

Intro [00:00:01.26] Welcome to the Collective Intelligence Podcast from IPG. We deliver marketing insights that help modern brands thrive. In this episode, you'll hear about the latest perspectives featured at Intelligence.Interpublic.com. Listen then log on to find new opportunities for your brand to stand out.

Jen Sain (Host): [00:00:22.70] Hello and welcome to another episode of CI Conversations on the Collective Intelligence Podcast. My name is Jen and I'll be your host for this episode and I am thrilled to be joined by McCann World Group's Nadia Tuma-Weldon and Jaclyn Kaminski, two on the heels of New York City Climate Week, talk about all things sustainability. And speaking of Climate Week, Nadia recently presented with another colleague exploring if the metaverse is ready to be integrated with sustainability. And that's a fascinating conversation and we are so pleased to be able to offer you the recording of that conversation on Intelligence. Interpublic Where in addition to that you can find a trove of thought, leadership and strategic insights from around the IPG network. So back to the topic at hand and our talk about sustainability. Today, we will be focusing quite a bit on truth about sustainability, the Truth about Sustainability survey, which was authored by Truth Central Truth Central, of course, is McCann, World Group's global intelligence unit. But before we begin, it would be great if each of you could introduce yourselves. Jaclyn, why don't you start us off?

Jaclyn K: [00:01:30.92] Hi, Jen. Thank you for having us. Very excited to be here. I'm Jaclyn Kaminski and I'm the Global Head of Sustainability for McCann WorldGroup.

Jen Sain (Host): [00:01:39.73] Yeah. It's great to have you here. Nadia, why don't you introduce yourself?

Nadia TW: [00:01:44.24] Hi. Thanks so much for having us. My name is Nadia Tuma-Weldon, and I am the global head of Thought Leadership for McCann WorldGroup, as well as EVP of Truth Central, which is our Global Intelligence Unit.

Jen Sain (Host): [00:01:57.23] Great. Thank you both. So to anchor us, I think it would be really important to define sustainability. You know, I think on first thought, it seems like a straightforward concept, but I do think that there's nuance and different perceptions and perhaps misperceptions. So to kind of get us all on the same page, it would be great if you could define what sustainability is.

Jaclyn K: [00:02:17.54] Yes. I once heard from an old professor that sustainability is best described as enough for all forever. I think it's a beautiful, simple way of thinking about the true meaning, given the word over the past few years has become confusing for many.

Nadia TW: [00:02:34.70] Yes, I completely agree with Jaclyn. And I think just to build on that and sort of to get into some of the research that we had been doing on our Truth about sustainability study, you know, there's so much that is swirled around, as you say, around this word sustainability. In a lot of ways, what Jaclyn has said is so important because we talk a lot about sustainability but don't quite know what we're talking about when we talk about it. And so that was one of the key questions that we really wanted to uncover in the Truth about Sustainability study, which really comes at this issue from a place of humanity first. Okay, so culture first. So what are people, everyday people, thinking about when they think about this topic? And it was really interesting because when we asked people in the survey which of the following most ladders up to your understanding of the word sustainability, we gave them lots of different definitions to choose from. The number one response was it's about protecting the planet, which I think is really interesting because I think we do talk about sustainability as like we're going to save the environment, we're going to save the planet. But we as researchers just weren't quite satisfied with that answer. And so we we wanted to dig just a little bit deeper. So we asked our over 1000 qualitative respondents from all over the world to tell us about their relationship with sustainability from a personal perspective. And I think that's where we really uncovered a very different story, which is where we received hundreds and hundreds of photos of people's everyday lives and everyday lived experiences. So we got pictures of their gardens that they keep at home or the different ways that they sort of hack their lives in order to make an impact. But I think most amazingly was really all of the different pictures we got of people's children and of themselves. And it was really like future generations looking up at them, like right in the eye. And then we also ask them to describe it. And that's where you got this incredibly emotive language like we use. We saw so many words like pain and shock and love and all describing their personal relationship with sustainability. And so we really got to this point where we said, you know, we obviously need an operating principle of what sustainability means from an organizational standpoint, from a governmental standpoint. But when it really comes to connecting with humans, it really has to be this deeply rich

and sort of human language and imagery, because that's that's the type of relationship people have with this word, because it really is about protecting us, not just protecting the planet. And so that was sort of a very long winded way of answering your question, but I wanted to sort of show the evidence that we got to get to this idea that sustainability is not separate from us. It's not just an ESG initiative. It's not just something that sort of lives in a document somewhere. It is us. It is the way we interact with the world. And it is ultimately like the survival of our species. And so I think remembering that sometimes the way we talk about sustainability is very technical and very scientific, but actually understanding that to make it, to connect it and to create action and to create hope, we just need to really humanize it.

Jen Sain (Host): [00:05:29.89] Well, that's fascinating. And just taking this, you know, people first perspective, I do think so often we talk about it in terms of initiatives and, you know, pledges and commitments and all that good stuff. So kind of keeping that human lens so interesting that this study, like you said, was worldwide. And I would be so interested to know if you notice any geographic differences or commonalities, actually.

Nadia TW: [00:05:52.57] Yeah, that's a great question. I mean, we at True Central are obsessed with cultural differences. We love to uncover universal truths and just kind of see how those manifests depending on who you are and where you live. So there are lots and lots of different ways that we sort of slice and dice the data to look at not just cultural differences, but, you know, generational differences or differences in income or comparing parents with non parents or even looking at, again, geographic, which is your question. So I think one thing that was one of the most fascinating findings that came out of the study was we asked people all over the world about their behaviors in terms of how they behave to make the world more sustainable. And we can talk a little bit later about the role that people versus brands versus the government should be playing in this space, but very specifically asking people, you know, what are some of the things that you are willing to do in order to help reverse climate change? And it was just so fascinating. If you kind of imagine a map of the world and sort of having it light up with like popcorn lights and seeing like where all of the different behaviors would light up. And we just started to see this incredibly fascinating story about culture, because what we found was that the types of behaviors that people were willing to do very much ladder up to the cultural context. So just to give a couple of examples. In India, they

are the market that's most likely to say that they're willing to give up eating meat in order to fight climate change. And of course, India has a very long standing history of vegetarianism due to spiritual practices. So you're like, okay, that makes sense. And then you can move over to Germany. And we know that the Germans love great design and engineering and things being done just so and so. They were most likely to say that they would be willing to buy products that were designed to last a very long time. So again, you're kind of like singing to the heart of the culture with those are the behaviors. And then I can say this because I'm an American, but in America, the thing that people said they were most likely to do was to reduce or stop flying internationally. And that makes sense, right? We're like a bit provincial. Not a lot of us have passports, so you can kind of make a little bit light of the fact cultural stereotypes sometimes are funny because they're true. But I think what that reveals to us is that sometimes as marketers, we sort of have this one size fits all approach to encouraging sustainability among our customers and whether that's like this is recyclable or use less or whatever it is.

Nadia TW: [00:08:24.55] But ultimately what these insights reveal to us is that you can be very strategic in sort of meeting people where they are from a cultural perspective and say, okay, actually this behavior is already sort of natural and they're open to it and we can start there and then we can build from that point rather than sort of overloading a behavior that maybe isn't as culturally relevant to that market. So that was one of the most fascinating pieces of analysis we did. But to answer the second part of your question around commonalities, so there actually was one thing that despite all of this richness and sort of variety in terms of cultural nuances, there was one thing that really unified people around the world, and that was this idea of shame and the shame that people felt sort of less than when they weren't able to feel like they were fulfilling their role in furthering sustainability. Quite frankly, in a world that's just not set up to facilitate sustainability. Right? I think people think sustainability and they think difficult. They think not as fun, they think not as good, not as effective, not as not as etc., etc., etc.. And that again, we can talk about the brands of the role of brands and governments. But I think to the point about this idea of shame, one thing that we often say as we look across all of the insights from the study is that sustainability has a massive communications problem, right? We're always talking about it about what you have to give up.

Nadia TW: [00:09:51.94] No, stop doing this. You're not. You're failing. You're not being sustainable enough. We sort of like shame each other like you took that flight, you

shouldn't have done that, etc., etc.. And I think there is this incredible opportunity to reframe sustainability around abundance, because ultimately that's what we're talking about. And so if people feel like they're less than, that's not going to encourage good behavior, right? That's just going to encourage paralysis. And then people are going to be like, well, I'm not effective, so why even try? So if we can think about how we message and how we design experiences and products to show that the most sustainable option is the most enjoyable option is the most indulgent option, is the most wonderful, the experiential option. Or you do it in a way that feels like lazy and effortless. Oftentimes, I think we need to tell the customer about all the sustainable credentials that are happening in all of these different things, and it causes, I think, a lot of confusion and it maybe puts things at the top of mind that like, Oh, I'm buying the most sustainable thing and maybe it's not as good or whatever it is.

Nadia TW: [00:10:58.10] And so an example that I often talk about because it's so unexpected is from Google, which is not an organization, you might say like so sustainable. But what they did was they had this insight that 95% of their users do not change the default settings on their phone, Right? Like many of us do not go in and be like, let me fiddle with some of these defaults, you know, And they use that to their advantage. And so what they did was they then started to make default settings the greenest. Right, because no one's going to go. Not many people are going to go in and change it to be the most polluting option. So for Google Maps, for instance, the default is that the route you were given is the greenest route by default. And I think oftentimes that also tends to be the most enjoyable route. Right? Might be through a park, might be in a way that's not not so much traffic, you know, etc., etc.. And so you can start to think about these ways of elevating life and making things feel abundant and sort of effortless. And by the way, it's the most sustainable option. So again, another long winded answer to your very simple question, but I hope I sort of gave a teaser of some of the the insights that came out.

Jen Sain (Host): [00:12:13.44] Absolutely. And again, just I mean, it's it's almost it's mind blowing to anchor it into the cultural context and the the person context, this human centric approach. And, you know, I had started off asking about geographic differences. You know, you had mentioned that there are other kind of slices of looking at this great sample that you all had. I was actually there was one finding from your survey that I was very surprised about and that the survey said that people aged 55 to

64 are more likely to say that they are worried about climate change than those aged 18 to 24. And I would have actually thought the opposite. So in all of this kind of, you know, human approach and looking at the individual, can you talk more about that, that age difference?

Nadia TW: [00:12:56.94] Yeah, definitely. I mean, I think so much of our views on the world are shaped by media and what we're seeing. And I think absolutely the younger generation is an activist generation, but people who are 55 like they were also young ones and they they may have marched in the first Earth Day back in the seventies. And you still see Jane Fonda going to Washington to be arrested for protesting whatever the latest thing is around sustainability. So I think these are tropes that we have in our brain that perhaps when you get to a certain age and you just don't care anymore. But that's just that's just not true, right? So what we found in the research now, just to be clear, everyone is concerned about climate change. It's just that as people get older, that concern increases. And I think that was the sort of trend line that we looked at that was surprising. But I think the takeaway is a couple of things. One is not to make assumptions about people just based on their age. You know, I'm sure there are there are young people who overindex in terms of care, how much they care and how much action they're willing to take. And there are many young people who just don't. Right. Just like for older individuals as well. So there's sort of that. But I think from a marketing perspective, from a brand activation perspective, the thing that really struck me is this opportunity for intergenerational connections and really thinking about how do we make all people work together. So if you could harness the passion and the action and the sort of punk spirit of the young with the older generation who have resource and influence and money and you can have them work together, that's where you start to get the magic instead of saying, Well, only young people care about it. But young people want support. They want to be able to see their ideas sing in the world. And a really good way of doing that is to get adults on board and partnering with them.

Jen Sain (Host): [00:14:45.30] Yeah, I mean, that's that's just again, just so interesting. And, you know, it kind of goes back to what you were talking about a bit earlier and how, you know, and thinking about sustainability or climate action. It could be it could be daunting or or sound difficult or or hard. And it sounds like, you know, empowerment is so important. And and as you said earlier, you use the word abundance, approaching it from an abundance perspective, no matter where you know, where on the age spectrum

or geography or whatever the consumer is. But again, you know, talking about assumptions, I you know, I'm coming to this with another assumption that, you know, as an individual, sometimes it's easy to feel helpless to make a change or even cynical about the impact that one can have, you know, given recent legislation in the U.S. or just thinking about, you know, or reading about the impacts that larger entities like companies and the government might have. And I think that the study goes in quite a bit to that intersection of personal responsibility and then government corporate action. And I would love it if you could talk a bit about that.

Nadia TW: [00:15:43.82] Oh, yes. We love this topic. Look at every brand is at a different stage in their sustainability journey. Some are quite far along. If you were to think about a Patagonia, they're sort of the pioneer and some have just appointed chief sustainability officers and every brand has has a role to play and they're all in different stages. But I think at times it can feel like the responsibility is fully on the the person, on the customer, on the consumer, or however you want to say it. And you sort of have people in the aisle trying to dissect like PhD level words and language and concepts and it's just more expensive. And so they're just like, I don't I don't know what to do here, right? And so I feel like I'm failing, which is what I spoke about earlier. But I think one of the most important pieces of data that came out of this study. That I think is like if brands and marketers are going to take one thing away, it would be this. So when we ask people again, many, many thousands of people across the world, who has the greatest responsibility for reversing climate change? And again, we gave them lots of different things to choose from. And the answer was very clear the top three were equal, equally weighted, three legged stool between individuals, governments and brands.

Nadia TW: [00:17:04.07] And what that says to us is it's not enough to just offer the sustainable option as part of a broader portfolio or part to say, okay, we made the thing or we have the service or we do the stuff. Now it's consumer choice, right? It's consumers have to make that decision. It's actually brands and governments in their own way and having very different responsibilities to create the systems that enable us to have a full life of abundance and and thinking about this way. Now, obviously, we can talk about partnerships as well, and this is very important. It's the 17th UN SDG goal, so partnerships is a big piece of it. But one example that we like to use, it's not a company, but it's a country that I think a lot of people are sometimes jealous of, which is France think everyone's like, Oh, the French, they know how to live, they know how to do it, you

know? But that way of life hasn't happened by accident. Know the government is creating the systems that allow for a more beautiful life. That's a much lower impact life. Right? So they recently were, I think, the first country to say that they were going to ban fossil fuel advertisements.

Nadia TW: [00:18:16.79] They are passing legislation to ban flights that are less than a couple of hours. And what's really interesting about that is that while there is some resistance among the French, they are very passionate people. I can say that because I have some roots there. They they don't like to be told what to do, just like everybody. But if you put some parameters there, ultimately, well, if it's a two hour flight, I'll take the train. It's more beautiful, it's more scenic, it's less stressful. Oh, and by the way, it's also sustainable. You also have the mayor of Paris who has created over 500 kilometres of new bike paths, lanes throughout the city after the pandemic. Again, it's wonderful. You get exercise, you get fresh air, you get to look at this beautiful city, but you also are reducing traffic and car exhaust and all of these different things, right? So in that sense, the citizens, the people, the individuals get to benefit from these systems. And by the way, it's all much more enjoyable, right? It's all much more beautiful and indulgent and all of these things. So I think that's that's a really good example of showing the role that everyone kind of has to play.

Jen Sain (Host): [00:19:22.80] I actually think that's really groundbreaking. You know, let's call it the oh, by the way, approach, because it does address those roadblocks that we've been speaking about, the overwhelm, the feeling of difficulty or the associations of lack with sustainable products that consumers may have. And it really just does give a way for brands and marketers to connect with their customers and offer a benefit or a solution to a problem or a way to improve their lives and not just education that could potentially cause stress or overwhelm. And I think, yeah, that that is that's important.

Nadia TW: [00:19:57.60] I mean, there are so many brands and so many of our brands that we represent that are just doing incredible things. I think that and again, if you think about the UN SDGs and all of the sort of spectrums of the way that a brand can address sustainability through all of those different lenses. Right? So I think every brand is doing most brands I think are doing something which is which is very commendable. I think everyone needs to be doing more. But if you think about all of those sustainable development goals, you can play a part in girls education. So women are more

empowered and you can play a role in reducing poverty, and that's another way. So again, going back to the original definition of sustainability, it's not just about like reducing plastic or not having as many emissions or whatever it might be. There's such a breadth of what a brand can do in order to address some of these issues. However, I just want to go back to this idea of partnerships because I think it's so important. There's something that we say a lot true central, which is that nobody's going to win. It's sustainability. It's not a competition. I mean, maybe a competition to innovate what would be good. But to say that, you know, no one wins because we all we all win. If this world can sustain us and are in our life for the long term. And so because of that, I think there's such a huge opportunity for partnership between sectors, between industries, between brands. Right? Everyone should be working together in order to come up with these really creative solutions to create a more sustainable world. So one of my absolute favorite examples is very counterintuitive because it's a partnership between two competitors.

Nadia TW: [00:21:36.33] On the surface, it might seem like hype, but it actually did innovate and develop something interesting. So and you were talking about legacy brands. So this kind of came to mind, I think about Adidas, which is obviously a 70 plus year old brand and then a newer direct to consumer brand called Allbirds. So Allbirds has a lot of sustainability creds just baked in from there. They're sort of their birth. And then Adidas has that sort of long standing legacy. And resources are kind of like the intergenerational connections for brands, but they join forces as competitors to say, Can we work together to create the world's most sustainable shoe? And they worked on it together, open source. And it wasn't just a marketing stunt because a year later they actually came back and reported on the impact of that shoe. And together they created a shoe that was something like 63% less sort of damaging than Adidas is current most sustainable shoe. And I think that to me is that spirit that I think is what's so fascinating about brands and people and sectors and companies and brain trusts coming together to solve some of these problems. You know, allbirds in and of itself is a very interesting brand as well because they've created something called a I want to say it's called a sustainability label, but it's kind of like a nutrition label for the sustainable behavior of the shoe versus calories and nutrients and things. So I think that case study and those brands are very interesting and sort of how they've thought about innovating to solve some of these problems.

Jen Sain (Host): [00:23:08.36] So yeah, and I actually think that really speaks to a common thread that I've noticed woven throughout our entire discussion, and that is breaking down barriers and challenging assumptions. You know, competitors working together, looking at sustainability through a lens of intersectionality and so on. So as we near the end of our time together, I would love it if each of you could speak about the role advertising and marketing plays in sustainability and then specifically how you're approaching this at McCann World Group in your daily work and with your clients. Jaclyn, can you kick us off?

Jaclyn K: [00:23:43.07] Yes, happy to, Jen. Well first Off, advertising overall has a unique opportunity to help brands identify an authentic role in the fight for a more sustainable world. Clients are coming to us at McCann World Group because there is one thing that is certain creativity, design and innovation. Our secret powers or secret sauce can help solve complicated problems, and there certainly is not a shortage of complex problems out there, specifically in this space of sustainability. Overall sustainability focused communications plays a role in helping consumers to make more sustainable choices if done so authentically. And as the study has found, people today trust brands nearly as much as governments to help create a healthier world. That is a huge responsibility that brands need to start paying attention to and start stepping up to when it comes to asset McKeon World Group. We're committed to being leaders in sustainability and committed to creating action now. We've set ambitious science based targets and are making decarbonization progress annually. We've also been developing environmentally friendly ways of working with our clients specifically in production, and we have started to tackle some of the key issues found within the study, specifically around education. We know it's a complicated space and we believe we have a responsibility to ensure all of our people understand it so that they can become better partners to their clients and perhaps just better individuals overall.

Jen Sain (Host): [00:25:18.39] You know, so that's really interesting because it sounds to me as if, you know, it's not necessarily clients coming to you to solve a problem, although that could be the case, but rather it seems that the thinking is kind of inculcating sustainability into all aspects of client work, like you said, perhaps more sustainable ways of of, you know, working with the client or, you know, education or bringing that to the forefront. Would you say that's accurate?

Jaclyn K: [00:25:46.47] Yes, absolutely. I think we're starting to have clients come to us for a multitude of of problems and reasons. One is to focus on embedding sustainability within their work, and secondly is to partner with them on achieving their sustainability goals. The reality is, is that there is no roadmap, no one's done this before. And the reality is, is that we all need to get to net zero. So it really does rely on partnership and creating action now and problem solving together.

Jen Sain (Host): [00:26:18.72] Is there anything in your work that any innovation and you don't have to mention like a client name or just anything that's been really exciting or innovative in particular?

Jaclyn K: [00:26:29.01] Yeah, I think a couple of things. So one is when it comes to our organization so it McCann world group we have well our team had realized that we do not have any way of managing our decarbonization progress in a way that visualizes the progress we've made or the challenges that we have ahead of us. So we are a massive organization with leaders all across the world. And rather than sending Excel sheets with data points on it, we thought we could be do a little bit better and visualize that progress or visualize the need overall. So what we did is we worked with Microsoft to create our first sustainability dashboard. That really brings to life the decarbonization progress, as well as allows leaders to dive into problem areas and work with us closely as a department to figure out how we might be able to reduce electricity, perhaps, or reduce our heating in a way. So it's it's an amazing tool, which has been the first, I believe, for our industry and definitely was a first piece of innovation that we got to work with Microsoft on even ahead of Microsoft having their own sustainability dashboard. And when I think I'll say this without getting into specific clients, I think there's been a real shift over the past two years, even specifically in the past year, I think it's been quite interesting sitting to view how much sustainability has become prioritized across our clients. And when I reflect upon the past year, I think a year ago we started to see clients asking for sustainability commitments. They wanted to know that we are committed to the same things that they were. But there has been a shift that's been happening over the past six months, which is that now clients want to look underneath the hood a bit more. They want to know that not only are we committing, but we're actually making progress against those commitments. And this is to say that, you know, two years ago clients weren't even asking this at all. And I think on a weekly basis, we're starting to get in request for Proposals, or requests for information from new

clients that are out there constantly asking us sustainability questions. That's a first. That's never happened before, even within our industry itself. And Net zero, which is the our industry's sustainability focused body at that only launched last November. So you can start to hopefully that starts to paint a picture of how new sustainability is for our organization and for the industry in general, but also the dramatic shift in which clients are starting to focus on sustainability and look at sustainability as a reason for working with certain agencies and perhaps not other agencies.

Jen Sain (Host): [00:29:24.92] Yeah, absolutely. I mean, and I just I think that's fascinating. You know, it being, you know, not a new topic, but certainly one that maybe has reached critical mass recently just to see how it is being received and responded to both on the client side and the agency side in terms of creativity, but also quantitatively, like you said, you know, maybe not a spreadsheet, but certainly, you know, we're partnering with Microsoft to have a tool that can marry the the innovation, the creativity and the nitty gritty, if you will. So speaking of that, Nadia, do you have anything to add from the research perspective?

Nadia TW: [00:30:02.94] One of the major reasons we do pieces of research like this is one. Yes, it's very interesting. But there is a purpose to it, Right. Which is to, as I said, every company in the world is thinking about this issue. It is it is the issue of our time. And there is there are many, many, many smart people at work on these things. But what we try to do again, is come in, be the voice of the everyday human, be the voice of culture. And in some ways, like you were just saying, maybe through the research and the findings just kind of change the world view a little bit. Like I never thought about it that way or I didn't know that was an opportunity or that's a space we hadn't explored yet, or that's something that we really aligns with our brand's meaningful role or our DNA. And I think it's just to push that thinking a little bit further and again, get us out of all of these ESG, SDG, all of this language. And remember that there's there's a guy named Ian Bremmer, who is a geopolitical expert, very random, but he actually had the best thing to say. And I'll just kind of quote him badly. And he said, you know, oftentimes leaders and government and businesses go to these global summits and they bicker around temperatures and pledges and commitments, forgetting that at the end of the day, we're talking about billions of people's lives and livelihoods that are on the line. And I think that's sort of what we try to do with this research, is come in and just just kind of gently remind everyone that it is about future generations, that it is about our own lives,

and that sustainability is not a buzzword, it's not a marketing opportunity. It's something that is sort of, as I said, the issue of our time. So that's really the sort of pointed objective of what we do with this to then open up broader conversations about further opportunities and further spaces and further audiences and further ways that we can start to make a change.

Jen Sain (Host): [00:31:57.57] Yeah. And I can say just from this conversation, I've heard the gentle reminder and I will be integrating it into my work and my my daily life that it goes beyond numbers and emissions percentage and just all the things. And it is about people and generations and, and life. And I think anchoring it and that is is really beautiful and and powerful. So thank you both so very much for being here. This was an excellent conversation.

Jaclyn K: [00:32:19.86] Thank you so much, Jen.

Nadia TW: [00:32:21.75] Thank you so much for having us.

Outro [00:32:25.45] Thank you for listening to the Collective Intelligence Podcast. For more marketing insights and ideas, please subscribe to this podcast or visit intelligence.interpublic.com.