

Well-Being: The Keystone of Sustainable Social Development and Social Entrepreneurism

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Abstract: In an interconnected world, global challenges like climate change transcend borders, complicating governance as national interests often clash. Unregulated information flows fuel misinformation and erode trust in institutions. Today's governance resembles a complex puzzle, where addressing one issue may exacerbate another. The rise of e-commerce has transformed consumer purchasing behaviors and research, yet marketing lags in adapting to this shift, focusing on digital media rather than engaging consumers.

This paper investigates how societal narratives and digital engagement can guide governance and marketing in a complex, interconnected world where trust in traditional institutions is declining. It introduces the Virtual Living Lab (VLL), a tool that analyzes social media, Big Data, and AI to track emerging public priorities and behavioral patterns. Research conducted in Japan and the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic reveals that well-being narratives play a vital role in shaping societal recovery and resilience. The findings emphasize that effective engagement requires not only relevant content but also emotional and contextual awareness, especially in times of uncertainty. As public perceptions of Well-Being evolve, particularly in Japan, organizations must ensure their messaging remains emotionally resonant and contextually relevant to foster behavioral change and promote healthier, more sustainable lifestyles.

Keywords: Interconnectivity, Narratives, Communications, Strategic, Timeless, Sustainability, Well-Being, Leadership, Engagement, Marketing, Accountable, Trust.

1. INTRODUCTION

Context is everything! It is crucial for several reasons, influencing how we understand and interpret information, make decisions, and interact with the world around us. The COVID-19 pandemic drastically reshaped our understanding of context. Physical touch, once warm, became suspect. "Going out" evolved from leisure to a risk assessment. Smiles, hidden by masks, lost their universal meaning. Virtual spaces became our new "normal," blurring the lines between work, life, and even continents. This unique shift forced us to constantly adapt, hyper-aware of the ever-changing context that dictated every interaction and decision.

We live in an Accelerating Age of change where it is not only the rate of change that is new but that the nature of change itself is changing. No category is immune to transformational change and no leading institution or corporation is too big to fail. Healthcare is increasingly a focus of multiple new players as aging demographics and technology are demanding/ creating new possible solutions. Whatever the label e-health,

m-health it is clear that 'smart health' solutions will be multi-disciplinary, involving different constituencies with multiple objectives. To engage people and accelerate the diffusion of new ideas there will be a need to incorporate left-and right-brain thinking in balance (high-tech; high-touch). The diffusion of new ideas is greatly enhanced by the almost ubiquitous participation in social. Indeed, narratives and social media are integral parts of today's connected world. Social sharing of new health ideas can create new and improved lifestyle behaviors. What has remained true around the world during this period of increasing flux is the increasing importance of healthcare, for peoples of the world. Aging demographics and the stress they pose on existing social welfare systems will affect mature and emerging economies, alike. None more so than Japan where its super-aging society is looking for new holistic social solutions that could be the model around the world.

Our interconnected world amplifies the significance of context, with social networks serving as integral parts of daily life. They offer a wealth of data illuminating human interactions, evolving behaviors, and the formation of social structures based on values

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and interests. The authenticity inherent in social sharing renders it a more credible means of communication than traditional mass media, reflecting genuine concerns. Yet, effective, and empathetic communication in diverse contexts demands adept utilization of communication science methodologies. Despite the wealth of information, individuals often feel less informed due to challenges in discerning trustworthy sources. Employing online content for behavioral analysis provides a more authentic representation compared to surveys or interviews. This approach captures genuine sentiments and opinions, presenting an opportunity to comprehend, influence, and steer behavior by identifying pivotal social, linguistic, visual and behavioural signals. Leveraging AI to analyze openly shared online content enables an understanding of its impact on behavior. This methodology unveils the pivotal topics, triggers, and media channels influencing diverse outcomes and their evolution over time. Additionally, it extends beyond sentiment analysis, measuring the emotional impact of content, culminating in the creation of a Virtual Living Lab (VLL) mirroring genuine societal behaviors.

A core tenet of The University of Tokyo's LifeStyle by Design research initiative was the increasing need to empower the individual to make an informed choice about their own healthy life options. To execute this policy demands greater health literacy amongst the population. As self-medication and healthy lifestyle choices become increasingly important social sharing of new ideas and practices can readily go viral. This will have the potential to drive major attitudinal and behavioral shifts that enhance '*healthspan*', rather than just longevity. Taking a LifeStyle by Design stance will improve an individual's QOL and potentially transformative and pervasive for public and private sector stakeholders, alike. It is widely accepted that roughly sixty percent of mortality and eighty percent of the global disease burden are a function of just four LifeStyle choices- lack of exercise; poor nutrition; smoking and alcohol abuse (Abe & Abe, 2019; Li *et al.*, 2018). As countries try to balance their social health costs, especially in ageing demography's, the increasing need for self-medication necessitates that policy align with the attitudinal shift from a treatment to a prophylactic priority in healthcare. As such, the longstanding (from 1948;) World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of healthcare:

'Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'

is at odds with empowering the individual to make personal and potentially ambiguous choices regarding their own health. This inherent tension was a foundation for our research, as it will need to be navigated in an objective and timely manner to ensure sustainable and coherent social development.

Human choice is a basic freedom and philosophically can have several dimensions including ethical considerations. Specifically, LifeStyle by Design promotes and delivers healthier lifestyle bringing a new balance to the physical, nutritional, and social needs to bring an individual's balance to enhance their Quality of Life (QOL). People who stay active tend to be happier, but too much exercise can be detrimental to your mental health. Design Thinkers are leaders who harness the skills of a designer with conventional corporate strategy to drive the open and unashamed innovation that revolutionizes everything from products to processes (Clark & Yamazaki, 2020). Going forward the personal and proactive changes now needed can lead to tangible improvements in Life Satisfaction / QOL, but it demands improved clarity and depth of communications to empower individuals to take more personal responsibility; to make informed choices. Without the communication system, in extreme, any invention will remain in a vacuum and have no in market impact that an innovation, by definition, demands.

The Design Thinking process essentially condenses to a concentration on experiential (sensory), emotional and integral (cross-sector) intelligence (Han, 2022). Thus, in a period of renewal, the character of any LifeStyle by Design would need to be:

- ✓ progressive (a questioning disruptive innovator);
- ✓ collaborative (brings multidisciplinary skills and melds a team to holistically explore '*what can be*')
- ✓ authoritative (focused with access to execute material change).

Moreover, as change is unpredictable, then leadership characteristics must be radically different and dynamic with an ability to encourage experimentation and willingness to adapt. With the stated increasing importance of social sharing, it becomes an imperative to be able to craft and execute the strategic leadership narratives.

Thus, LifeStyle by Design supports scientific and social research, education, new partnerships, and deregulation to accelerate the adoption of innovative solutions focused on holistic well-being for the individual and community to enhance QOL. Since the scope of potential collaborators is broad it is imperative to establish early on a construct that helps focus the design thinkers and ensure all the necessary competencies are brought to bear to develop new solutions; to move with convergent and divergent thinking and assess new alternate outcome states to move from 'what is' to 'what can be'. An illustration of potential scenarios is outlined by one of the authors in Healthcare Robotics & Well-being (Clark & Beaumont, 2025).

2. NARRATIVE ECONOMICS

At the outset we should stress that these analyses are not just identifying some interesting things but things that are important to people now! So, from a corporate or policy perspective aligning with stories that the people feel are driving their current feelings is important allows one to go beyond Thought Leadership pieces to creating Strategic Leadership Narratives than effect change.

Importantly, people have always been attuned to narratives, factual or not, to validate their behaviour. The work of Nobel laureate Shiller in Narrative Economics (2019) is particularly relevant. "*When we are asleep at night,*" he suggests, "*narratives appear to us in the form of dreams. We do not dream of equations or geometric figures without some human element.*" He has studied the epidemiology of narratives and revealed how when contagious narratives go viral, they can create major economic impact. He has shown how the popular narratives of their times drove the 1920-1921 Depression, the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Recession of 2007-2009 and fuel today's socio-economic-political opinions.

Narrative Economics importance lies in:

- **Explaining Bubbles and Crashes:** Traditional models struggle to explain how seemingly rational markets can become irrationally exuberant, leading to bubbles. Narrative Economics suggests that infectious stories of easy money can fuel these bubbles. Conversely, narratives of fear and pessimism can contribute to market crashes.

- **Understanding Long-Term Trends:** Economic narratives can shape long-term economic trends. For example, a narrative of technological progress can drive investment and innovation, while a narrative of stagnation can lead to a lack of confidence and hinder growth.
- **Improving Economic Policy:** By recognizing the influence of narratives, policymakers can craft interventions that address them directly. For instance, combating a narrative of pessimism during a recession might require addressing public anxieties alongside traditional economic stimulus measures.
- **Promoting Financial Literacy:** Narrative Economics empowers individuals to be more critical of the stories they encounter. By understanding how narratives can influence behavior, people can make more informed financial decisions and avoid being swept away by contagious hype or fear.

Narrative Economics is not without its critics. Some argue it lacks a rigorous analytical framework compared to traditional models. Additionally, disentangling the impact of narratives from other economic factors can be challenging. However, the field offers valuable insights. By acknowledging the power of stories, Narrative Economics provides a richer understanding of human behavior in the economic sphere. This knowledge can equip policymakers, investors, and individuals alike to navigate the complexities of the market and make sound and sustainable economic decisions.

3. NARRATIVE ANALYSES

In the commercial world, research is not conducted out of curiosity or for academic purposes. We conduct research to help organisations make better (evidence-based) decisions. The right story, told the right way, makes it more likely that right action will happen. Measuring and interpreting social and linguistic signals by accessing openly available online content is naturally more directly reflective of human behavior, than traditional qualitative or quantitative survey methodologies. It can provide real-time insight to facilitate better decisions. The Significance Systems axiom is to "deliver utility from the world's narratives", by measuring long-term engagement. The platform earth.ai, analyses millions of behavioural interactions with content, to model human interaction, and to

provide an objective read on engagement, media power, and the authentic, emotional drivers of (new) behaviour. This enables one to 'engage with engagement' and thus be part of the on-going story rather than to try to dominate it from outside, which has been the traditional mass communication norm of intrusion.

The ubiquity of the internet and mobility have enhanced the importance of social media [first coined in 1994 by the founders of Significance Systems, Darrell Berry, and John Ricketts (Forbes, 2010)], and social sharing in effecting change. While witnessing the economic successes from readily scalable platform businesses and digital ecosystems across the world, people have benefited from a new standard of utility in service and healthcare (for example, Sen *et al.*, 2021; Gauthier *et al.*, 2022).

However, traditional consumer / market research is by its' very nature akin to looking in the rear-view mirror while driving. It has leveraged technology to develop faster and cheaper research approaches, obviating the need for a field-force of interviewers. One might argue it simply provides similar wrong answers quicker. For example, social listening, provides volumetric measures of comments. Citations of a topic are categorised and counted, then averaged and subtracted for sentiment. However, frequency is not uniformly significant, especially in the digital context where personalization is the key characteristic of engagement. This is analogous to wrongly adopting the notion of reach and frequency, popularized for mass-media, to the digital context. In this approach, the signal of 'what is important' is not isolated from the noise of 'what is not'.

While such platforms can provide quick measures of the penetration of topics, they are poor in predicting future behaviour. Berry and Ricketts, founding Significance Systems, wanted something better and developed earth.ai; a proprietary platform for strategic understanding and forward-looking decision-making. Significance System's adopts a different approach by to explicitly extracting insights from on-going global narratives. Tracking societal narratives offers valuable insights beyond traditional marketing research that relies on recruitment, it must be pursued with a rigorous ethical framework that prioritizes privacy, consent, and the equitable representation of voices. Responsible scholarship in this domain is not only a methodological imperative but a moral one.

Significance Systems is a platform that tracks and classifies digital narratives by analyzing large-scale online conversations and content. It uses advanced technologies like natural language processing (NLP), machine learning, and semantic analysis to understand how ideas, emotions, and values are expressed and evolve across digital media. Their proven and proprietary platform earth.ai (Figure 1), which analyses millions of behavioural interactions with content, to model human interaction, and to provide an objective read on engagement, media power, and the authentic, emotional drivers of (new) behaviour. It can sense and quantify over 400 named emotional states, in response to any story. The process considers all open data online as contending for consideration. By analogy with the human vision system, in accord with the foundational computational neuroscience Marr (1982, 2010), it pursues a computational-reductionist approach applying multiple layers of processing to identify and extract human-meaningful social-signaling structure within the petabytes of raw topical data

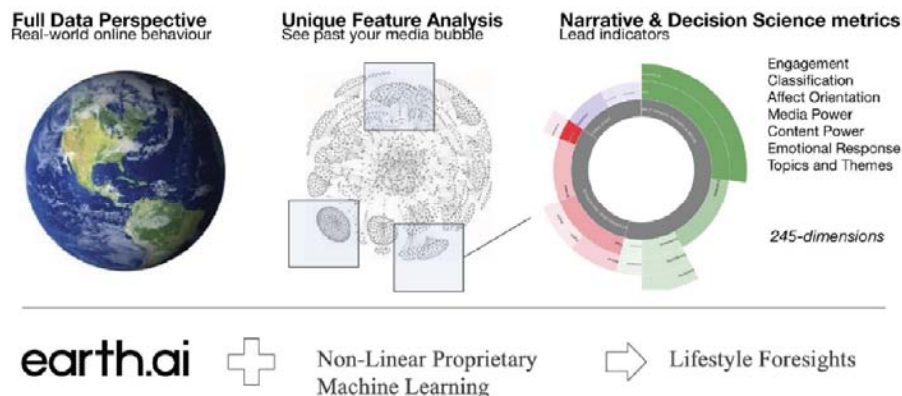


Figure 1: Significance Systems Narrative Analyses that drive Behaviour. [Significance Systems: "deliver utility from the world's narratives". They leverage their proprietary platform earth.ai, which analyses millions of behavioural interactions with content, to model human interaction, and to provide an objective read on engagement, media power, and the authentic, emotional drivers of (new) behaviour].

available to the first stages of our process. This approach dramatically reduces the volume of data to which they then apply computationally intensive processes such as detailed grammatical analysis. The textual content is interpreted within an affect model.

First, vision would be cleaved into separable 'computational theories', in which the visual system is characterized in terms of its computational goals and the strategies by which they are carried out. Each such computational theory could then be investigated in increasingly concrete terms, from symbols and measurements to representations and algorithms, to processes and neural implementations. This paradigm rests on some general expectations of a symbolic information processing system, including Marr's stated principles of explicit naming, modular design, least commitment, and graceful degradation. In retrospect, the computational framework also tacitly rests on additional assumptions about the nature of biological information processing. These include, (a) the separability of computational strategies, (b) the separability of representation, (c) a pipeline nature of information processing, and (d) that the representations employ primitives of low dimensionality. Moreover, Marr believes that viewing "our brains as information-processing devices is not demeaning and does not negate human values. If anything, it tends to support them and may in the end help us understand what from an information-processing view human values are, why they have selective value, and how they are knitted into the capacity for social mores and organization with which our genes have endowed us" (Marr, 1982, 2010).

As such the understanding of the emotional depth of the narrative, allows for better understanding and connection with people. It is important to be able to understand how the expression changes to remain relevant. Leveraging Big Data and AI to identify specific content (topics, triggers, media channels...) that drive past and future outcomes. The ability, promptly, to go beyond volumetric measure of a topic and understand what is significant, has never been more important to help improve decision-making with a better strategic understanding and ability to connect with your audience. Recognizing that social sharing is more authentic, and trustable than traditional forms of mass communications it is now possible, with data-based communications insights (Figure 1), to

- ✓ objectively explore these narratives to understand the drivers and dynamics of changing behavior and consensus;

- ✓ probe what people value and feel are more important; and
- ✓ establish how new solutions can be effectively introduced to create new and better behaviours.

The foundational premise of the Virtual Living Lab, (VLL), established within iFi'sLifeStyle_{by} Design unit, at The University of Tokyo, is that any societal innovation to have impact must be embraced and diffused so communications / engagement is pivotal. As is the empowerment of individual which connotes a sense of 'informed choice'. The timeliness of our research cannot be overstated beginning in June 2019 (BC-Before COVID-19) and so far, consistently tracking key lifestyle narratives over 15 waves of research through to June 2025 (See Tables 2 & 3). Lifestyle VLL is not a futuristic concept; it's woven into the very fabric of our present lives. Moreover, we find ourselves at the tail end of a unique period in lifestyle research. The pre-pandemic landscape offered a precious window of normalcy, allowing us to track narratives and establish baselines. This unique perspective, coupled with our comparative analysis between Japan and the UK, has provided invaluable insights into how different cultures approach and adapt to increasing societal uncertainty and volatility. As a keystone of lifestyle sustainability from these analyses in 2025 The University of Tokyo VLL, became the foundational element of AI and Well-Being Institute, at the ICLA to broaden and deepen the influence and impact of such research and insight.

A key requirement to improve the dispersion of new lifestyle behaviors will be to leverage social media in a consistent and coherent manner, that is explicitly transparent and positive, and people feel empowered by being enabled to make informed choices. As a basis for investigating a broad sense of LifeStyle_{by} Design, some potentially rich narratives (Table 1) were qualified by PreSearch. These form the objective basis for the empirical comparison between Japan and the UK, which, over time, were tracked to monitor and assess best practices.

The digital narratives are classified by analyzing their structure, emotional tone, and thematic content to understand how they influence public engagement and behavior. Their methodology involves mapping narratives into a dynamic "landscape" that reveals their utility, by showing how different ideas and values resonate with audiences over time. This landscape is built by examining the nature of the narrative; including its emotional appeal, coherence, and relevance, using

Table 1: VLL Lifestyle Narratives tracked in the UK and Japan

English	Japanese
well-being	ウェルビーイング
wellness	健康
personal happiness	個人的な幸せ
personal satisfaction	個人的な満足
leisure time	余暇
personal employment	個人雇用
personal life balance	私生活バランス
personal friendship	個人的な友情
my family	私の家族
personal nutrition balance	個人の栄養バランス
personal activity	個人的な活動
my free time	私の自由な時間
motivation	動機
my community	私のコミュニティ
personal bonding	個人的な絆
being employed	雇用されている
personal wealth	個人の富
personal relationships	個人的な関係
my resilience	私の回復力
personal confidence	個人的な自信
personal optimism	個人楽観主義
personal pessimism	個人的な悲観主義
social stability	社会的安定
economic growth	経済成長

advanced tools like semantic analysis, AI, and machine learning. Narratives are not just categorized by topic but by their capacity to engage, evolve, and drive action. The system identifies which narratives are gaining or losing influence, how they connect to broader societal trends, and what emotional or cognitive triggers they activate.

A significant majority of narratives are *Transient* (82%). Such narratives will fall away without significant investment. These are poor choices for communications, since as issues, they are not expected to persist or grow. Strategically, such

narratives are often easy to 'own', but they must be driven, or connected to greater relevance and/or differentiation, to have any long-term value. Tribal (11%) narratives are characterised by intense debate, being driven by personal experiences or commercial perspectives, bringing divergent POVs. The vast majority of this debate, therefore, has no impact. Although it is easy to be a participant, it is far more difficult to be a player or leader in such narratives. Those narratives that have the greatest potential utility (Table 2) are Transformational and Timeless. Transformational (2%) narratives are characterised by intensely, engaged experiences with strong timeless

Table 2: Narrative Classification Landscape: Utility

TRANSFORMATIONAL	
✓	A very small number of narratives, campaigns or, indeed, brands characterised by intense, engaged individual experience with strong timeless themes.
✓	Fast changing, yet potentially resulting in lasting transformation of the world.
✓	A volatile environment for the positioning of brands or themes for communications.
✓	Strong opportunity if there is positive alignment, or great threat if it is an opposed issue.
✓	Communication Power comes from detailed understanding of, and alignment with, both the timeless drivers and the in-the moment significant experiences of those connected to the narrative.
TIMELESS	
✓	A small number of narratives, campaigns, or brands.
✓	Characterised by long-term, deep engagement, driven by a small number of key players who are often experts and authorities.
✓	These are authentic. They matter to people.
✓	They are long-lived. They are good choices for the positioning of brands or themes for communications
✓	As issues they are expected to persist or grow.
✓	They are high value but difficult to own. Focus is key.
✓	Communication Power comes from the understanding of what has long-term significance, and alliance-building with the existing players.
TRIBAL	
✓	A small number of narratives, campaigns or, indeed, brands.
✓	Characterised by intense debate.
✓	Personal experience often drives engagement. Commercial perspectives often drive divergent POVs.
✓	We see that most of this debate, this flow, has no impact: Indeed <<1% of content over any given period will have any significance.
✓	So, although it's easy to be a participant, it is far more difficult to be a player or leader, in this space.
✓	Leverage the power of authentic individual experience via sharing or aggregation/curation.
✓	Communication Power comes from an understanding of what is significant in the moment.
TRANSIENT	
✓	Most narratives, campaigns, or brands.
✓	They are narratives which will fall away without investment of time or resources.
✓	Strategically, these are often easy to 'own': but they must be driven (or connected) to greater relevance and/or differentiation to have long-term value.
✓	As existing campaigns or issues, they are worthy of tracking.
✓	Communication Power comes from building stronger connections to more engaging narratives.

themes. These narratives are fast-changing, yet potentially result in lasting transformation of the world. Timeless (5%) narratives are expected to persist or grow. They are characterised by long-term, deep engagement. These narratives are good choices for communication activities. If one considers the narratives of the top 100 brands / companies, then their effective communications strategies are focused. One sees Timeless engagement representing at least 90 percent of the narratives.

In tracking narratives that can shape our world, we recognize explicitly that:

- ✓ popular stories affect individual and community behavior.
- ✓ improve decision-making comes by knowing and addressing what people feel is important.
- ✓ relevant and timely communications, in context, can stimulate change in perception and behaviour.

- ✓ not just content but tone is important has been exemplified by changing affect during COVID-19 (illustrated in Figure 2 in Section 6).

To leverage the strong story, it is now possible to go beyond traditional media planning considerations and focus on the strong narrative. Simply

- ✓ Know what to say;
- ✓ How to say it;
- ✓ Who to say it to;
- ✓ Where to say it.

With the pandemic there is a new urgency for public and private institutions to reset and communicate their orientation so that people can make sense and engage with new paths forward. There is a greater imperative to facilitate entrepreneurship so that current peripheral initiatives can become the focus of more lives. Purpose can bring focus but the passion it also reflects needs to

accept risk and focus on what works and why. Big Data and AI can help create new, currently unimagined, solutions but a critical element of a development narrative is that it is evidence-based. Our modern lives are increasingly complex with many things happening outside ones' influence. Leaders will need to be able to simplify the complex, facilitate a learning journey by developing Strategic Leadership Narrative that has a clarity and can inspire commercial and societal regeneration and entrepreneurship. Such clarity is fundamental to stimulating creativity and transformation.

The Strategic Leadership Narrative demands that there is a competence (O'Hara, & Leicester, 2012) in complexity, that can simplify providing a culture for growth, change and social innovation. The pandemic has brought to the fore the need to go beyond traditional job descriptions and stable institutions to create a comfort with, and embracing of, change, if we are to meet today's complex dynamics. A core component of societal development will be improvement in health and well-being, which will demand greater health literacy as people need to be empowered to make informed choices. This was a central motivation for creating the Virtual Living Lab that is outlined in the next section, and which forms the focus of this paper. (Lifestyle) Purpose can help people embrace change. A current notable example is that of Patagonia who have the mission statement "*we're in business to save our home planet.*" Their enlightened founder and leader Yvon Chouinard recently transferred ownership to a Trust, because as the founder said instead of an IPO ("going public"), they were "going purpose."

To develop the narrative Landscapes, we look at all online sources, in Japan and the UK respectively, up to the date of the research wave. There is no time window. So, depending on the specific narrative, which self organises, it could be dominated by recent content ... or not. Most existing AI initiatives focus on content devoid of context or emotion. Our methodology entails examining all online sources in Japan and the UK up to the research date, devoid of temporal constraints. The period of study, June 2019 to June 2024, saw unprecedented and dramatic changes in people's behaviour, with COVID-19 becoming a social media virus as well as a biospheric virus. Already social and political commentators are referring to the tectonic shift created by the pandemic in terms of different era BC, DC, and AC [Before- During- and After COVID-19] (Nelms, 2020). During this tumultuous period, with

minds altered, opinions changed, and attitudes adjusted, it is not surprising that some of the narratives themselves took on different characteristics.

4. ENGAGING WITH ENGAGEMENT

Prior to the wide availability of the internet communications in the late 1990's, the twentieth century communications were dominated by multiple broadcast mass media channels. Marshall McLuhan's seminal media treatise, *The Medium is the Message* (McLuhan & Foire, 1967), evaluates the top down, western-led broadcast, mass media and its global impact.

While western values were spread around the world by mass media, the internet completely changed that dynamic since it provided open access to a flat network, in which anyone, anywhere, can participate in an apparently fragmented world (Riley, 2017). It may appear messy, but it facilitates direct messaging for everyone, anywhere, anytime to like-minded communities; the Mess-Age. This dramatic shift in orientation necessitates a deeper understanding of, and willingness to, embrace different cultures (Hofstede, 2001), or not, if one wishes to remain disconnected.

The internet serves as a hub for human interaction and reactions, reshaping our online world. Stories and social media significantly influence societal values and actions. Embedding ourselves within these narratives enhances the clarity and impact of our messages while allowing us to manage our image effectively. Identifying and characterizing these influential stories across various platforms enables a comprehensive understanding of public sentiment and engagement. Shiller (2019) underlines the profound effect of self-told stories on behavior and their potential to instigate global change.

Our analyses allow one to identify, at any time, what is important to people, so that one can readily participate with topical conversations in a relevant and credible manner; to 'engage with engagement'. It is more effective and efficient to be part of the on-going story rather than to try to intrude from outside, which has historically been the traditional mass communication norm. By understanding societal sentiments, this research aids policy formulation and evaluation, empowering leaders amid volatile times. Our VLL contextualizes ongoing narratives, facilitating informed engagement for leaders. Focusing on existing

Table 3: User Experience

Analysis	Rationale
1: Engagement Classification	Assessing opportunities to embrace Timeless and Transformative narratives
2: Affect Orientation	Understanding emotional responses of the narratives
3: Media Power	Identifying and ranking influential media
4: Content Power	Assessing the potency of individual content pieces
5: Emotional Response	Grasping market sentiment / emotional tone of the significant content
6: Relationships	Leveraging interconnectivity of topics and emergent themes for credibility and relevance

robust narratives and user experiences has proven instrumental (Table 3).

5. NEW WAYS OF THINKING AND COMMUNICATING

To reiterate, the premise of being able to realise social innovation is the need for adoption of new ideas. This is the context for well-being and the individual and societal level. Social media provides a new way of taking multiple messages to the market to affect change in attitude, and behaviour.

Many if not most industries are undergoing unparalleled change not just the speed of change, but the nature of change is itself changing. Some industries are having more fundamental transformations with the change in landscapes bringing in new competitors. This is especially true where the transformation is driven by the significant impact of digital empowerment. The seminal work of Castells' (1996, 1997, 1998), *The Information Age* trilogy provides the broad foundation with the accelerating rate and nature of innovation in our networked and interconnected society, as well as the evolving nature of communications power (Castell, 2009), empowering the individual (Carpentier, 2011). During COVID-19 the future has in fact been brought forward and we see examples of personal precision and improved prediction driven by increasing use of big data and analytics. That said, for a long-time marketing theory and practice have been disconnected (Lehmann, 2014), and with an industry in transition it is timely to redress this disconnect. Part of the problem is an incremental evolution of practice, constrained by legacy thinking and structures. A holistic approach is needed to ensure coherence, appropriate prioritization, and focus, at a time when issues of governance, sustainability demand a greater level of granularity is needed. Specific issues to address and solve, include:

- a) Today's marketing has the same goal but operates in a new world.
- b) Marketing theory though static, is useful if understood.
- c) Digital channels are broken, and their role(s) are mis-understood.
- d) Social matters as it transcends hierarchy with purpose.
- e) People trust people.
- f) People are empowered by feeling better informed.
- g) Marketing logic is a failed narrative; differentiation under performs.
- h) People-centricity drives engagement.
- i) Brand values have passed their sell-by date; ethics trump marketing speak.

The purpose of marketing has not changed; to move markets, to move people, in such a way that products and services are brought into the home (B2C) or enterprise (B2B). However, we have witnessed transformational changes in how a brand's message can be communicated in a more relevant and credible manner to drive marketing effectiveness. This paper shows a coherent approach to understanding what is significant from a market perspective. It is also demonstrating how you can control and nurture your brand, grow your franchise in our contemporary, digital world. Today's digital realities and market dynamics demand marketers can embrace a new level of granularity to ensure communications remain relevant and credible.

The opportunities of the Industrial Age that led to mass marketing, benefited from mass-media, have been usurped by social media and social sharing where the Mess-Age democratizes access (Riley, 2017). Ideas can come from anywhere, and like-

mindful communities are not constrained by geography. The complexity and level of interconnectedness in today's world has been materially witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, in today's Sustainable Age (L2025, 2021), the only hierarchy is that of imagination. People are now more interconnected than ever before and how they buy, and research their purchase priorities have been transformed to make consumers ever more powerful. Being able to understand what people believe is important, at any time, has never been more important (Beaumont & Ricketts, 2020). Understanding what people think and how they feel enables one to be relevant and engage credibly. With a focus on communications, it has also never been more important to have a common mindset or attitude and a common language so that any organisation can speak with a shared voice.

Part of the disconnect between theory and practice is marketing's overpromise and under delivery. It is timely to consider a reset. Management guru, Peter Drucker (2001) has never been more relevant: "Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things." Here is the challenge: marketing is management not leadership. Too often the challenge of leadership falls to marketers. Like bad politicians, marketers can be fixated in giving their customers what they want even when what they want is not what they need. The most successful companies have moved beyond the limitations of marketing thinking and into the realm of creative thinking, coupled with design thinking. Those who deploy the 'triple growth play' of creativity, analytics, and purpose, realize dramatically higher average growth rates (Cvetanovski *et al.*, 2021). With such purpose they can do the right thing in the right way.

That said, many firms are constrained since it is widely thought that marketers are not equipped (Ratchford, 2020) to deploy marketing analytics, and that only data professionals are adequately trained to handle Big Data issues of targeting, measuring consumer opinion, and understanding social behaviour (Olenski, 2018; Roubaud, 2018). This situation will materially impact marketing research going forward, since today's capabilities can deliver real-time behavioural insights, much cheaper and better, than traditional survey methodologies. Self-evidently, the answer is not to simply leverage web access, for cheaper (panel) recruitment. Such analogue thinking simply gets the same wrong answer more quickly, with the limited scope of on-line focus groups / panels.

However, the basic conceptual framework and techniques for empirical analysis used in marketing that were developed in the 1960s (Levitt, 1960; McCarthy, 1960; Kotler 1964) and 1970's (Little 1970) remain in use today, albeit in refined versions that take advantage of improved data, analytics, and dashboards (Powell, 2022). There are also numerous broad summaries of trends in marketing issues (Mela *et al.*, 2013; Huber *et al.*, 2014; Wang *et al.*, 2015; Cho *et al.*, 2017), as well as those specifically looking at quantitative marketing (Beaumont *et al.*, 1989; Winer & Neslin, 2014), and marketing strategy (Kerin, 1996; Kumar, 2015).

The pioneering theoretical and empirical work on Buying Behaviour by Ehrenberg (1988; 1975; *et al.*, 2004; Mittelstaedt, 1969; Sharp & Sharp, 1997) during his tenure at London Business School that culminated in the globally renowned, Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science remains relevant as it enables a focus on brand growth. The likelihood of selling to an existing customer is between 60% and 70%, while only between 5% and 20% for a new prospect, depending on the category. Brands grow (Sharp, 2010) by focusing on winning new customers, driven by increasing mental and physical availability, resulting in behaviorally loyal buyers. Existing customers already know you, and their memory structures are refreshed when they buy you again. A key finding from this seminal research was the notion of light / low-value buyers and a few heavy / high-value buyers. The graph of value against the number of customers is the Negative Binomial Distribution. The NBD is a general finding for any brand or category, and the shape remains constant as a brand grows. Thus, growth, is driven across all buyers to some extent. This critical insight is consistent across the IPA database (Field & Binet, 2018); campaigns targeted at all customers are more effective than campaigns targeted at new or existing customers. Success comes from engaging the market more than the perceived white space, and / or loyalists.

More significantly, the authors believe that while the marketing concept and marketing mix remain useful introductory frameworks, there is a need for transformative marketing thinking with a singularity of focus regarding people centricity; People 3.0 (Beaumont, 2006). Barwise and Meehan (2004) had noted that marketing practice had taken theory too far and become disconnected from their customers, by focusing on trivial differences rather than value for money, and quality products and services. They were

in “Simply Better” suggesting a back to basics would lead to greater success. In the same vein, Ambler (2003) focuses on the bottom-line. Unfortunately, the academic literature has relatively few marketing cases when compared to other management areas and thus despite claims to the contrary do not reach marketing practitioners (Hughes *et al.*, 2018).

The rapid access to Big Data, analytics, and AI (Leung *et al.*, 2018) reinforces the demand for a people-centric orientation since social media, social sharing (Ansari *et al.*, 2018) and social business are fundamentally re-orientating marketplace control and nature and extent of the influences on the customer journey. Social media fuels the imagination, impacts attitudes and behaviour (Beaumont & Ricketts, 2020) and facilitates the marketing of products and services (Barwise *et al.*, 2002; Kaplan, & Haenlein, 2010; Anker *et al.*, 2022). The customer purchase intention and buying decision-making has been materially impacted by social media and e-commerce / m-commerce and should be reflected in mobile advertising (Martins *et al.*, 2019). For example, Dehghani *et al.*, (2016) identified four dimensions that have an influence on YouTube advertising—entertainment, informativeness, customization, and irritation which influenced brand awareness, and purchase intention. As the customer journey has changed, so the nature of consumer brand connections has also changed materially. The implication for brands is the need to be strategically much clearer.

Digital is therefore playing a significant disruptive role in content analysis (Kietzmann & Pitt, 2020), and media with new media channels. As with past innovation in media new channels they do not replace old channels, but the relative importance is shifting dramatically. This means that there is unfortunately some legacy structure and legacy thinking and the necessary shake up will perhaps be accelerated by the pandemic as retailing / social distancing in traditional formats are replaced by e-commerce. Programmatic buying and selling leverages a software platform for real-time decisions, rather than weeks or months in advance with traditional media. Conceptually, one can more readily purchase targeted audiences, measure a campaign's impact, and improve ROMI (Return on Marketing Investment). However, as this new approach has been embraced and even though it is projected to dominate, there is in fact little governance. As case in point, the ISBA Programmatic Supply Chain Transparency Study (2020), found that 15% of advertiser spend, or one third of supply chain costs,

could not be attributed. Indeed, they found on average that publishers only received 51% of advertiser spend. Programmatic has only recently reached the inflection point to get the attention of the C-suite, and powerful procurement executives. It is the fastest growing advertising channel already accounting for 20% of total advertising spend today and will grow to 30% by 2023. Yet, it is the least efficient in delivering working media?!

The industry had been called to account by P&G's Chief Brand Officer, industry thought leader, and campaigner for change, Marc Pritchard (2017), at the Internet Advertising Bureau's annual meeting: “We serve ads to consumers through a non-transparent media supply chain with spotty compliance to common standards, unreliable measurement, hidden rebates, and new inventions like bot and ‘methbot’ fraud, ...”. It should have led to transparency and improved governance since Pritchard was unequivocal in his criticism: “There is no sustainable advantage in a complicated, non-transparent, inefficient and fraudulent supply chain.” At the same time, he also questioned the closed measurement systems of Google and Facebook. Self-evidently, media buying processes and digital supply chain are not built for the purpose of advertising in the digital era. That said, opportunities exist to effectively and efficiently ‘engage with engagement’ (Section 3), that demand a new way of thinking and communicating beyond the traditional mindset and practice that is rooted in traditional advertising.

Content creation and amplification is an important issue. So, while social media readily allows for the diffusion of ideas / innovation, we need to be rigorous in how we use it as well as the nature of the narratives we develop to help shape policy. Indeed, there are an increasing number of cases of ‘bad’ narratives that fuel a prejudice (Moskovitch, 2005; Burgers & Beukeboom, 2020). For example, poverty (O'Hara, 2020). Moreover, multiple audiences will likely not have multiple interests, distinct prior knowledge, and their own agendas. Understanding what people think is important and what it takes to change behaviour is critical (Section 2). High affect content generates clicks and sharing. This is the thrust of our narrative analyses in Section 3. Naturally, it is also becoming more important to understand our context across broad perspectives to understand the influences more deeply on change and uncertainty.

A special set of editorials recently published in the journal *Science* argue that social media in its current

form may well be fundamentally broken for the purposes of presenting and disseminating facts and reason. The algorithms are running the show now, and the systems priorities are unfortunately backwards. They believe “the same profit-driven algorithmic tools that bring science-friendly and curious followers to scientists’ Twitter feeds and YouTube channels will increasingly disconnect scientists from the audiences that they need to connect with most urgently” (Brossard & Scheufele, 2022). The Social Dilemma (2020) is a ‘docu-drama’ that explores the potentially dangerous advances in social networking, partially narrated by technology experts. The biggest issue surrounding the regulation of social media is the restriction of free speech and freedom of expression. Attempts to put some controls around this have been received as a penalty rather than a privilege.

Governance has become of broader relevance to marketeers in relation to their brand and corporate stance, as they seek sustainable transitions (Davies *et al.*, 2020), evolving the nature and scope of Corporate Social Responsibility (Latapí Agudelo, 2019). This has led to much discussion around brand purpose driving growth and the role of sustainability (Polman & Winston, 2021) has moved to the marketing centre stage as the importance of ESG regarding corporate governance has increased. In late March 2022, the SEC opened its new sustainability reporting rules for public comment. If approved, the rules will require all public companies to report their emissions and sustainable investments. If the new requirements are enacted into law, it could lead to the creation of a new industry to oversee the truthfulness of sustainability reports. When emission statistics become public, greenwashing will become more difficult. However, some may use their competitors’ sustainability records against them for marketing advantage. That said, in the Sustainable Age (2025, 2021), ethics will be far more important than brand values. Sustainable businesses will recognize the strategic nature of their sustainability stance.

People in developed economies are pessimistic about the near future (Edelman, 2022). Economic prospects are at an all-time low in nine countries, including the U.S., Canada, Germany, Japan, and China. China and the U.S. experienced the biggest year-over-year drops. In times of crisis and uncertainty people often turn to brands and businesses they trust. The COVID pandemic and war in Ukraine have both magnified and accelerated this trend, and the expectations for businesses and brands will change as

new demands are made by shareholders, business, and society. Although greater data and information is readily available, people do not feel better informed, rather there is an increasing concern about what information is correct. Edelman’s annual monitor refers to an infodemic, during the pandemic, being characterised by an “epidemic of misinformation..... in an environment of information bankruptcy” (Edelman 2021). That said, people now expect businesses to play a bigger role to help society, communities, environments in dire need of support, and rebuilding. Generally, how they can make a material difference to their communities, and how their products and services can have a less detrimental effect on the world. With ever increasing global interconnectedness (Riley, 2017), in the Mess-Age, it is increasingly imperative that institutions, across both the private and public sector, understand what is important to people (Handy, 2015; 2019) at any point in time. Human choice is a basic freedom and philosophically can have several dimensions, increasingly including ethical and cultural considerations.

6. VIRTUAL LIVING LAB

LifeStyle by Design proposes to leverage on-line behaviour to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of the appropriate narratives, in context, to different constituencies. It is anticipated that this will help create community capital (Parsfield *et al.*, eds., 2015). We began in mid-2019 to benchmark twenty key narratives (Table 1) in the UK and Japan, to draw scalable communication implications for policymakers and public and private institutions, alike. At different times additional narratives were included. These reflected specific topics that other researchers in the LifeStyle by Design unit were focused on (cf. food sustainability) and issues that were becoming globally more topical such as ESG and DEI.

The original premise was to understand what people wanted and that would enable innovation to magnify and annex on-going trends. Beyond creating a benchmark of attitudes and behavior, to monitor the mood of society, it was also intended to be comparative in nature focusing on both Japan and the UK, to help affect policy or monitor any subsequent action plan. As Geert Hofstede’s (2001) seminal work, which made him the most-cited European social scientist, demonstrated at the early stages of globalization; “National Culture cannot be changed, but you should understand and respect it.” Naturally one can hypothesise material differences in the nature of the narratives associated

with LifeStyle health choices and self-medication due to differences in primary healthcare provision between the two countries. For example, the primacy of the General Practitioner as the interface for the patient / family in the UK (Pike *et al.*, 1981).

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the importance of science and technology innovation to create a new and sustainable society. It has also illustrated that any communications must be inclusive and understood and embraced by multiple constituencies to have a coherent effect. The diffusion of new ideas is greatly enhanced by the almost ubiquitous participation in social. Indeed, narratives and social media are integral parts of today's connected world. Critically, trust is paramount as it is amplified in a social setting and more than ever people find trusted voices in their networks.

The core VLL premise, explore LifeStyle by Design innovation opportunities, is that social sharing can be more authentic, and trustable than traditional forms of mass communications and can drive real world outcomes, it is now possible, with big-databased communications insight, to;

- objectively explore these narratives to understand the drivers and dynamics of changing behavior and consensus;
- probe what people value and feel are more important;

- establish how new solutions can be effectively introduced to create new and better behaviours.

To 'engage with engagement' it is not simply having the appropriate content, but it is also critical to convey the appropriate tone. This is dramatically illustrated by the emotional dynamics at a time of perceived vulnerability / uncertainty during 2020 global pandemic, when it is evident that, with conflicting policy options, unclear and sometimes contradictory messages only exacerbated the difficult situation. As illustration, to track the COVID-19 narrative we looked at all open online sources, in the UK, every day, from the start of the national emergency in March 2020, through to its end in May 2023 (Figure 2).

Affect is a rich measure of the emotional tone of the narrative. It is felt emotion which is a powerful descriptor of future behaviour. Below the horizontal we see negative emotions dominating the positive senses (above the vertical). Initial panic (red) was replaced by fear, grief, despair and resignation, and material periods of confusion and anger. People's resilience (above the vertical) came through with a greater sense of belonging helping to maintain hope and create optimism. One clear learning in coping with the pandemic has been the need to have a positive outlook, to obviate the heightened negativity. Anxiety and anger have been exacerbated by confusing, contradictory messages from local and central government officials. The Guardian (Jan. 2021) links this confusion, with lockdown rules changing on

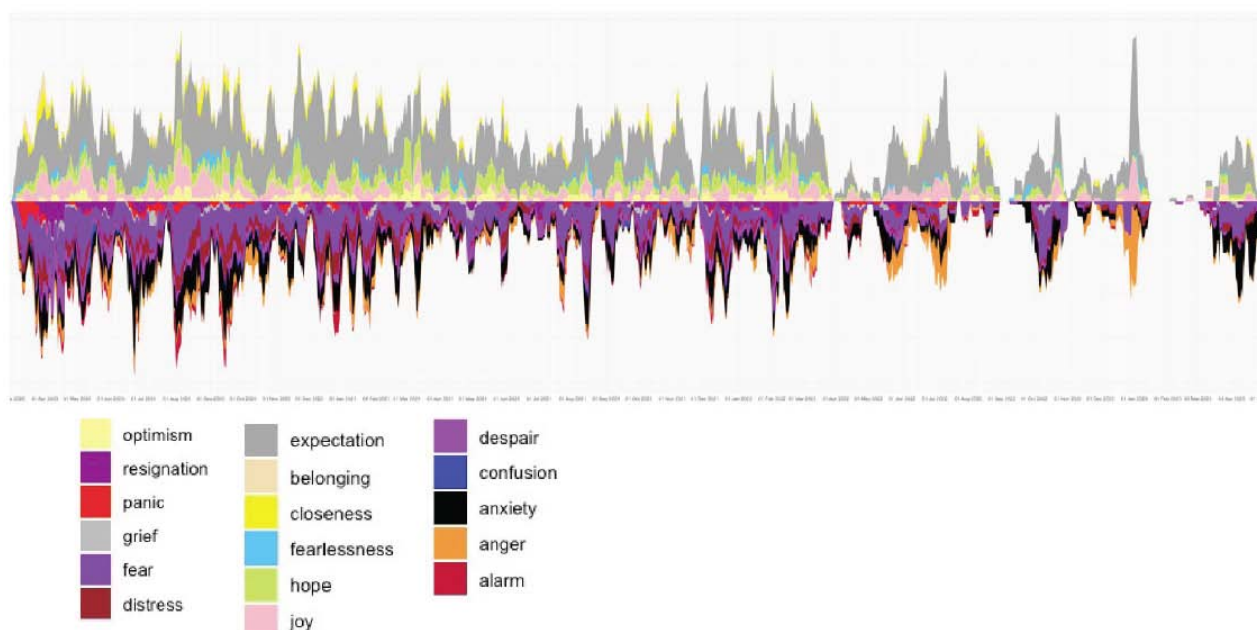


Figure 2: Daily COVID-19 Narrative Affect in UK during National Emergency (March 2020-May 2023).

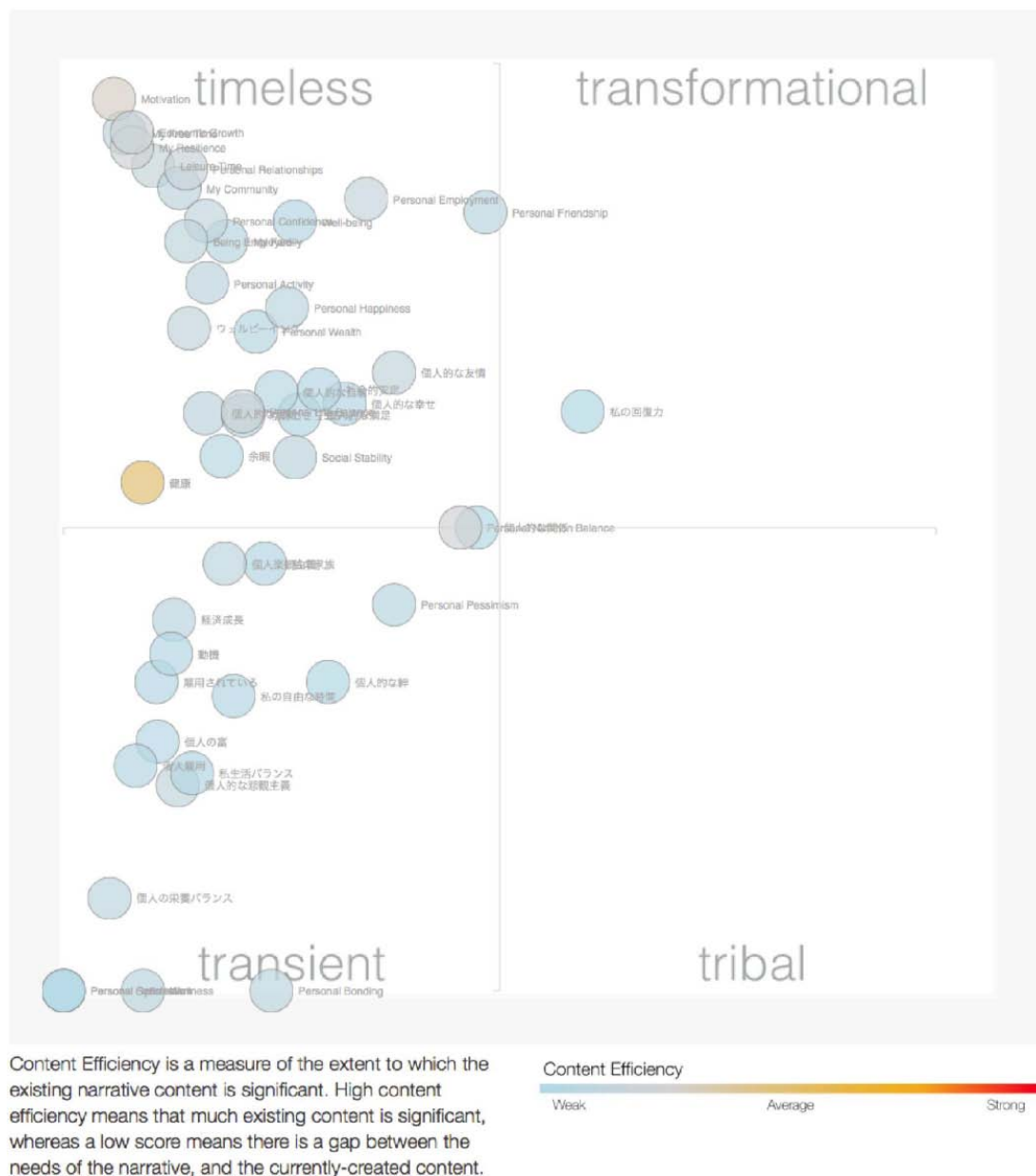


Figure 3: VLL Narrative Landscape June 2019, Japan and UK.

average less than every 5 days on average, for the 10 months since March 2020. One clear learning in coping with the pandemic has been the need to be positive. Anxiety, indeed, anger, was magnified by confusing, contradictory messages from so-called UK leaders. In these unusual times with heightened uncertainty, it becomes more of an imperative for leaders to be able to communicate and connect in a relevant and credible way.

7. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE VLL

The VLL analyses in this paper covers the period from June 2019 to June 2025. COVID-19 moved health / well-being, in the broadest sense to the top of the

agenda. At a time of unprecedented change globally, the distorted and biased views that some mass media and social media platforms provide can hinder rather than enhance decision-making. Too much disinformation, too much misinformation and information poorly organized is causing confusion, and pessimism. Entropy is increasing at a time when clarity, optimism and conviction are demanded. It was critical to have a positive and empowering attitude.

DC- during COVID; everything was questioned. Table 4 shows how during DC many of the previously Timeless narratives changed their classification. The pandemic became a stark reminder that context is not just a backdrop, but a living, breathing force shaping

Table 4: Timeless Narratives June 2019 – June 2025

TIMELESS	NARRATIVES	
Wave	Japan	UK
19-Jun	Well-Being, Leisure Time, Personal Friendship, Personal Happiness, Personal Activities, Personal Satisfaction, Personal Confidence, Personal Confidence, Wellness, Social Stability, My Community	Being Employed, Economic Growth, Leisure Time, Motivation, My Community, My Family, My Free Time, My Resilience, Personal activity, Personal Confidence, Personal Employment, Personal Friendship, Personal Happiness, Personal Life Balance, Personal Relationships, Personal Wealth, Social Stability, Well-Being
19-Dec	My Community, Personal Satisfaction, Wellness, My Family, Personal Activity, Social Stability, Leisure Time, Well-Being, Personal Happiness, Personal Relationships	Motivation, Wellness, My Community, Leisure Time, Personal Relationships, Being Employed, Social Stability, Economic Growth, Well-being, Personal Activity, My Resilience, My Family, Personal Confidence, My Free Time, Personal Happiness
20-Apr	Well-Being, Personal Satisfaction, Leisure Time, Personal Activities, Personal Confidence, Personal Relationships, Wellness, Personal Happiness, Being Employed, Personal friendship, My Family, Social Stability	Motivation, Wellness, Personal Employment, My Free Time, Leisure Time, Personal Relationships, My Community, My Family, Being Employed, My Resilience, Personal Wealth, Economic Growth, Personal Confidence, Personal Activity, Well-Being, Personal Happiness, Social Stability, Personal Optimism
20-Jun	My Family, Personal Relationships, My Free Time, Wellness, Well-Being, Leisure Time, My Community	Motivation, My Free Time, Wellness, My Resilience, My Community, Leisure Time, Personal Employment, Being Employed, Well-Being, My Family, Economic Growth, Personal Confidence, Personal Happiness, Personal Wealth, Personal Activity, Personal Relationships, Personal Satisfaction
20-Dec	Personal Bonding, My Community, Well-Being, Personal Activity, Personal Relationship, Leisure Time, Personal Satisfaction, Wellness	Motivation, Wellness, My Community, Leisure Time, Being Employed, My Free Time, Personal Relationships, Economic Growth, Personal Activity, Personal Wealth, My Family, Well-Being, Personal Happiness, Personal Confidence, My Resilience, Personal Life Balance
21-Jun	Economic Growth, Well-Being, Personal Satisfaction, Motivation, Health, Leisure Time, My Community, Personal employment	Motivation, My Free Time, Wellness, My Resilience, My Community, Leisure Time, Personal Employment, Being Employed, Well-Being, My Family, Economic Growth, Personal Confidence, Personal Happiness, Personal Wealth, Personal Activity, Personal Relationships, Personal Friendship
21-Aug	Personal Satisfaction, Personal confidence, Personal Wealth, Healthy Food, Leisure Time, Well-Being, Health, Plant Based Food, My Community, Personal Employment, Personal Bonding (& Transient), Personal Happiness, Personal Employment, Animal Based Foods,	Motivation, ESG, My Free Time, Healthy Food, Food Sustainability, Wellness, My Resilience, My Community, Leisure Time, Personal Employment, Being Employed, Well-Being, Plant Based Food, My Family, Economic Growth, Personal Confidence, Personal Happiness, Personal Wealth, Personal Activity, Personal Relationships, Personal Friendship, Personal Optimism
21-Dec	My Community, My Resilience, Well-Being, ESG, Personal Life Balance, Healthy Food, Personal Relationships, Personal Happiness, Personal Satisfaction, My Family, My Free Time, Personal Wealth, Social Stability, Health, Motivation, Leisure Time, Personal Wealth	Motivation, ESG, My Free Time, Healthy Food, Food Sustainability, Wellness, My Resilience, My Community, Leisure Time, Being Employed, Well-Being, Plant Based Food, My Family, Economic Growth, Personal Confidence, Personal Happiness, Personal Wealth, Personal Activity, Personal Relationships, Personal Friendship
22-Jun	My Community, Personal Satisfaction, ESG, Environmentally Friendly Food, Well-Being, Health, Healthy Food, Motivation, Free Time (& Transient), My Family (& Transient)	Motivation, ESG, My Free Time, Healthy Food, Food Sustainability, Wellness, My Resilience, My Community, Leisure Time, Personal Employment, Being Employed, Well-Being, Plant Based Food, My Family, Economic Growth, Personal Confidence, Personal Happiness, Personal Wealth, Personal Relationships, Carbon Efficient Foods
22-Sep	Personal Happiness, Personal Satisfaction, Free Time, Health, Well-Being, ESG, Plant Based Food, My Community	Motivation, ESG, My Free Time, Healthy Food, Food Sustainability, Wellness, My Resilience, My Community, Leisure Time, Personal Employment, Being Employed, Well-Being, Plant Based Food, My Family, Economic Growth, Personal Activity
22-Dec	ESG, Well-Being, Leisure, Personal Happiness, Personal Satisfaction, Personal Relationships, Health, Motivation, Plant Foods, Social Stability, My Community	Animal based foods, Being Employed, ESG, Food Sustainability, Healthy Food, Leisure Time, Motivation, My Community, My Family, My Free Time, My Resilience, Personal Relationships, Personal Wealth, Plant Based Food, Well-Being, Wellness
23-Jun	Well-Being	Economic Growth, ESG, Food Sustainability, Motivation, My Resilience, Personal Employment, Personal Optimism, Personal Relationships, Personal Wealth, Well-Being, Wellness

(Table 4). Continued.

TIMELESS	NARRATIVES	
Wave	Japan	UK
23-Dec	DEI, ESG, Well-Being, Leisure, Health, Being Employed	Being Employed, DEI, Economic Growth, ESG, Food Sustainability, Motivation, My Community, My Family, My Free Time, My Resilience, Personal Bonding, Personal Confidence, Personal Employment, Personal Friendship, Personal Happiness, Personal Life Balance, Personal Nutrition Balance, Personal Optimism, Personal Relationships, Personal Satisfaction, Personal Wealth, Social Stability, Well-Being, Wellness
24-Jun	DEI, ESG, Well-Being, Leisure, My Community	Being Employed, Economic Growth, ESG, Food Sustainability, Leisure Time, Motivation, My Community, My Family, My Resilience, Personal Bonding, Personal Confidence, Personal Happiness, Personal Life Balance, Personal Optimism, Personal Relationships, Personal Satisfaction, Personal Wealth, Social Stability, Well-Being, Wellness
24-Dec	DEI, Well-Being, Leisure Time, Wellness,	Being Employed, DEI, Economic Growth, ESG, Food Sustainability, Leisure Time, Motivation, My Community, My Family, My Free Time, My Resilience, Personal Confidence, Personal Employment, Personal Happiness, Personal Life Balance, Personal Optimism, Personal Relationships, Personal Satisfaction, Personal Wealth, Social Stability, Well-Being, Wellness
25-Jun	ESG	Economic Growth, ESG, Food Sustainability, Motivation, My Community, My Family, My Free Time, My Resilience, Personal Bonding, Personal Confidence, Personal Employment, Personal Happiness, Personal Life Balance, Personal Optimism, Personal Satisfaction, Social Stability, Well-Being, Wellness

our perception of the world. Timeless societal norms were rapidly upended. Handshakes morphed to air hugs, commutes vanished, and home blurred with work. COVID shattered norms, questioning everything from personal space to work-life balance. From sourdough starters to mask debates, the "normal" we knew became a fluid concept, forcing us to redefine what truly mattered in a world turned upside down.

We witnessed rapid cultural shifts which left fewer stories universal, as default /cultural 'truisms' struggled to keep pace with a world in flux. Traditions were uprooted, norms rewritten, and new realities surge forth, demanding we cling tight or be swept away in the maelstrom of change. Amidst the churning tides of change, one anchor remained: well-being. It is a lifeline, securing us to values, identities, and connections that offer stability in the storm. As old narratives fray and norms shift, the anchor holds fast, offering a grounding point of meaning and purpose, reminding us of who we are even as the world transforms around us.

Despite the upheaval of COVID, the desire for well-being transcended cultures and time. In both UK and Japan, it remained a constant timeless narrative, a universal anchor amidst shifting sands, reminding us of our core human pursuit: happiness and a fulfilling life.

In any context this can be a critical element of dialogue to effect sustainable change. In June 2019, BC, the affect (emotional response) for well-being in Japan (Figure 4) is skewed heavily positive and optimistic (cf. Happiness; joy), so if appropriated it would empower people. Affect serves as a nuanced indicator of the emotional tone embedded within significant content. By examining the emotional drivers underlying a narrative, one can gain deeper insight into its psychological impact and respond with greater contextual sensitivity. In the accompanying visualization (Figure 4), emotional valence is represented through color coding: positive affective states are denoted in green, while negative states are indicated in red (cf. Fear). Distinct emotional tonalities, such as anticipation or apprehension, are highlighted in purple (cf. Wonder) to distinguish them from general positive or negative sentiment. Colour intensity corresponds to the strength of the emotional expression, with more saturated hues indicating heightened emotional engagement. The width of each arc reflects the proportional contribution of a specific emotion to the overall affective profile of the narrative. The affect chart (Figure 4) is structured concentrically to illustrate emotional granularity. Core emotions, such as fear and love, are positioned near the center, while more nuanced emotional expressions, those that inform and shape the broader categories, are displayed in successive outer rings. Each concentric

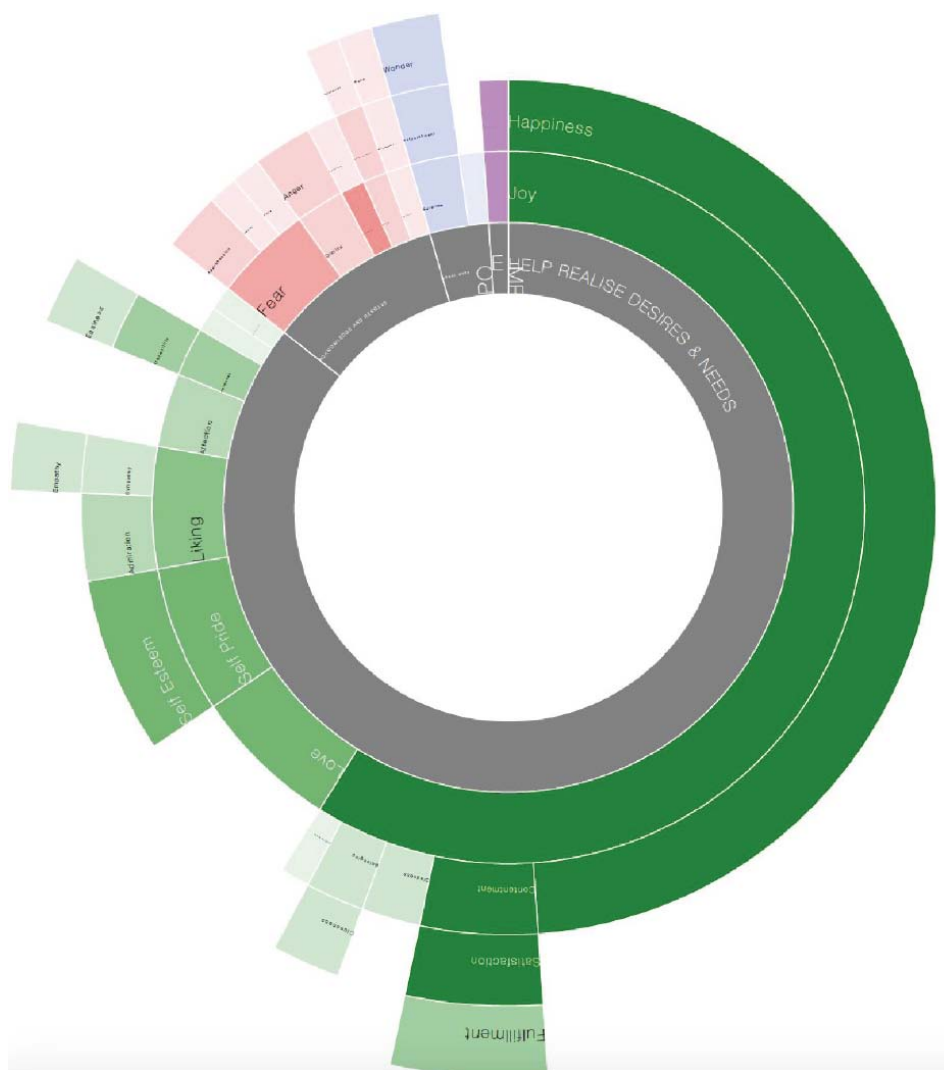


Figure 4: Emotional Response Well-Being, Japan, June 2019.

layer represents an increasing level of emotional specificity, enabling a detailed exploration of the affective landscape.

The media influence on well-being was dominated by wired.jp and to a lesser extent profile.ameba.jp. The analyses can identify the key topics driving the engagement with the well-being narrative (Figure 5). In April 2020 (Figure 6) there is more negativity associated with the narrative, but by June 2021 (Figure 7) the well-being narrative was much stronger. Significantly, topics during COVID that drove engagement on well-being narrative were much more focused: health and happiness, drove positive emotion. By June 2023 (Figure 8) there are more diverse positive emotions driving engagement and some expectations of future change and re-evaluation of the importance of GDP (Figure 9). In June 2024 (Figure 10), the well-being narrative remains strongly positive (Figure 10), in Japan, with multiple emotional triggering

engagement for this timeless narrative. That said, overall, the latest narrative landscape, from the VLL in Japan, (Figure 11) shows the overall continuing volatility and uncertainty with many of the base lifestyle narratives remaining transient. Fortunately, the well-being narrative is readily and clearly accessible as a lifestyle notion (Figure 12). However, a significant opportunity for policy makers is the current reality that the My Community narrative in Japan was transformational (Figure 11). However, by June 2025, most of the VLL narratives in Japan (Figure 13) had become transient including well-being, which as a concept had become more singular and focused on happiness, with the power media driving the narrative being fuelled largely by note.com and x.com. Such is the flux and uncertainty in Japan the only Transformational narrative was Personal Pessimism and only ESG was Timeless. Being Transformational Personal Pessimism is dynamic and volatile: potentially world-changing, but risky if misaligned.



Figure 5: Key Topics driving Well-Being Engagement, in Japan, June 2019.



Figure 6: Emotional Response Well-Being, Japan, April 2020.

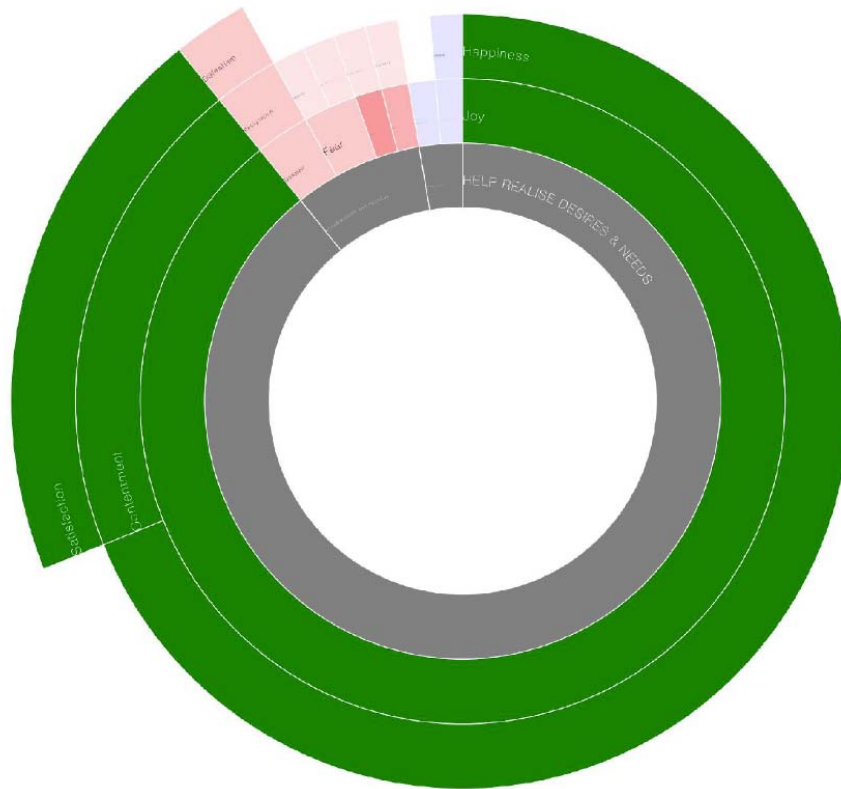


Figure 7: Emotional Response Well-Being, Japan, June 2021.

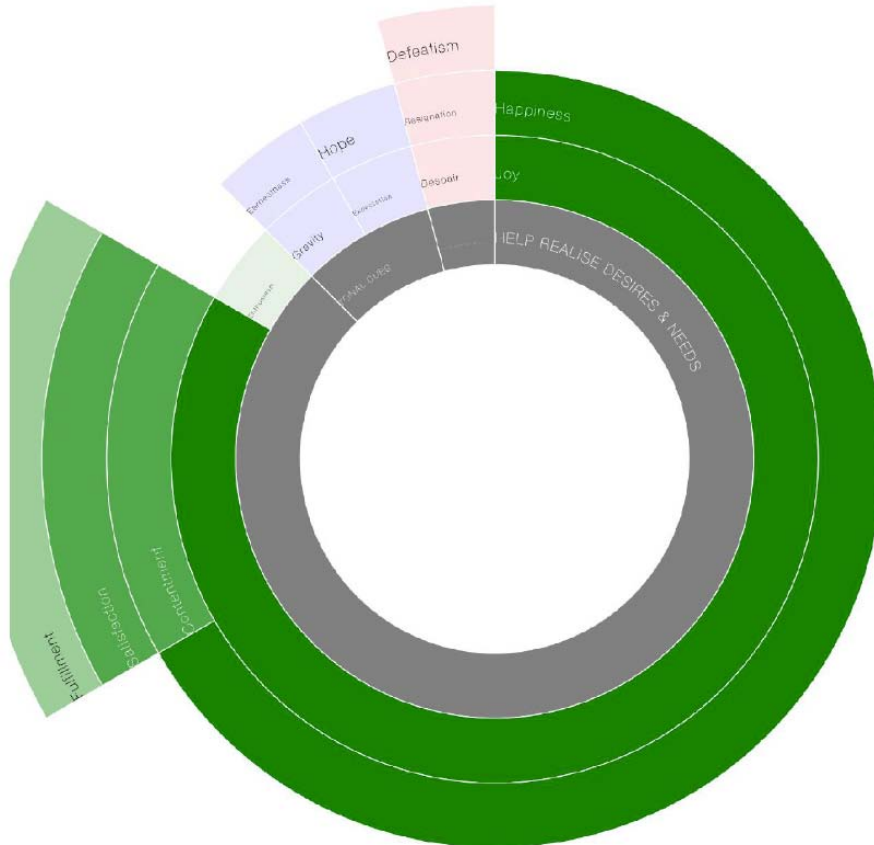


Figure 8: Emotional Response Well-Being, Japan, June 2023.



Figure 9: Illustrative Content driving Engagement of Well-Being, Japan, June 2023.

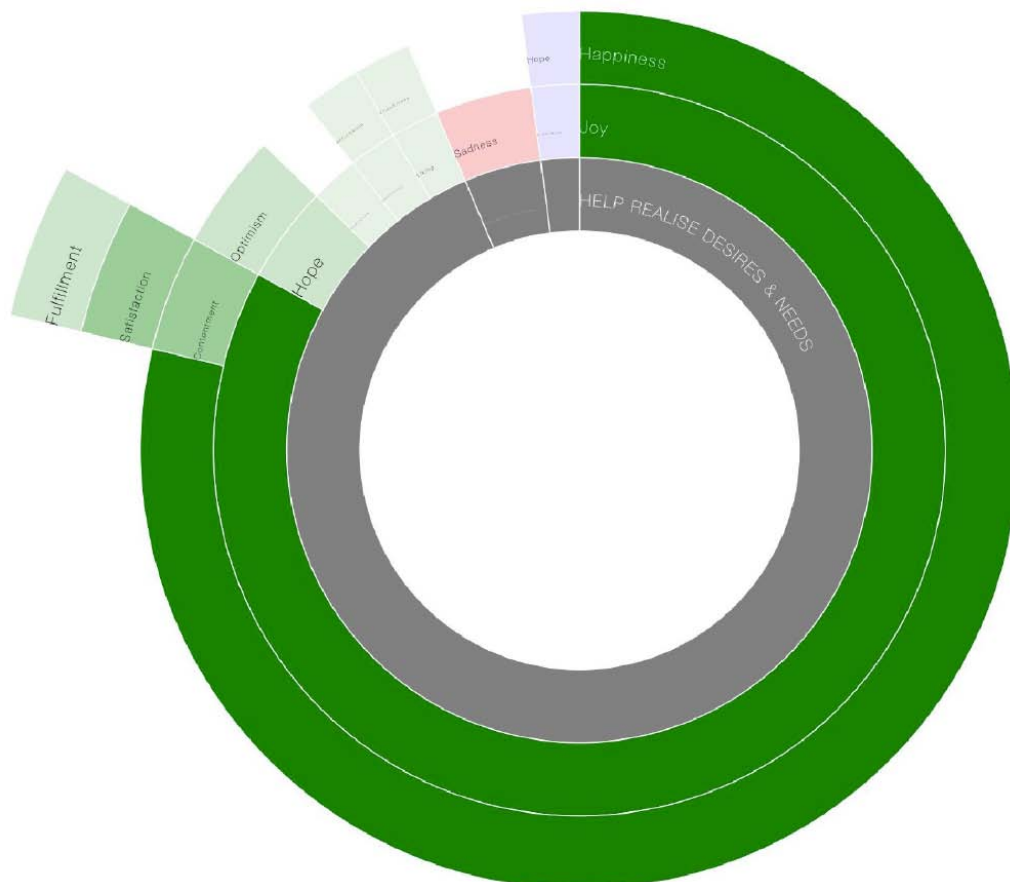


Figure 10: Emotional Response Well-Being, Japan, June 2024.

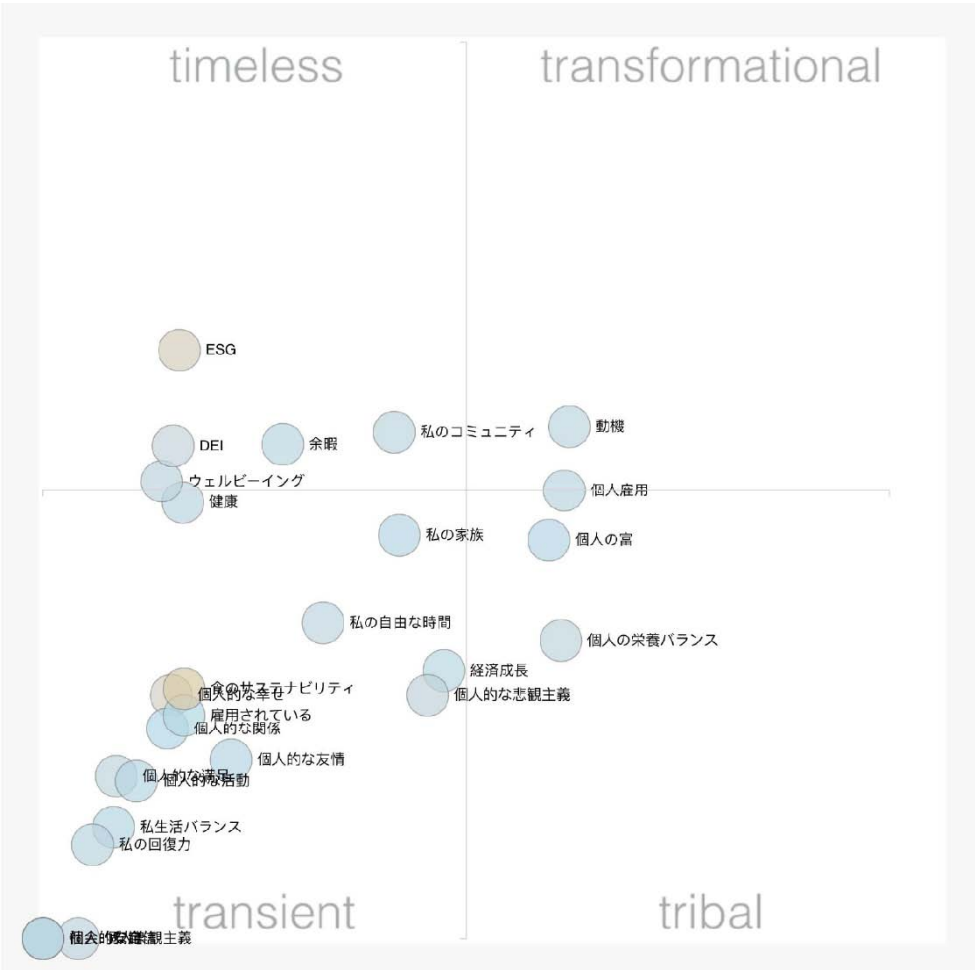


Figure 11: VLL Narrative Landscape Japan, June 2024.



Figure 12: Key Content Well-Being, Japan, June 2024 & 2025.

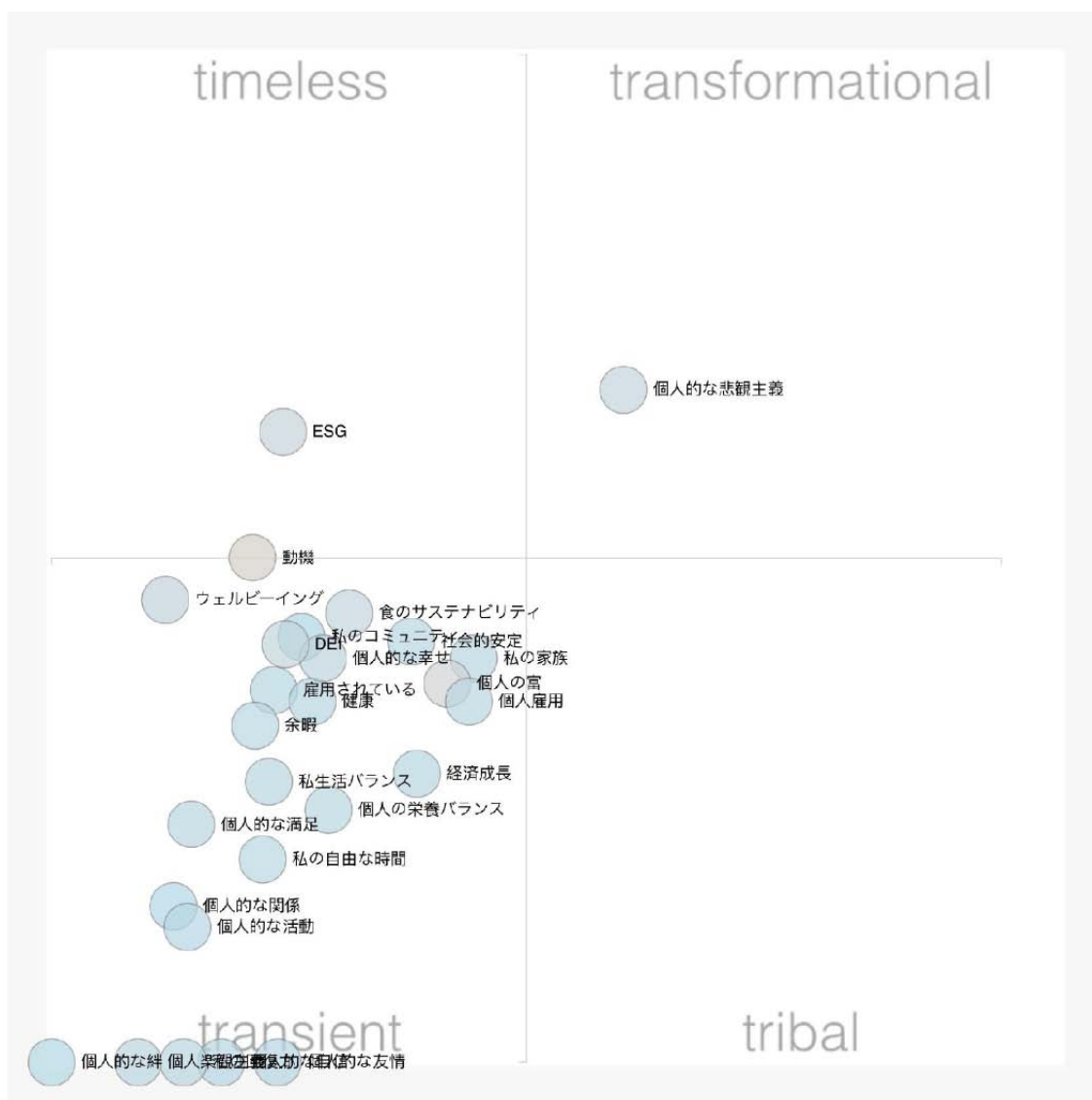


Figure 13: VLL Narrative Landscape Japan, June 2025.

Several common themes can be identified from the platforms (note.com, J-STAGE, Kotobank) which are important media for the well-being narrative (Figure 12). Common themes include:

- ✓ Well-being and Identity: Personal development, psychological insight, and societal roles.
- ✓ Cultural Reflection: especially around Japanese concepts like “ぺしみずむ” (pessimism), often approached introspectively.
- ✓ Sports, Movement, and Embodiment: based on J-STAGE content, expect academic exploration of physical education or sports psychology.
- ✓ Narrative Therapy and Personal Voice: usually found in user-written note articles with autobiographical or reflective writing.

- ✓ Societal Structures and Value Systems: how Japanese values shape well-being, pessimism, and social responsibility.

Importantly, this is not simply illustrative content but rather what drives the narrative.

These themes are driven by:

- Emotional resonance and vulnerability
- Exploration of failure, resilience, and transformation
- Use of metaphor and cultural idioms
- Structured self-reflection or narrative techniques
- The tension between individual agency and societal norms

In June 2025, Japan's societal narratives are dominated by a prevailing sense of transience, solidified by ongoing uncertainties stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, economic stagnation, demographic challenges, and political instability. Despite a modest projected GDP growth of 0.7%, personal consumption remains low, and only slight improvements in real wages are anticipated. Meanwhile, a shrinking and aging population exacerbates social security strains and shifts consumer behavior towards savings and selective spending. In addition, Japan faces a significant societal challenge with almost 1.5 million individuals, approximately 2% of the population aged 15 to 62, experiencing social isolation. This phenomenon, known as 'hikikomori', extends beyond the common perception of reclusive youth to encompass a substantial and growing number of middle-aged adults, many of whom have been isolated for over a decade. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing mental health challenges, further contributing to the urgency of addressing this issue. While traditional support systems often focus on younger individuals, a considerable proportion of 'hikikomori' are in their 30s, 40s, and 50s, a demographic particularly affected by the decline of Japan's lifetime employment model. These individuals often express a desire to re-engage with society but lack the necessary pathways to do so.

Effectively addressing the dual crises of a shrinking population and widespread social withdrawal necessitates a paradigm shift from individual blame to the development of sustainable, community-led support systems. A particular focus is required for invisible 'hikikomori', who are no longer within the school system or are beyond the age range of youth-centric support services. The political landscape, characterized by low approval ratings for PM Ishiba's administration and potential legislative gridlock, further amplifies public skepticism about long-term governance. Concurrently, work and leisure habits are undergoing radical transformations, with an increasing emphasis on job flexibility and experiences over material acquisition. Overall, this period in Japan reflects a deep-rooted response to multifaceted uncertainties, emphasizing adaptability and short-term focus as survival strategies amidst profound social change.

While the lifestyle narratives in Japan in June 2025 are defined by a quiet and deep-seated sense of transience, the United Kingdom presents a contrasting picture—not of timeless structure, but of a more volatile and overt period of national restructuring. While many

of the previously identified important lifestyle narratives remain Timeless the nature of the content and the source driving engagement is changing (Figure 14). Moreover, the Being Employed narrative, in June 2025 (Figure 14) is highly debated but fragmented content is a narrative classifies as being Tribal. It provokes intense but low-impact discourse; lots of chatter, few meaningful contributions. Whereas Japan's uncertainty is a chronic condition born from decades of demographic and economic pressures, the UK's is a more acute upheaval, manifesting in loud, systemic shifts that shape its social fabric in a fundamentally different way, with little or no consensus being evident.

The primary rationale for this contrast lies in the nature of their current challenges. Japan's "five-alarm fire" is its demographic decline, a slow-moving, structural force that underpins its economic stagnation and social anxiety. This fosters a rational, personal-level adaptation towards short-term horizons and flexibility. The UK, by contrast, is grappling with the more immediate aftermath of major political and economic shocks, namely Brexit and the pandemic. This has not led to quiet adaptation but to a turbulent political realignment. While Japan's political flux involves legislative gridlock, the UK in 2025 faces a potential shattering of its traditional two-party system, fueling a national narrative of debate, division, and reinvention rather than passive acceptance of a "new normal."

This divergence is also clear in the world of work. In Japan, the shift away from lifetime employment manifests as "quiet quitting"—an individualistic, subtle retreat. In the UK, the re-evaluation of work culture is a more confrontational and collective affair. Widespread public debate on the four-day work week, prominent union action, and vocal demands for flexibility create a narrative of active struggle for a new or repaired social contract around work. This is less about personal improvisation in the face of inevitable decline and more about a society openly wrestling with its identity and values. While both nations face economic headwinds, the UK's relatively more dynamic (though inflationary) economy and its status as a global cultural hub provide a different set of social anchors. There is a prevailing sense that despite the political and economic turmoil, foundational cultural institutions and a more individualistic ethos offer a form of continuity. Therefore, while Japan's transience feels like a slow tide pulling things out to sea, the UK's uncertainty is



Figure 14: VLL Narrative Landscape UK June 2025.

more like a storm reshaping the coastline—the fundamental landmass remains, but its form is being actively and often noisily remade.

In June 2025 well-being in the UK remains Timeless (Figure 14) with multiple positive emotions (Figure 15) which are significantly weaker than in June 2024 (Figure 16). Indeed, the heightened negativity is indicated by the greater presence of red as well as a deeper need for new expectations and surprises fueling hope (Figure 15).

That said, to deal effectively with the future, we must absolutely learn how to manage two equally inevitable conditions: uncertainty and risk. Complexity of change is increased by the growing interdependence of our world, and demands we continue to track what people feel is important to them. Moreover, as change

is unpredictable, then leadership characteristics must be radically different and dynamic with an ability to encourage experimentation and willingness to adapt. The pandemic has heightened the importance of health, in the broadest sense, to the top of the agenda as people, at all levels, re-evaluate what is important.

The pandemic, as noted, has irrevocably pushed health and well-being to the top of the global agenda. This profound re-evaluation of what is important provides a powerful, if challenging, opportunity. In both the structured turbulence of the United Kingdom and the quiet transience of Japan, a genuine focus on well-being can serve as the primary engine for positive and, crucially, sustainable change. However, the path this change takes will look fundamentally different in each nation.



Figure 15: Emotional Response Well-Being, UK, June 2025.

In Japan, where the core challenge is a slow, grinding battle with demographic decline and economic stagnation, well-being can fuel change from the bottom up. The “quiet quitting” phenomenon is not just a retreat but a reassertion of personal well-being over corporate loyalty. This individual-level shift, if supported, can lead to more sustainable work cultures that value mental health and productivity over mere presence. Furthermore, as people re-evaluate their priorities, there is an opportunity to strengthen local communities, creating more resilient social safety nets that are less dependent on a struggling central government. The sustainable change here is not one of grand, top-down policy, but of fostering a more adaptable, resilient, and healthy populace capable of navigating chronic uncertainty through community and personal balance.

In the UK, a nation wrestling loudly with its identity through political and social restructuring, well-being acts as a more direct and confrontational catalyst for

systemic change. The push for a four-day work week, the demand for better mental health funding within the NHS, and the emphasis on green spaces in urban planning are not fringe lifestyle issues; they are central political demands. Here, well-being is the explicit goal of a new social contract that people are actively fighting for. Sustainable change is driven by collective pressure on leadership to experiment with new economic models that prioritize human and environmental health over traditional growth metrics. It’s about rewiring the system to produce well-being as a primary output, not a secondary benefit.

Ultimately, despite their contrasting approaches—Japan’s quiet, adaptive resilience and the UK’s loud, systemic reinvention—both paths underscore a new reality. Prioritizing well-being is no longer a luxury. In a world defined by the “inevitable conditions of uncertainty and risk,” it is the most rational and direct route to creating societies that are not just economically productive, but socially and

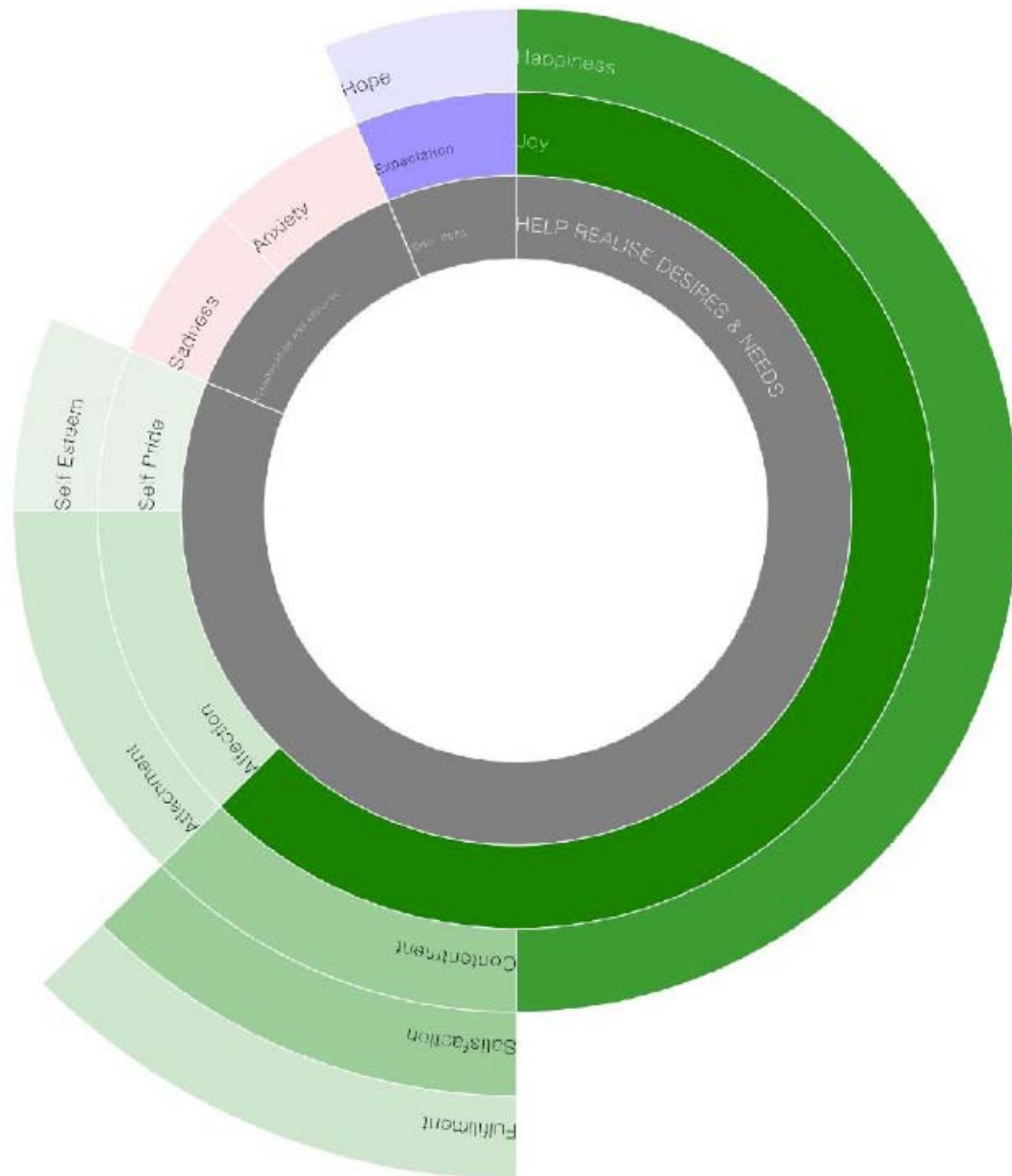


Figure 16: Emotional Response Well-Being, UK, June 2024.

environmentally sustainable. It is the foundation upon which a more human-centric future can be built.

8. WELL-BEING; THE KEYSTONE

50 years ahead we will have succeeded if we have a more caring society with pillars Health, Food and Well-being. Most people now realise that economic growth, however desirable, cannot solve all our problems. Instead, we need philosophy and science that encompass a broader range of human needs and experiences.

The pursuit of well-being is smart policy for several fundamental reasons. It is not only the right thing to do

philosophically but, empirical evidence indicates it is, also economically and politically the smart thing to do, as well:

- ✓ Philosophical rationale: well-being is what citizens ultimately care about
- ✓ Political rationale: raises government approval
- ✓ Economic rationale: demonstrable objective benefits of subjective well-being

Well-being can be the Keystone for coherent societal development that helps simplify the complex and empowers multiple constituencies to diffuse new ideas and behaviours that improve people's quality of

life (QOL). As a foundation of a more 'thrivable' society is critical to ensure that well-being is presented in a holistic manner. Well-being, which includes physical, mental, and social health, is not only an individual goal, but also a social asset. Some benefits that can be envisaged include:

1. **Higher Productivity and Innovation:** Well-being boosts performance, creativity, and attendance. A well-being-rich workforce leads to economic and social progress.
2. **Lower Social Costs:** Well-being reduces the burden of health problems on society and healthcare systems. Investing in well-being initiatives, such as preventive care and mental health support, saves resources for other needs.
3. **Greater Social Cohesion:** Well-being strengthens community and connection. People with strong social ties are more likely to participate in civic activities, volunteer, and help others. This creates a more cooperative and supportive society.
4. **Increased Resilience:** Well-being helps individuals and communities overcome adversity. Whether facing disasters, downturns, or challenges, well-being fosters resilience and effective coping.
5. **Greener Future:** Well-being aligns with environmental care. People who value well-being are more likely to adopt sustainable practices, leading to a healthier planet and a safer future.

Promoting well-being requires a comprehensive approach. Governments can ensure access to healthcare, education, and social support. Businesses can create positive work environments that enhance employee well-being. Individuals can invest in their physical, mental, and social health through self-care and strong relationships. Investing in well-being is not just about feeling good; it's about building a stronger, more resilient, and prosperous society for all. By prioritising well-being, we create a brighter future where individuals and communities can flourish.

9. HEALTHCARE IMPLICATIONS

The pandemic, a global crisis unlike any other, laid bare our deepest values and anxieties. Tracking what people felt important exposed their shifting priorities, from the immediate need for health and security to the

rediscovery of human connection and the yearning for normalcy. By understanding what mattered most during such upheaval, we gain valuable insights into human nature and societal needs. This knowledge equips us to navigate future challenges, prioritize effectively, and build a more resilient world that reflects our shared values. Tracking sentiment during the pandemic acts as a historical record, capturing the emotional zeitgeist of a transformative era. This snapshot can inform future generations, guide policymakers, and remind us of the enduring human spirit in the face of immense adversity.

Health has moved to the top of everyone's agenda as the pandemic has fundamentally, and permanently, changed how people live, work and what is important to them. In terms of technology transformation, COVID-19 has in many regards fast-forwarded our futures. Digitisation, data analytics will increase predictive analysis to be used to personalize healthcare and there will be greater consumerisation of the (contactless) patient experience, only further heightening healthy lifestyle choices.

This reframing of healthcare for society demands an improved level of health literacy amongst the population and this can be assisted by, as well as personal adoption of 'Positive Health' tracking help behavioural shifts towards, and maintenance of, health lifestyle behaviour. COVID-19 has been attitudinal transformational, an equaliser, in that people are now talking more about mental health and seeking treatment when they would not have done before. There is need to create a momentum, and public and private institutions will need to accelerate digital investments and participation in ecosystems, where aligning with Lifestyle narratives is likely to become more influential and impactful.

The imperative to communicate and really connect is to ensure that the complex is simplified. Since most narratives are Transient this is also indicative that not all screen time / social media is productive time. Creating healthy, productive social media user experiences has become topical given the increasing reliance of social media and social sharing due to social distancing. It is driving start-up investment (Brown, 2020) and generating dialogue between entrepreneurs and social media specialists who believe they can create better media options, that clarify content. Some recent, social issue research (Burgers & Beukeboom, 2020) has identified latent desires and conflicts, through data mining, in a way that can provide greater societal understanding of subcultures,

current issues and potential avenues to better governance. That said, our approach of engaging with engagement is more singular and focuses to help attitudinal and behavioral Lifestyle change. Empowering the individual through stories that go viral will have the impact outlined in Narrative Economics (Carpentier, 2011).

As people evolve from DC to AC, they are looking forward to experimenting with newer activities (Ref 18). The pandemic has brought forward people's expectations in technology and innovation, as well as a desire to streamline their lives. Companies that recognize the new nature of convenience and community will embrace mobility, contactless experiences, and social sharing to create dynamic, future-forward behaviours.

With many different people / institutions naturally trying to provide help and advice; the imperative is to focus on what is important to people, now. Their health literacy is inadequate for the demands of self-medication, never mind in the new reality created by COVID-19. Trust is an imperative but that can be gained by talking and meaningfully contributing to the stories that are important. The pandemic has sparked innovation, whether a start-up or an established cross-border, MNC, today's digital ecosystems enable you to focus the right message, to the right people, and in the right context. Listening is so underrated, but with a focus on objectively understanding and leveraging important stories, public policy and commercial enterprise, leaders, alike can affect change for the good. Engaging with engagement can move people, and can move markets, that will enhance people's health and QOL. The critical characteristic to enhance QOL is a positive attitude and a sense of personal empowerment.

The global shift in priorities toward health, well-being, and redefining personal values has surged despite mounting inequality, mental health concerns, and economic strains. Numerous texts, rooted in scientific principles, offer practical guidance for individuals to craft a balanced life. "Build the Life You Want" (Winfrey & Brooks, 2023) by Arthur C. Brooks stands out, emphasizing pillars like family, friendships, work, and faith for achieving happiness. It amalgamates academic rigor with everyday lifestyle suggestions, resonating with Oprah Winfrey's podcast, reflecting a shared aim to enhance lives.

Similar texts align with this focus, offering accessible daily guidelines without institutional support.

For instance, Rubin's (2020) year-long happiness experiment, Peale's (2020) classic on cultivating positivity, Ruiz and Mills' (2020) wisdom from the Toltec people, Achor's (2020) research on positive psychology, and Brown's (2020) guide to embracing authenticity all contribute to this narrative. Unlike seminal scientific treatises on concepts like 'ikigai' (Miralles & Garcia, 2016) and 'positive health,' (Huber, 2016) these texts deliver tangible, relatable insights into well-being and happiness (Clark *et al.*, 2018; Helliwell *et al.*, 2023).

Of these texts, "The 5L's" (LaGreca & Mannix, 2022) stands out for its practical framework, offering daily questions that facilitate balanced living. The pursuit of balance can become habitual, significantly improving one's quality of life and potentially employing gamification principles to positively influence behavior.

However, in the contemporary landscape, social media's potential to amplify distrust is noteworthy, particularly amid political populism. A lack of decisive leadership and short-term thinking during uncertain times exacerbates societal challenges. A case in point, in Japan is the societal imperative of addressing 'hikikomori', introduced in Section 7. Addressing it is a crucial strategic investment for Japan, directly impacting social stability and economic recovery. The presence of a hikikomori member significantly burdens families, leading to financial hardship and severe strain on relationships, often fostering mistrust, frustration, helplessness, and even violence. This stress can permeate the broader community, potentially increasing instances of harm, crime, or suicide. From a societal perspective, Japan cannot afford the loss of another generation to social disconnection. The reintegration of individuals back into society offers both emotional and substantial economic contributions. For instance, the successful re-entry of just one long-term NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) into the workforce is estimated to inject approximately ¥150 million (\$1 million) into the system over their lifetime through taxes paid and reduced welfare costs, according to the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Therefore, reintegration initiatives go beyond mere assistance; they are proactive measures to prevent poverty, social decline, and harm. By fostering a positive cycle of recovery and participation, these efforts strengthen individuals while simultaneously rebuilding the fabric of family and community life.

The pandemic has spurred a yearning for well-being, mental health support, and a search for new

ways of life, all while highlighting the importance of genuine care and personalized engagement. As technology reshapes work environments, the divide between in-demand jobs and obsolete roles widens, elevating secondary jobs or "side hustles" from experiences to economic necessities. Sadly, progress on diversity seems to regress, with resistance to the financial implications of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals observed in many developed countries. Support rendered during these upheavals often falls short, intensifying feelings of isolation, particularly in the age of omnipresent social media. This neglect is deemed unacceptable; personalized care and connection are easily accessible. Engaging with like-minded communities can enhance credibility and influence behaviors significantly. It's crucial to monitor and prioritize what individuals value the most.

Strategic leadership narratives that bridge large-scale initiatives with grassroots efforts are pivotal. Addressing negative emotional states through economic and political means remains challenging but essential. Alternate potential strategies include:

Mitigation Strategies

- ✓ **Mental Health Funding:** Allocate public funding for mental health services and programs.
- ✓ **Healthcare Reform:** Implement policies ensuring better access to mental health care.
- ✓ **Mental Health Laws:** Enact laws treating mental health services equally with physical health services.
- ✓ **Workplace Mental Health Initiatives:** Encourage workplaces to adopt mental health programs.
- ✓ **Education and Awareness Campaigns:** Support campaigns to reduce stigma and promote mental health education.
- ✓ **Poverty Alleviation:** Implement economic policies to reduce poverty and income inequality.
- ✓ **Social Services:** Fund services supporting vulnerable populations struggling with various issues.

Adaptation Strategies

- ✓ **Resilience and Coping Training:** Develop programs teaching resilience and coping skills.

- ✓ **Crisis Response Services:** Invest in emergency response services for emotional distress.
- ✓ **Community Support:** Create networks providing resources to those in need.
- ✓ **Counseling Services in Schools:** Ensure schools have mental health professionals available.
- ✓ **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage collaborations to address mental health challenges.
- ✓ **Mental Health Legislation:** Develop laws that protect individuals' rights and dignity.
- ✓ **Data-Driven Approaches:** Use data to inform policies and interventions.

Combining economic and political strategies, supported by evidence-based practices, can foster a healthier and sustainable society. Reducing stigma associated with mental health issues is integral to these efforts.

Effective leadership involves not only having the right answers but also asking the right questions of the right people. Rather than relying solely on monologues, the best leaders stimulate conversations and prioritize key narratives by tracking societal sentiment. In the wake of the pandemic, leaders must ask themselves authentic questions to demonstrate leadership during a time of unprecedented change and transformation. The pandemic caused people and institutions to question everything as the virus dramatized that many things were broken, and for many leaders were found to be lacking. It exacerbated inequalities, heightened mental health concerns, and daily lives have recently become worse for many because of rising costs; thus, societal and living transformations continue almost unabated. With such volatility and uncertainty creating greater personal concerns, for some, the military acronym VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) has taken on a broader relevance.

The pandemic also accelerated digitalization, something that has been both magnified and taken centre stage since the ChatGPT prototype launch at end of November 2022, with the broader access to generative Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI is having an intense impact on the way we live and work. While more innovative breakthrough to benefit people and

society are highly anticipated, we must also acknowledge the risks and limitations, of misinformation / dis-information, especially in open societies. The increase in data is not making people feel more informed. People want to use data to improve decision-making, but don't know how and where to begin, and this the overload creates stress (Decision Dilemma, 2023). In the absence of knowledge and clarity, fear (of the unknown) of the unknown machines well beyond the Cambridge Analytica data scandal, is increased. Our emotional readiness should not be to compete against the machines but learn to cooperate with them. Social media has become central to our daily lives and the stories we share have the potential to change how we think and behave. We established, before the pandemic, our VLL to track key lifestyle narratives in Japan and the UK. We believed that interconnectivity was greater than globalization, and the imperative was to be able to understand the evolving and important role culture would play in facilitating sustainable transformation. Moreover, with so much change taking place simultaneously the increasing imperative was for leaders to be able to simplify the complex and provide clear strategic leadership narratives. The societal sentiment, in our VLL, helps leaders prioritise and lead during a period of unprecedented volatility. Moreover, our VLL, significantly provides context to the on-going narratives which can empower leaders to engage, while current AI initiatives focus on content, without context, or emotion.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented societal transformation. Leaders must adapt to these changes and ask questions that are sensitive to the context and audience. In doing so, they can address the implications of the pandemic on well-being, inequality, and engagement. One of the main implications of the pandemic is that what was once fixed is now a variable. Individuals are testing lifestyle and societal fundamentals, and poor messaging has compounded isolation. Leaders must ask themselves the same questions to be seen as authentic (Figure 17). Maxwell (2014) stresses the importance of asking questions for self-discovery, leading people, and leading a team. Furthermore, the pandemic has magnified inequalities, with some individuals in high-demand jobs while others need reskilling. Moreover, well-being and mental health are becoming increasingly important, as people desire new ways of living and feel unheard. Leaders must monitor and focus on what people feel is important to them to ensure engagement and relevance. Another important implication is the need to engage with like-minded

communities with existing narratives in the wild. Doing so enhances credibility, fuels relevance, and can change behavior. Leaders must monitor and prioritize what people feel is important to them to lead effectively.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused profound societal transformation and has magnified inequalities while highlighting the importance of well-being and mental health. It is no surprise that the CWO (Chief Well-Being Officer) is getting more traction; becoming an increasingly important role as many companies try to create a more human focused workplace. HR (Bratton & Gold, 2017) is being transformed by a more human capital stance. Leaders must adapt to these changes and ask questions that are sensitive to the context and audience (Figure 17). By doing so, they can address the implications of the pandemic on well-being, inequality, and engagement. Monitoring and prioritizing what people feel is important is crucial to leading effectively. For leaders the best way to imagine the future is to have a clear Strategic Leadership Narrative and help create it, Imagineering!

This reframing of healthcare for society demands an improved level of health literacy amongst the population and this can be assisted by a focus on engaging with engagement over traditional messaging. COVID -19 has been attitudinal transformational, an equaliser, in that people are now talking more about mental health and seeking treatment when they would not have done before. While attitudes and behaviour have been changed by the pandemic, beyond our ability to communicate what people find important, it is also necessary to recognize that the vernacular has also been disrupted (Katermina & Yachenko, 2020). There is need to create a momentum, and public and private institutions will need to accelerate digital investments and participation in ecosystems, where aligning with Lifestyle and social development narratives (Figure 17) is likely to become more influential and impactful to ensure a 'thrivable' society.

The imperative to communicate and really connect is to ensure that the complex is simplified (illustrated in the following short case study of the potential of robotics and automation in healthcare). Traditional, mass media approaches are no longer fit for purpose. That said, since most narratives are Transient this is also indicative that not all screen time / social media is productive time. Creating healthy, productive social media user experiences has become topical given the increasing reliance of social media and social sharing due to social distancing, as people evolve from DC.

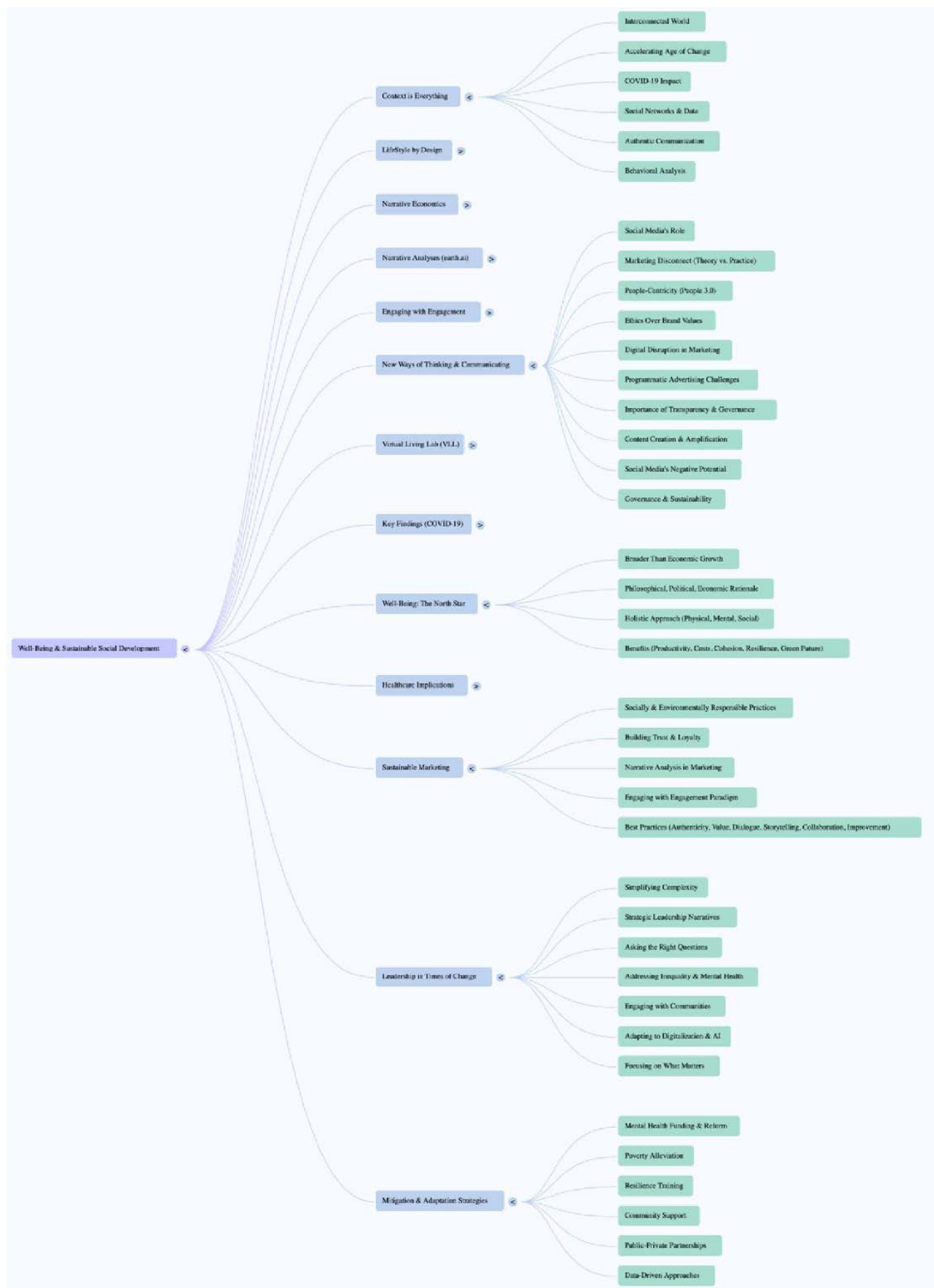


Figure 17: Well-being and Sustainable Social development.

9.1. CASE STUDY: The Future of Robotics and Automation in Healthcare: A Key Element of a Sustainable Society.

The future of robotics and automation in healthcare is not merely about technological advancement—it is about enabling a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient society (Clark & Beaumont, 2025). As populations around the world age and birth rates decline, particularly in advanced economies such as Japan, the demand for healthcare services is increasing while the availability of caregivers and resources is diminishing. In this context, robotics and intelligent automation emerge not only as solutions to workforce shortages but as vital instruments in reimagining healthcare systems that prioritize both efficiency and human well-being. Healthcare robotics—ranging from surgical assistants and rehabilitation devices to care giving companions—can extend human capabilities, enhance precision, and reduce the burden on healthcare workers. These technologies are designed to support not replace humans, enabling caregivers and clinicians to focus on empathy, complex decision-making, and patient relationships, while delegating repetitive or physically demanding tasks to machines. This partnership model embodies a sustainable approach: one that respects human dignity while harnessing the power of technological innovation.

Moreover, automation contributes to sustainability through cost efficiency and improved access. Pharmacy automation, AI-driven diagnostics, and robotic surgical systems reduce errors, minimize waste, and streamline operations, making high-quality care more accessible—especially in underserved or remote communities. Robots that monitor patients remotely or assist in eldercare can alleviate pressures on centralized healthcare infrastructure, supporting decentralized, home-based care that is both scalable and cost-effective. Japan's leadership in industrial robotics and its demographic imperatives offer a real-world proving ground for these ideas. With over 30% of its population aged 65 and above, Japan has already embraced robotic solutions to maintain societal function. Caregiving robots, like Robear and Paro, and wearable exoskeletons like Cyberdyne's HAL exemplify how technology can directly contribute to both personal well-being and macro-level societal sustainability. The future of healthcare robotics must be guided by ethical foresight and systemic integration. As the technology matures, it must be implemented within frameworks that address data privacy, equity, and emotional intelligence. By embedding robotics and automation

into the complex adaptive system of healthcare—where humans, technologies, and institutions evolve together—we create a dynamic model of care that is not only more responsive but also more resilient in the face of global challenges.

The thoughtful integration of robotics and automation in healthcare is a keystone of sustainable societies. It addresses demographic pressures, enhances care delivery, and enables a future where health systems are more inclusive, adaptable, and human-centered. The path forward lies not in replacing the human touch, but in extending it—with technology as its ally.

Marketing communications can play a transformative role in accelerating the adoption and societal acceptance of robotics and automation in healthcare. These technologies, while powerful, often face barriers rooted not in their capabilities, but in public perception, lack of awareness, and fear of the unknown. Strategic and empathetic marketing communications can bridge this gap by informing, inspiring, and inviting participation from all stakeholders—patients, families, caregivers, professionals, and policymakers.

Here's how marketing communications can enhance the impact of these developments:

1. Reframing the Narrative: From Replacement to Partnership

One of the most common societal fears is that robots will replace humans. Marketing communications must shift the narrative toward augmentation and collaboration. Campaigns should emphasize that healthcare robots are here to support doctors, nurses, and caregivers—extending their reach and reducing their burden, not replacing their compassion or expertise.

- ✓ Message: "Robots extend the human touch—they don't replace it."
- ✓ Tactics: Storytelling through real patient and caregiver experiences, behind-the-scenes videos of collaborative care environments, testimonials from healthcare professionals.

2. Showcasing Real-World Use Cases

Abstract ideas don't inspire confidence—real stories do. Marketing efforts should highlight concrete

examples of healthcare robotics in action: surgical robots reducing recovery times, caregiving robots providing companionship, or AI diagnostics saving lives through early detection.

- ✓ Message: “The future of care is already here.”
- ✓ Tactics: Case study videos, interactive infographics, documentary-style short films, and live demonstrations at healthcare conferences or public exhibits.

3. Educating with Clarity and Empathy

Technical jargon and sci-fi imagery can alienate audiences. Marketing should humanize and simplify the technology, explaining how it works, why it's safe, and what it means for individuals and families.

- ✓ Message: “Safe. Smart. Here to help.”
- ✓ Tactics: Educational campaigns using approachable language, animations, FAQs, and explainer series designed for different demographics (e.g., seniors, caregivers, children).

4. Engaging with Values, Not Just Features

People respond more deeply to values than to technical specifications. Marketing should connect healthcare robotics to shared values like dignity, safety, independence, and family support.

- ✓ Message: “Because everyone deserves dignified care.”
- ✓ Tactics: Emotionally resonant campaigns that depict human-centered outcomes—elderly individuals regaining mobility, families spending more time together thanks to robotic caregiving assistance, or rural patients accessing urban-quality care remotely.

5. Building Trust Through Transparency

Trust is essential, especially in healthcare. Marketing communications should proactively address concerns about data privacy, reliability, and ethical use, and clearly show the safeguards in place.

- ✓ Message: “Your care, your control.”
- ✓ Tactics: Public Q&A sessions, expert interviews, transparent disclosures about technology

standards and regulatory compliance, endorsements from medical professionals.

6. Mobilizing Champions and Influencers

Communications campaigns can leverage early adopters and thought leaders—from surgeons and tech innovators to patient advocates and caregivers—as ambassadors to champion these technologies.

- ✓ Message: “I’ve seen the difference it makes.”
- ✓ Tactics: Peer-to-peer storytelling, podcasts, keynote appearances, and blog content that reflect firsthand experience and credibility.

7. Encouraging Participation and Co-Creation

Marketing should invite people not just to accept these technologies but to help shape them. Open forums, design workshops, and social media engagement can turn the public into co-creators rather than passive consumers.

- ✓ Message: “Let’s build the future of care together.”
- ✓ Tactics: Crowdsourced storytelling campaigns, surveys to inform development, and community-based pilot programs with public feedback loops.

The full potential of healthcare robotics and automation can only be realized if society is not only informed but emotionally and intellectually engaged. Effective marketing communications act as the cultural interface between technological possibility and public readiness—turning innovation into adoption, skepticism into trust, and information into action.

10. SUSTAINABLE MARKETING STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES: A NARRATIVE APPROACH

Sustainable marketing has emerged as a critical business strategy, compelling companies to adopt environmentally and socially responsible practices. This approach necessitates a holistic view of a business's impact on society and the environment, with a focus on balancing profitability and ethical conduct. As consumers increasingly demand transparency and accountability, companies are integrating sustainability into their marketing initiatives to build trust, foster loyalty, and enhance their reputation.

The relationship between sustainable marketing and consumer management is deeply intertwined. Both

disciplines aim to create value, cultivate loyalty, and establish enduring relationships with consumers, while addressing environmental, social, and economic concerns. This essay explores sustainable marketing strategies and practices, drawing upon narrative analysis and the concept of "engaging with engagement," to provide a comprehensive understanding of how companies can effectively integrate sustainability into their marketing strategies while meeting consumer needs and preferences.

Narrative analysis offers a powerful lens for understanding how sustainable marketing messages resonate with consumers. As Shiller (2019) suggests, people are inherently attuned to narratives, using them to validate their behavior. In the context of sustainable marketing, compelling narratives can effectively communicate a company's commitment to environmental and social responsibility, shaping consumer perceptions and driving behavioral change.

By crafting authentic and engaging stories, companies can connect with consumers on an emotional level, fostering trust and loyalty. These narratives should highlight the company's sustainable practices, its positive impact on society and the environment, and its alignment with consumer values.

Traditional marketing approaches often rely on mass communication, attempting to "dominate" the narrative from the outside. However, the rise of social media and digital platforms has fundamentally altered consumer behavior, empowering individuals to actively participate in shaping narratives. "Engaging with engagement" represents a new paradigm that emphasizes the importance of understanding and participating in ongoing conversations. This approach involves:

- **Measuring long-term engagement:** Instead of focusing solely on short-term metrics like reach and frequency, companies should prioritize measuring the depth and duration of consumer engagement.
- **Analyzing social and linguistic signals:** By analyzing online content, companies can gain valuable insights into consumer sentiment, values, and priorities.
- **Identifying key topics, triggers, and channels:** This analysis enables companies to understand what drives consumer behavior and how to effectively communicate their sustainable marketing messages.

- **Understanding emotional impact:** Measuring the emotional response to narratives allows companies to tailor their messaging for maximum resonance.

By embracing this approach, companies can move beyond simply disseminating information to building genuine relationships with consumers. This involves actively listening to consumer feedback, participating in relevant conversations, and co-creating sustainable solutions.

Tracking societal narratives through digital platforms offers valuable insights but raises key ethical concerns that need to be borne in mind:

- ✓ **Privacy and Consent:** Public data does not imply informed consent. Researchers must consider users' expectations and rights.
- ✓ **Anonymity Risks:** Even anonymized data can be re-identified, especially when cross-referenced with other sources.
- ✓ **Bias and Representation:** Algorithms may amplify dominant voices and marginalize others, requiring transparency and reflexivity.
- ✓ **Surveillance Concerns:** Awareness of monitoring can suppress free expression, impacting democratic discourse.
- ✓ **Accountability:** Clear governance, data protection, and public engagement are essential for ethical practice.

Ethical narrative tracking demands a balance between insight and individual rights, grounded in transparency and responsibility.

That said based on the principles of narrative analysis and engaging with engagement, several best practices for sustainable marketing emerge:

- **Authenticity and Transparency:** Companies should communicate their sustainable practices in an honest and transparent manner, providing evidence to support their claims.
- **Value-Driven Communication:** Sustainable marketing messages should emphasize the values that underpin the company's commitment to sustainability, such as environmental stewardship, social justice, and ethical business practices.

- **Two-Way Dialogue:** Companies should actively engage with consumers, seeking their feedback and incorporating their perspectives into their sustainable marketing strategies.
- **Storytelling:** Crafting compelling narratives that highlight the company's sustainable practices, its positive impact, and its alignment with consumer values can effectively engage consumers and drive behavioral change.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Collaborating with other organizations, such as NGOs, community groups, and industry associations, can enhance the credibility and impact of sustainable marketing initiatives.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Companies should continuously evaluate their sustainable marketing strategies and practices, seeking to improve their effectiveness and adapt to evolving consumer expectations.

Sustainable marketing is essential for long-term business success in an era defined by increasing environmental and social awareness. By embracing narrative analysis and engaging with engagement, companies can effectively communicate their commitment to sustainability, build strong relationships with consumers, and drive positive change. The future of marketing lies in creating authentic, engaging, and value-driven narratives that resonate with consumers and inspire them to join companies in creating a more sustainable world.

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