A Parliamentary forum for Media and Marketing Debate

Does AI-driven marketing threaten consumer choice?

"Although consumers will still be empowered to have the illusion of choice, AI will clearly diminish the number and nature of those choices". These were the words of Rob Sellers, Manager Director of Grey Shopper, proposing the motion 'AI-driven marketing threatens consumer choice 'at the Debating Group debate on 21 May 2018 at the House of Commons. The debate was sponsored by the Institute of Promotional Marketing and Chaired by the Lord Black of Brentwood, Deputy Chairman of the Telegraph Media Group.

Rob Sellars prefaced his paper by paraphrasing a quotation from *Jurassic Park*, "Technologists pushing for an increasing role for Artificial Intelligence in consumer and shopper channels are 'so preoccupied with whether they could, they didn't stop to think if they should' ".

Rob Sellars argued that choice is an essential and highly beneficial component of a healthy modern economy and the fervent pursuit of Artificial Intelligence as a means to 'improve' the way that brands and retailers sell to their audiences creates more problem than it solves.

Defining Artificial Intelligence, he pointed out that it is not a cloned brain in a bubbling bell jar. We are not talking about sending robots to the supermarket to do the weekly shop. Artificial Intelligence is another word for algorithms to try to make sense of the tsunami of data that organisations hold about us and people they perceive to be like us. The algorithms are constructed by people with an agenda and then they are continuously tested and refined to try and drive the ultimate 'effectiveness' against the purpose of the algorithm.

The ultimate expression of AI in marketing is the purchase being made for you. Not selection, but your money being spent automatically on products and services that the algorithm decides you need. This may sound like a dream scenario to many of us who have busy lives – less time shopping, more time consuming. But underneath the veneer of convenience you have to remember that the algorithms are created with a clear purpose – to maximise sales and profits: not the happiness of humanity; not the health of our planet; not social utility; not even an emotively articulated brand purpose, but cold, hard cash.

Rob Sellars commented that having this debate in a political building provides and interesting context: in recent times similar technologies and techniques have been deeply scrutinised. Micro-targeting of cynical messaging through data-rich platforms have skewed voting and influenced the most fundamental choices we get to make in a free and open society.

When you see the likes of Amazon, Google, Apple and Facebook streak ahead of the world economy and Jeff Bezos becoming the world's richest man with a net worth of $100 billion, one must question whether the businesses that are going to be at the forefront of Artificial Intelligence are doing it for the good of the consumer, or anyone else apart from their shareholders.

This is arguably not the first time that businesses that own a route to the consumer have bloated and reduced consumer choice. In the second half of the 20th century, western markets have seen local 'grocers' becoming giant retailers dominating how people buy products for their families. A stranglehold on distribution and a squeeze on producers meant that shoppers became used to having to choose from a small number of big brands in every category. But even though we were having our choices limited, we were still choosing.

However, as the retail landscape became congested and saturated, resulting in a beige world of sterile experience, an interesting trend had emerged. It is clear that consumers yearn for variety and discovery. Categories that felt regimented and dominated by 'power' brands have exploded into vibrant, culturally exciting tapestries of new and innovative products. Beer has gone from mainstream lager to craft and creativity. Coffee drinkers can choose all manner of ways of buying and drinking their favourite pick-me-up. Men can buy their razors from plucky start-ups challenging the status quo, and new parents have an incredible range of brands to help raise their children, whether they prioritise great value or natural ingredients.

Rob Sellars questioned why the previous iteration of 'choice management' failed in this way. He suggested that allowing people to choose is a fundamentally good thing. It makes the world better. In simple terms, choice means competition. Competition drives innovation and progress. In selfish economic terms, it drives value and can make the unaffordable quickly accessible to the majority. If innovators and entrepreneurs know they can access a market they can fairly compete in, they are motivated to find new solutions to consumer challenges. It is open source creativity at its best. If that choice is constrained by AI built on established norms and learned behaviours, how do we harness that thinking and energy?

Beyond the economics, as the world faces bigger social and environmental challenges, consumers are starting to make significant changes in their purchasing choices, based on much more than simply which brand is best. An example is how the UK has quickly reacted to moving away from disposable coffee cups and plastic straws. These are significant purchase and behavioural shifts based on intangible environmental benefits. In a new age of conscious consumerism, choices that redefine category behaviour can have huge impacts for us all. Rob Sellars suggested that thinking why people would pay more for a reusable cup for their coffee leads us nicely into the other aspect of the importance of letting people choose: it makes them happy.

Our brains are already super computers, hard-wired with millions of years of evolved 'algorithms' that have helped us become the most successful species on the planet. To get to where we are, we have had to consciously and subconsciously make choices and we get a sense of reward when we make a good one. There is a theory that making a choice is a kind of 'investment' –people value rewards they choose for themselves more than ones simply given to them. Thinking about our own lives, we know the feeling of finding a bargain, discovering a new potential favourite to try for the first time, or buying something we love to share with friends. We are programmed to feel joy when making what we feel are good choices. These feelings are deeply rooted in our humanity – the modem manifesto of what drives us as individuals: to hunt, to provide and to explore.

Divesting how we make decisions about the world around us, and in particular the products and services we buy, is something, by very definition, *not* human, it is artificial – not only do we undermine marketing, deeply threaten consumer choice, but potentially damage one of the best and fundamental components of who we are.

Rob Sellars concluded, "I propose the motion passionately and encourage you to resists the rise of the machines".

Visual search

Opposing the motion, **Dr Windsor Holden, Juniper Research,** disagreed with those who are suspicious of what AI has to offer: that, rather than making life easier for us, it will narrow our horizons and drive us down a path of the familiar.

He looked at the issue first from the perspective of retailers and marketers and then from that of the consumer. The rise of eCommerce and ubiquitous connectivity has generated new opportunities for retailers to capture and use a tremendous amount of data. Properly analysed this data can offer a range of useful insights for the business, enabling it to differentiate and remain competitive. Windsor Holden asked the audience o consider the amount of time and money we now spend in an online environment – three hours per day on social media, plus another two and a quarter hours browsing, buying, gaming, watching video and listening to music. Each time we visit a retailer site, this generates data. For each purchase, there is more data. However, as the data volumes available to retailers exponentially increase, it becomes more difficult for human analysts to extract value from these.

AI systems offer retailers the opportunity to leverage data in a flexible manner that is beneficial to business. If you are Netflix, it can analyse viewing patterns and enable you to recommend new films; if you are Amazon, it can recommend new products. From a marketing perspective, being able to analyse myriad data points in this way and guide the user towards products which (based on their previous behaviour) they are likely to be interested in, is an exceedingly powerful proposition.

Furthermore, it can enable more efficient business processes as well as new services. One of the cornerstones behind a successful retail business is to provide the best service possible, which also acts to sustain customer loyalty. Product quality clearly plays a significant role in driving the customer experience, but the overall shopper experience is unlikely to play a big part in driving the consumer back to the same retailer when considering future purchases.

Digital store fronts often feature a vast catalogue of products, which limits their ability to direct customers to suitable products in the range. This array of choice can overwhelm the customer, meaning they are unlikely to purchase a product or will prefer to do so in-store, where a shop assistant may be able to direct them. AI offers the possibility for this in-store experience to be replicated online.

AI systems can be utilised to help narrow down choices, personalise product catalogues or to find similar products using visual search. Visual search is one area in particular where AI is revolutionising the customer journey. Retailers can leverage computer vision technologies to enable systems to understand product pictures, identifying key characteristics, such as colour, material and style. This data is then combined with metadata from product catalogues, enabling the systems to automatically find a product that has similar characteristics. Moreover, AI systems can even recommend clothes based on a simple set of questions answered by the customer. For example, the clothing retailer, the North Face, utilises IBM's Watson platform to suggest items based on recommendations. Similarly, Under Armour used Watson to combine their own customer data with third-party information to create a personalised health and fitness tracking app.

Indeed, many eCommerce websites now include a visual search function. It is likely that this approach of integrating visual search will widen to include, not only websites, but also apps for in-store locations. There is also potential to incorporate AR (Augmented Reality) solutions with this.

It is also likely that by leveraging information held about a customer, such as prior purchase history or search enquiries, eCommerce retailers will be able effectively to personalise their homepages, resulting in real-time suggestions that accurately reflect the customers' likes and dislikes.

Besides looking at retail marketing use of AI from the perspective of up-selling goods to existing customers, it can also be extremely beneficial for marketers enabling them to identify which segments are likely to become new paying customers, thereby reducing marketing spend on less probable leads.

From the perspective of the consumer, curation is not necessarily a bad thing, particularly within the context of a digital environment. Amazon has more than 530 million items available on its virtual shelves. It you wander into its Home and Kitchen section, you could be faced with 74 million items! Windsor Holden commented "When I think how long it physically takes me to walk round IKEA looking for moulded plastic – pausing for meatballs – how long is it going to take me to go through 74 million items!"

Time is of the essence. Shopper expectations have evolved rapidly. They want to be able to buy products wherever they are, whatever time it is, easily and without friction – and they want these products as soon as possible.

The millenials are particularly impatient. They interact at speed on social media, instant messaging – they have an expectation that all online processes can be performed in this way, including shopping. Any friction or hurdles in the process, are likely to lead to a cart being abandoned – or potentially, if all that they are presented with is a poorly identified, inchoate mass of product, not even putting anything in the cart in the first instance.

How do you reduce time to product? How do you reduce the consumer bafflement and exasperation in the digital storefront? By curation guided by AI. Windsor Holden contended "If the computer wants to help me via predictive analysis based on previous purchases, then I'm happy to be helped. I'm happy to be curated".

Even before we get to the retail storefront, AI can help us. The online behemoths – Apple, Google and Microsoft – have sought to offer consumers increasingly powerful tools to search for items or services using natural language processing – that is, the element of AI that has to do with language, as opposed to 'classic' keyword searches. NLP offers the retail backed software an understanding of context. For example, if the system knows that the user is looking for clothes suitable for an office environment, it will be able to provide more relevant results. This is, of course available using keyword searches, but it is more burdensome for the consumer.

The naysayers cry that all this curation, all this guidance, is diminishing consumer choice. You are being pushed by AI towards products, which, if not themselves familiar, are closely related to those you already buy. "But since when", asked Windsor Holden, "was this a new concept in retailing. When you go into a physical storefront, you typically go into those areas of the store which you have previously visited – when I am in Waterstones, I head for the biography section. When I'm in an off-licence, I can invariably be found near the real ales or the red wines. And as for being pushed towards products – when you go into a supermarket and see 'special offers' isn't that precisely what is being done in that instance?".

"Algorithms are not infallible It may suggest that I purchase a Jazz LP when everyone knows that jazz is music's answer to tinnitus. It may suggest that because I like folk music, I should purchase a particular album in that genre.

But ultimately, the decision to purchase will be made by the consumer. The siren voice of a storefront's AI may suggest product X, but I reserve the right to purchase an alternative – which may or may not have been recommended to me. If I want to I can browse through the 73.99 million items

which have not been recommended for me. That is my prerogative. That is choice, in all its 74 million varieties".

The language of choice

Seconding the motion, **Marc Curtis, Ideation Manager, Lyreco Group,** pointed out that to some extent many aspects of our lives are in the hands of agencies external to us. Many of us have bosses or figures in our lives that direct elements of our day.

Governments make decisions for us, hopefully with our best interests at heart. Laws provide us with a framework that direct our choices down paths that makes sense for both the individual and society.

Stoic philosophy teaches that everything falls into two categories: things that are within our control and things that are not. There are many more things that are outside of our control than within it, but how we react to these is something we do have a choice in.

Exercising that choice is the only real power we have in the world. According to the stoics happiness comes from exercising control over the one thing we can truly change – how we choose to react with the world around us. Happiness comes from knowing how far our circle of influence over the world stretches, and making the best use of that knowledge.

There is a huge difference between relinquishing control over systems like traffic management, taxation or what time we start work in the morning and relinquishing control over our choice of food or clothing.

AI or the algorithm is increasingly reducing our choices over things that should really belong within our circle of influence.

Sometimes this can be a good thing. Marc Cutis personally enjoys some of the recommendations that Spotify makes for him. However, the consequences of being played a track by Little Mix when he can't think of anything worse are pretty minor. There is a skip button.

The consequences of abdicating responsibility for our purchasing decisions can be far more reaching.

We tend to think of companies like Amazon and Google as broadly benevolent. Marc Curtis certainly does not think that they are being driven by some kind of evil hidden agenda. Corporations are driven by profit. That is the boring truth. But whilst the language they use is the language of choice, we are being sold the exact opposite.

Marc Curtis presented a hypothetical example where he takes us to dinner, suggesting the dress code, menu, day, time and type of restaurant. "After we've eaten we can discuss the choices I made for us and that will help for the next time. In fact, I can ensure that if you like the food and location, we will only ever eat at that place again. Plus I can ensure that the menu only has stuff you've been shown to enjoy (or variations)". He pointed out that there are certain words in this scenario that are being used to make us feel comfortable with the removal of choice: recommendation; curated; personalised; frictionless. He contended that the language of choice is being used against us, to enable platforms and companies to sell things to us that they think we will buy based on a number of factors. The main one is the same thing that led to the famous social media filter bubble. Algorithms are optimised to show us things that have a higher probability to resonate with us. In other words, if you can only show ten products to a consumer a day, it makes sense to only show the ones that stand a better chance of selling.

Words like curate personalise, recommended, sound like we are getting a better service precisely tailored to our individual needs, and we are. Make no mistake, we get shown more of the things we like than of the things we don't.

Marc Curtis continued, "We also never get to see the things we have never experienced but could expand our horizons – like aubergines, folding bikes or dogs (three things I never thought I liked until I did)".

Algorithms can be programmed to 'up' the serendipity of their functionality, but ultimately the shops that are driven by AI are there to make money, not provide us with a more rounded experience of life. The default is always going to be what stands the best chance of resulting in sale.

We have an expectation that we will be involved in or at least have the illusion of choice when it comes to how we spend our leisure time, or what foods we eat or beers we drink. Why should we abdicate responsibility for choosing the brands we want to purchase? Because, as our opponents have suggested, we can't understand how to choose?

The history of unchecked innovation is the history of convenience. Human beings have always been attracted by the idea of having to do less, initially at least.

Unfortunately, in recent times, the innovation of convenience, of frictionless experience has led to pretty serious outcomes. We only have to look at the impact of AI-driven content platforms on the political opinions of some of the world's great democracies. Where we once relied on oratory and skill to help us inform our political choices, we now simply consume the output of a newsfeed – filled with 'content' aimed at maintaining our attention long enough to add some marketing messages to the margins. The consequences of AI-driven political over-simplification has led in part to the binary nature of modern politics. Are you in or out? Vote for the idiot or the liar?

This is a consequence of choice being curated for us and served up as an option A or B with little chance for the individual to find out about all the other nuanced positions available.

With each innovation we outsource, what were once essential skills succumb to the allure of ease, enabled by technology.

Mental arithmetic was swept away with the pocket calculator. Our ability to remember phone numbers, names and appointments vanished the day mobile phones found permanent homes in our pockets. But the ability to add up figures or remember your partner's phone number are isolated skills. The damage to our humanity is slight when compared with the insidious loss of something that is at the core of our sentience.

When we outsource choice over time our ability to make decisions withers in the same way as our ability to remember facts in face of 'let me Google that for you'. When we outsource choice we lose something of what it is to be human. Instead we move a step closer to simply becoming the end point in a machine of consumption, mediated by the tyranny of the algorithm.

Choice, unfiltered choice, in every aspect of our personal lives, is the antidote to an ever shrinking bubble of curated, frictionless, personalised recommendation.

A bubble that would result otherwise, in an ever shrinking experience of the world.

Intellectual exceptionalism

Seconding the opposition, Alasdair Todd, Researcher to the Rt Hon Dame Cheryl Gillan, DBE, MP, addressed the principles of consumer choice, and the assumptions and illusions that lead us to have a pessimistic view of it.

Freud laid out the so-called 'three humiliations of humanity' the theories of Copernicus, Darwin and Freud.

Humanity, ever proud (and if anything increasingly so) has been forced to admit the most bitter thing: mediocrity. Copernicus expelled man from the centre of the universe. Darwin deprived him of being the pride of creation. Freud taught him that he does not even have dominion in the house of his own mind.

It may well be that the Fourth Industrial Revolution will beckon in the fourth humiliation: man being deposed from the intellectual 'exceptionalism' we currently cling onto. No longer objectively exceptional in creation or biological situation, we are on the edge of losing that status in the realm of the cerebral: our exclusivity in the realm of intelligence. Perhaps we feel threatened.

It has always been the case that as society demands ever more goods, we have only one answer: produce more. When we reach the limit of manual production, we refuse to go without: we innovate and automate. Not enough cotton can be knitted by hand? Invent the stocking frame.

Yet in spite of it being *our* demand, *our* choices that necessitate innovation, here is the paradox: we resent it. We are afraid of it. In the case of the stocking frame, the Luddite movement rose to destroy this insidious newcomer in the 1810s, "And I know that was a good while go, before the proposition assists me in bringing attention to that flaw, but we have not changed. We are improving, but we still resist automation: take as a case in point the automated tube lines that still have drivers. We view it as a threat, not only to our consumer choice, but to our livelihoods and purpose".

Alasdair Todd hoped that the purpose of his introductory point was clear: that while this species is changeable, our pride is a constant, and we are all too ready to feel threatened by new technology.

Is our pride in our last bastion of supremacy, intelligence, why we refuse to see AI-driven marketing as a threat to choice?

If we accept that, we see ourselves as helpless victims, stripped of our own agency. Alistair Todd wished to rectify that.

He set out to demonstrate that AI-driven marketing will not restrict choice on the supply side: it will do the polar opposite and provide a more fertile environment for brands. Even if we are to read increased relevance at scale as a 'narrowing of choice', that is an illusion and a false one. The denial of human agency in that case is misrepresentative and demeaning.

In the world of brands and shops, traditional barriers to entry include premises costs, market uncertainty, and advertising costs. Alistair Todd contended that all these barriers will be significantly lower in the age of AI-driven marketing and that we will therefore see the market increase, rather than decrease, consumer choice.

As digital shopping dominates, the high street is no longer the only option. No longer do brands have to rent 100-104 Regent Street at great expense to cement their luxury credentials: they can operate from a trading estate with an attractive web store instead.

The age of AI-driven marketing depends on one major factor: data collection. This is happening constantly and exponentially, and as well as allowing knowledge of a consumer's taste, can provide information to indicate broader consumer trends. No longer do you have to take a gamble when setting up, say, a hipster clothing store, that you will be best placed in Camden rather than Henley. No longer, either, do you have to gamble that there is a market. The data by-product of AI-driven marketing can serve to inform potential suppliers of the state of the market and whether there is indeed any point in starting a new brand.

Now, brands can know there is a market – and that algorithms can and will direct the market to you, regardless of whether you are in Camden or Henley – or a trading estate.

Neither will small brands have to shell out for billboards or magazine advertising space. Alasdair Todd argued that mass marketing in that way is, deeply inefficient, with a miniscule conversion rate to sales at great expense. He contended that relevance at scale ensures that your £0.001 pence is infinitely more likely to mean a product sold than even a pixel in *Vogue*, which is much more expensive.

The age of AI-driven marketing, then, gives increased market confidence to potential suppliers and eliminates the small inefficiencies that prove so critical to new, small and desperately competing brands, giving them a look-in against the big names, meaning the potential for more products from which to choose.

Having established that the *supply* of choices will still be there – and, if anything, greater – Alasdair Todd went on to deal with the demand-side – the consumer.

He suggested that a number of assumptions allow the illusion of the consumer having constricted choice to stand. He presented a scenario where a consumer mentions wanting a Nespresso machine at home, and his Alexa or Google Home hears this and shows him Nespresso adverts over the following week. Yes, this might exclude DeLonghi from a little marketing space, but it is a non-sequiter to assert that his choice has been limited. Where did the input for the showing of Nespresso machines come from? A marketing firm? AI? No – the man. He has already made a choice. The targeting of adverts – or the illusion of the narrowing of choice – results from his own choice. He is the Prime Mover.

It is not an AI system that has constricted his choice: he has chosen to have his field of view constricted. Furthermore, he is still not prevented from looking at DeLonghi machines. They do not become unavailable. He may choose to see them at any time.

Move this comparison to 'the real world' and you will see the absurdity of it. The man lives in a town with a good fish-and-chip shop down the road, and he chooses to visit it because it is convenient and satisfactory for his needs.

In the neighbouring town, there is an excellent Thai restaurant. The man knows it is there. However, he has never bothered to go in for his dinner – he is a creature of habit and chooses the immediately convenient and familiar fish and ship shop. Do we blame the Thai restaurant for his failure to go in there? For his laziness? For his self-limited choice? No.

In the real world, this is patently absurd – and yet, we do not see that online. We embrace the culture of laziness, the culture of impatience, and legitimise it. Our Netflix homepage might suggest re-watching *The Thick of It* again because of our history. It is not Netflix' fault if we never discover the delights of *House of Cards* (the British one with Ian Richardson, naturally) as a result of our unadventurousness. Let us not forget that we control computers: they do not control us – and we control our own actions.

We control the future of AI and its place in marketing – it is not an unchangeable trajectory. Neither are we yet fully aware of how it will be used. With the increasing development of the Internet of Things, we will likely each have a smart fridge in our kitchen that tells us when we are running low on Brie. The fridge though can either restrict our choice or broaden it depending on how we program it. Noticing the midnight Brie-raid, it can either say next morning, "You're low on Brie. Shall I order another round of President Brie?" or "You're low on Brie. Castello is running a promotion that makes it cheaper, and 79% of previous buyers have said it tastes similar. Do you want to try that?"

Alasdair Todd contended that this is the second assumption to challenge: that conditions remain static and that we will merely adhere to them.

The idea that AI-driven marketing threatens consumer choice because it learns behaviour patterns and aims to reinforce them with adverts is not only dubious in practice, because the choice in fact originated with us – the main problem Alasdair Todd has with it is the principle: that it strips humans of our agency. We are in this theory, helpless and compulsive consumers, destined to be influenced by what we immediately see, and he refuses to adhere to this theory.

AI-driven marketing won't necessarily threaten consumer choice. It, and the factors surrounding it, has the potential to widen consumer choice: more possible brands and more possible products than ever, at your fingertips.

The House of Lords Select Committee on AI's report, *AI in the UK: Ready, Willing and Able?* highlights an absolutely crucial point on which to end. AI developments, it points out, are "historically boom and bust cycles in which excitement and progress have been followed by disappointment and disillusionment".

We are not discussing a static subject with AI. We are not dealing with a familiar subject. It is perhaps threatening and it is certainly not predictable.

Alasdair Todd concluded, "Even if you don't 'buy' our argument that AI-driven marketing could well *increase* choice that does not matter. I would merely suggest that, given how unsure we are of the full future implications of AI on marketing, that it is impossible to say with any certainty that it will not".

Discussion from the floor

The following points were made by the contributors from the floor:

For the motion

- We have tried to control the Internet and it is very difficult. AI will result in new markets all over the world: there will be off-shore islands of data and we will have no control of our data.
- AI stops innovation. Start-ups and new businesses come into the market based on data. But algorithms can only work on the information they already have, so there is a risk of narrowing the market. If we go on tried and tested routes, we are undemocratic.

Opposing the motion

- Similar arguments were heard when computers came in. With AI entrance to the market can come in at a lower cost. It will increase choice, not reduce it.
- The contributor had a job as a Petrol Pump Attendant in his youth, where he could remember what customers wanted because there was limited choice. Now choices will be unlimited.
- There is a distinction between AI and how we are developing it, and people and how they manage their behaviour. We are not yet creating inspiration in our lives. AI will give us more time.
- There are lots of categories where we are not interested in making our own choices. AI will free up time for when we really want to make our own choices. AI will be able to find amazing and surprising brands and products.
- AI has helped the start-up culture. You can start up very small without losing emotional connections. Used in the right way, AI can do all the things you don't want to do.
- Customers are not bombarded with ads they don't want.

- AI can help with the basic needs like rubbish bags. It broadens choices, not necessarily about what we shall be wearing or eating. As the technology gets better it will make life much easier.
- The contributor described the Virtual Reality Headset. The augmented reality experience is not in the confines of the screens we have now. AI will help in the more mundane aspects of shopping.
- Choice is not restricted by AI. The restriction is happening because of emerging brands.

Summing-up

Summing up for the opposition, **Dr Windsor Holden**, argued that what the proposition is actually suggesting, what the proposition is deprecating, is actually our ability to choose – to choose between curated recommendations and the other goods and services on offer. People value choices rather than something given to them. They have choice whether or not to accept what is being recommended for them.

Companies are marketing their goods for both shareholders and consumers. AI can reduce costs and focus on the consumers they have and keep their business.

When mobile phones first came out there were some 10 games. In July 2008 Apple brought out Apple Store. There are now thousands of apps on offer. Having some kind of curation is incredibly helpful. AI gives us guidance.

There are of course huge concerns about cyber security, but AI is only a small part of this. It all boils down to consumer choice– do you want help or not?

Summing up for the motion, **Rob Sellars**, focused on companies like Amazon and its position in the marketplace. Amazon has 50% of the marketplace in the US. Its business is based on customer data. It will do innovation. Rob Sellars predicted a future where everyone in this room would spend more money with Amazon than anywhere else. Curation will start with the mundane, go on to entertainment and then luxury goods.

In this future we will not make choices. They will be made for us by other people. AI will limit consumer choice.

The result

The motion was defeated.

Next debate

The next debate will take place on **Monday 16th July 2018** sponsored by The Market Research Society. The motion is 'Social media can't be trusted with self-regulation'. For more details contact Doreen Blythe, Debating Group Secretary, e-mail: doreen.blythe22@btinternet.com