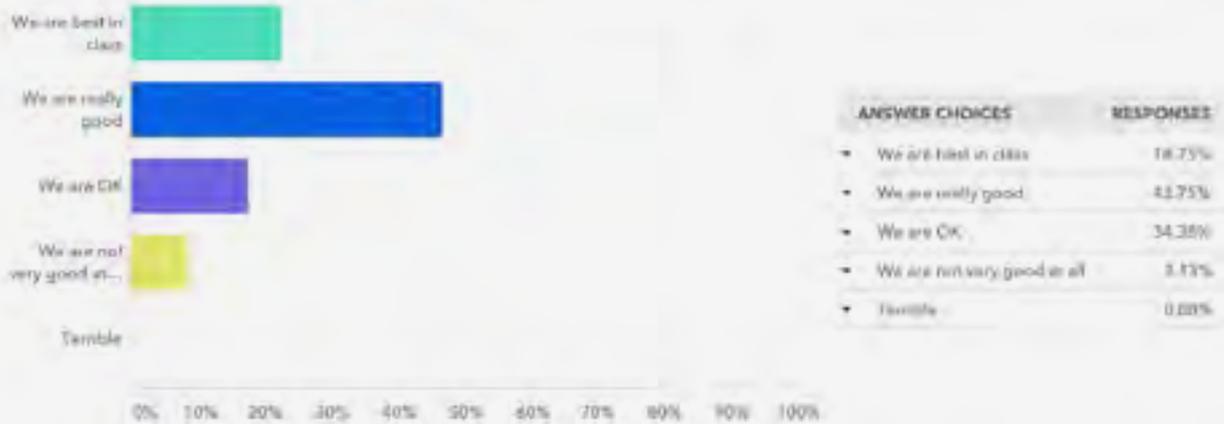
What would you consider the main barrier to being better at understanding your customers within your organisation (choose top 3)?
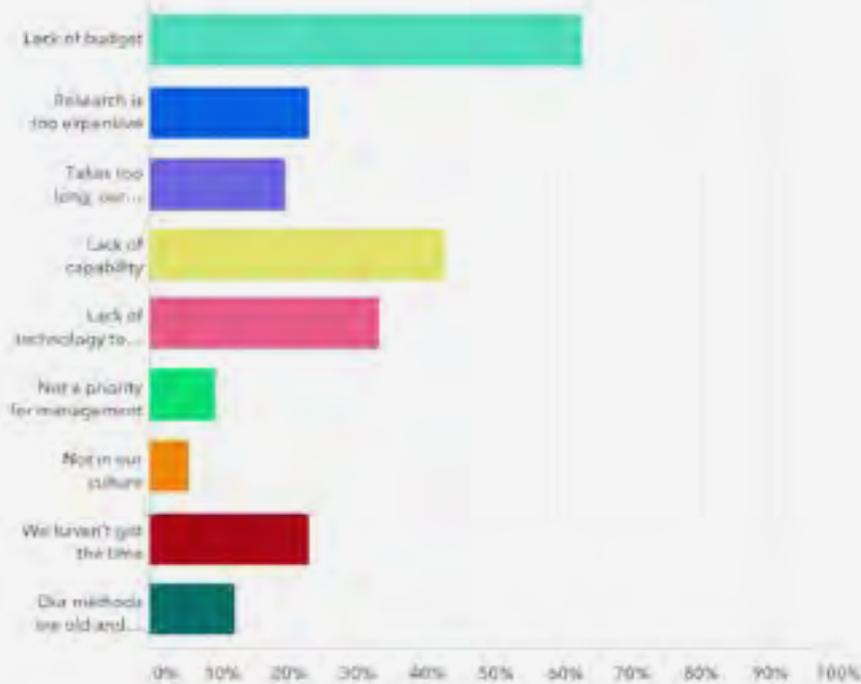
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▾ Lack of budget	63.33%
▾ Research is too expensive	23.33%
▾ Takes too long, our business moves too fast	20.00%
▾ Lack of capability	43.33%
▾ Lack of technology to enable us to understand customer better	33.33%
▾ Not a priority for management	10.00%
▾ Not in our culture	6.67%
▾ We haven't got the time	23.33%
▾ Our methods are old and not effective	13.33%

Which statement below best represents how ideas and strategy is developed in your organisation?
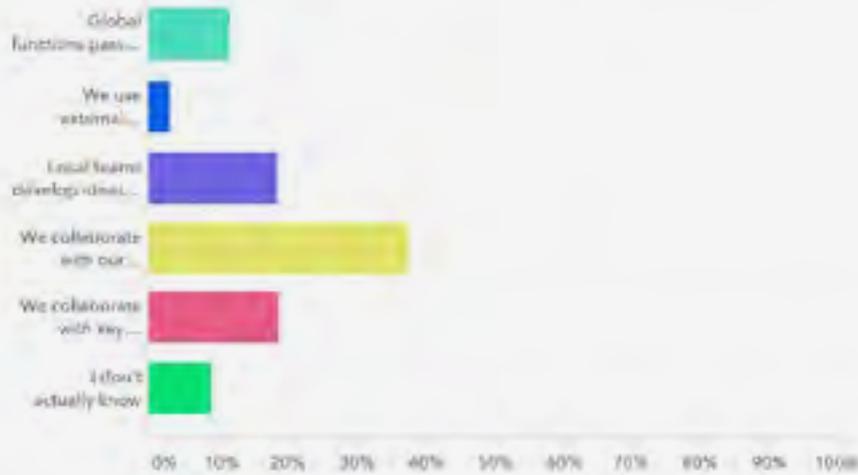
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Global functions pass down ideas and strategy for local markets to implement	12.50%
We use external agencies to lead on ideas and strategy	3.13%
Local teams develop ideas and strategy for the businesses they run	18.75%
We collaborate with our customers to develop and validate best ideas and strategy	37.50%
We collaborate with key partners to develop and validate best ideas and strategy	18.75%
I don't actually know	9.38%

In relation to idea and strategy development, which approach do you believe would be the most effective for driving business performance?
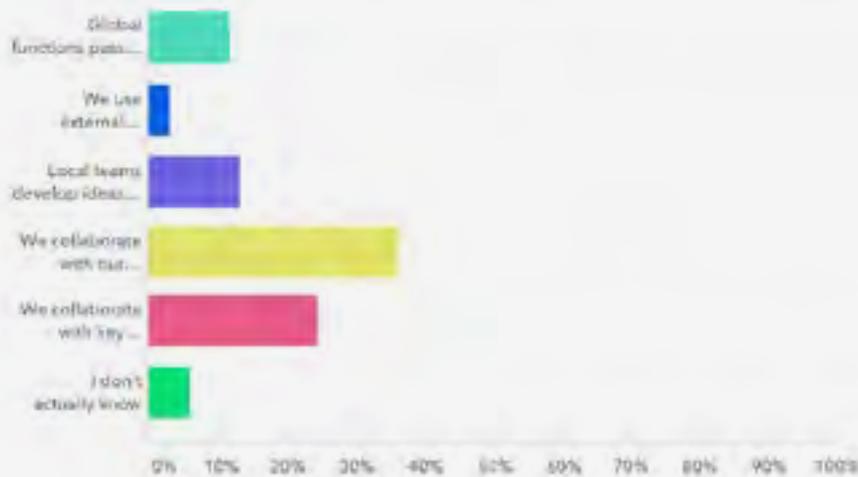
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Global functions pass down ideas and strategy for local markets to implement	12.50%
We use external agencies to lead on ideas and strategy	6.25%
Local teams develop ideas and strategy for the businesses they run	12.50%
We collaborate with our customers to develop and validate best ideas and strategy	37.75%
We collaborate with key partners to develop and validate best ideas and strategy	24.75%
None of the above	6.25%

Do you think you know what your customers really think about your brand?
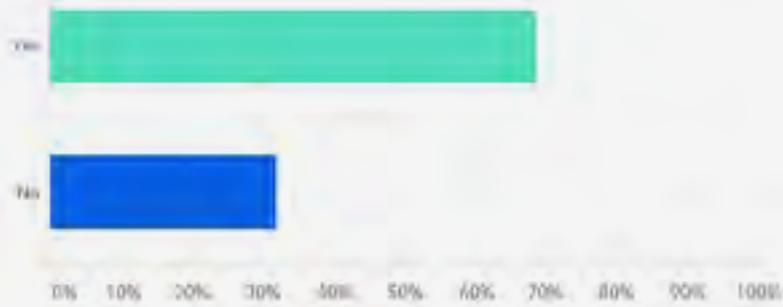
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	68.75%
No	31.25%

Do you think that you have a genuine connection with your customers?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	75.00%
No	25.00%

Are your current customer insight systems affective?
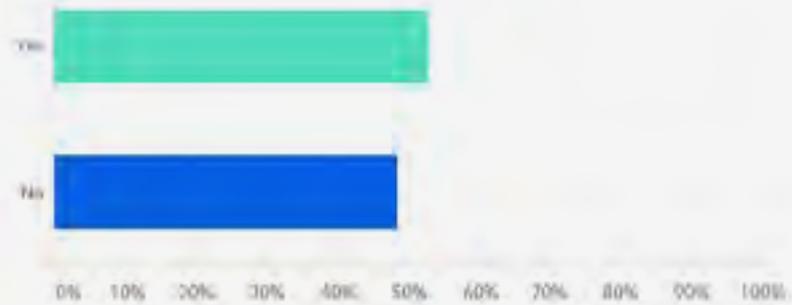
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	51.61%
No	38.27%

Do you believe that collaborating with your customers drives revenue?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	87.50%
No	12.50%

Do you feel conected to the brands you use?
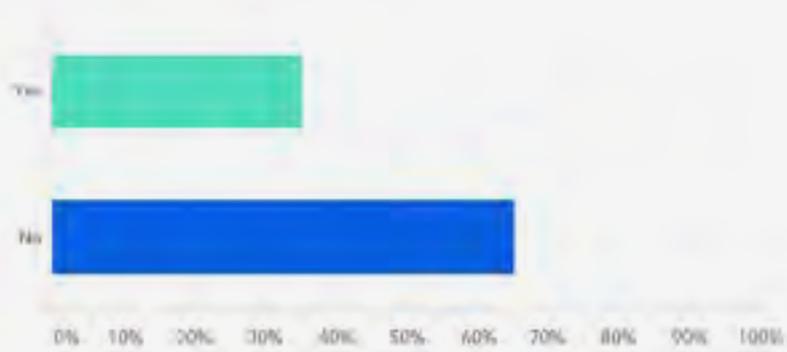
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	34.70%
No	65.30%

Are you able to give brands your feedback, ideas and opinions?
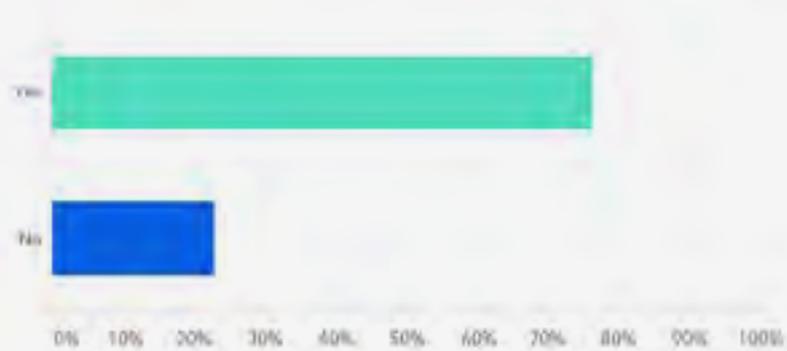
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	22.85%
No	77.13%

Do brands listen to your feedback, opinions or ideas?
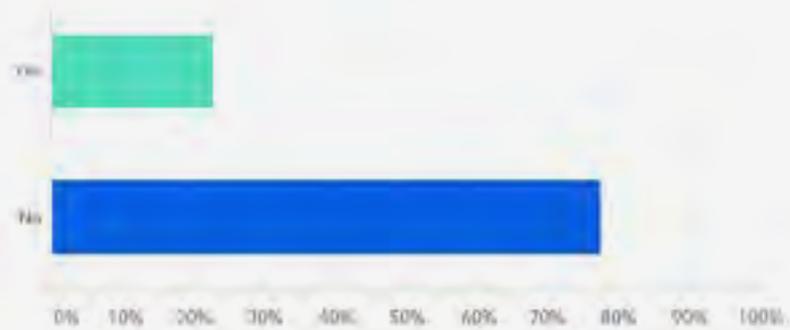
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	23.08%
No	76.92%

Do you think that brands care what you think?
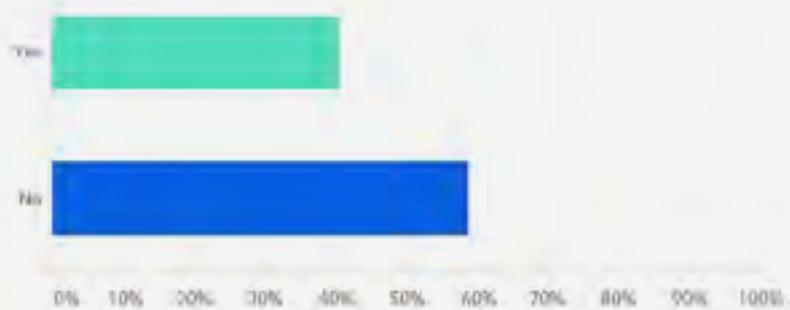
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	40.38%
No	59.62%

Do you favour brands that collaborate with their customers?
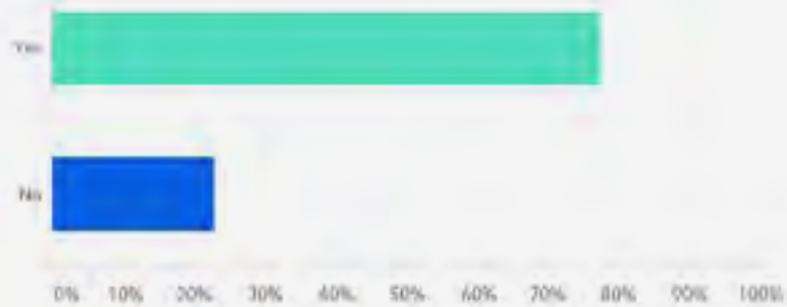
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	76.92%
No	23.08%

Do brands that collaborate with their customers feel more authentic?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	80.77%
No	19.22%

Do brands that collaborate with their customers feel more trustworthy?
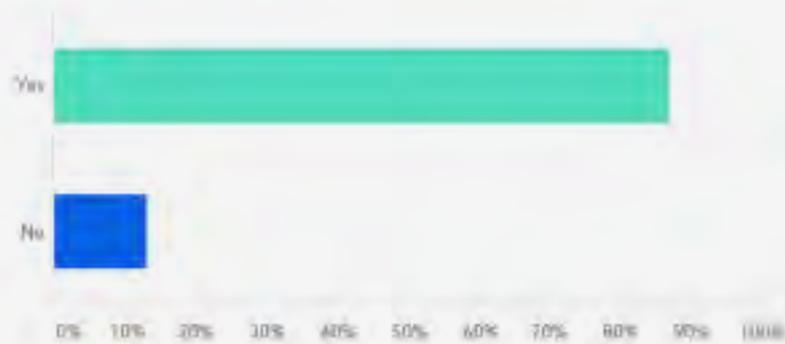
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	86.54%
No	13.46%

Where would you most like to be involved in the collaboration process / where could you add most value...
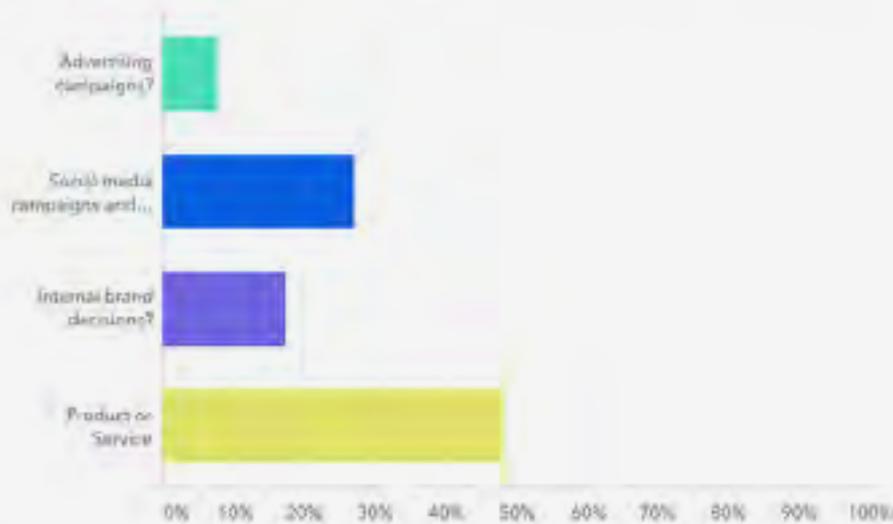
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Advertising campaigns?	7.69%
Social media campaigns and content?	26.92%
Internal brand decisions?	17.31%
Product or Service development?	48.08%

Does being part of a brand's own online community make you feel more involved with that brand?
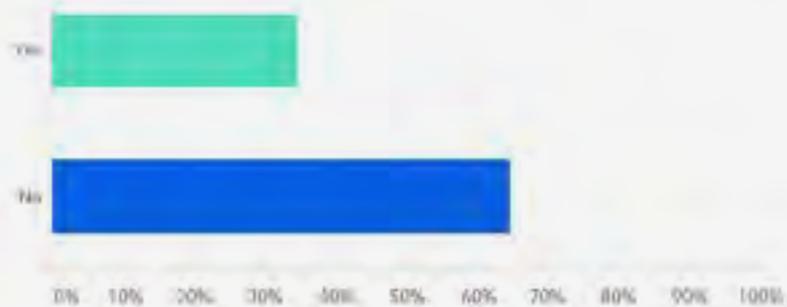

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	78.85%
No	21.15%

Is social media a place where you can truly say what you think?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	34.80%
No	65.20%

Arrange a FREE demo

To find out more about Bulbshare and arrange a **FREE demo** of our co-creation technology, contact Michael Wylie-Harris on **michael@bulbshare.com** or **07545 832 517**

Bulbshare