LUX
FORUMS

May 15 | **CHICAGO**

8:00-9:00	*Networking Breakfast*

9:00-9:40

Breaking the Demographic Mold:
Unlocking What Really Drives Consumer Behavior

For decades, brands have relied on demographic segmentation — age, gender, income, geography — to understand consumers. But in a world where identities are fluid and ideas flow freely across groups, people rarely fit into simple demographic categories. Ultimately, consumers are driven by motivations and beliefs rather than fixed demographic traits, requiring a more nuanced, human-centered approach to audience understanding. The risks of outdated segmentation are clear: Pepsi's Kendall Jenner ad flopped by assuming all millennials embraced surface-level activism. GAP's "Dress Normal" campaign misfired by relying on generational stereotypes. Bic's "For Her" pens failed by reducing women to a demographic label instead of understanding real needs. These missteps highlight the danger of mistaking demographics for shared values.

This session explores how Lux's AI-powered ethnography and belief-based segmentation make it easier than ever before for brands to uncover the deeper drivers of behavior. Unlike demographics, beliefs change more gradually over time, offering stability in volatile markets and helping future-proof brands. Senior Director of Research for Consumer Insights Cheryl Auger and Research Director Amy Huras will share case studies on how Lux's team of cultural anthropologists leverages AI-driven anthropology to develop messaging, products, and experiences that foster deeper emotional connections, enhance brand relevance, and drive sustainable growth.

SPEAKERS:

Cheryl Auger
Senior Director

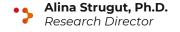**Amy Huras, Ph.D.**
Research Director

9:40-10:20

The Hidden Connections that Win Consumers in a Divided World

Consumer tastes are shifting faster than ever, and brands are caught in the tension between broad appeal and local nuance. A one-size-fits-all strategy doesn't cut it, while overrelying on demographics can be just as misguided. Hershey's misstep in China proves the point: The company assumed American-style chocolate would resonate, ignoring local tastes and gifting traditions. Meanwhile, Cadbury's Unity Bar in India, meant to symbolize harmony, fell flat by oversimplifying deep cultural and caste divisions. The lesson? Success lies in understanding what truly resonates — not just on the surface but also deep within each market's cultural fabric.

In this session, Research Director Alina Strugut and Senior Research Director Joshua Haslun will show how belief-based segmentation uncovers surprising common ground across two seemingly opposing generations in three different geographies. By analyzing chocolate perceptions in the U.S., Germany, and China, we'll reveal how boomers and Gen Z — despite their differences — are drawn to products that align with shared emotional triggers yet differ by locality (e.g., self-care in the U.S., knowledge in Germany, social connection in China). We'll also explore how these distinctive beliefs can be positioned to align product positioning and innovation opportunities like functional ingredients or sustainable packaging. The takeaway? Brands that blend global strategy with local relevance unlock new opportunities by aligning innovation with what truly matters to consumers. Understanding how beliefs shift across markets ensures R&D doesn't just react to trends. It also fuels lasting impact worldwide.

SPEAKERS:

Alina Strugut, Ph.D.
Research Director

Joshua Haslun, Ph.D.
Research Director

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May 15 | **CHICAGO**

10:20-10:50	*Networking Break*

10:50-11:30

Maximizing Human-Centric Innovation: From Insights to Action

Human-centric innovation isn't just a buzzword; it's an approach that deeply understands and prioritizes human needs, behaviors, and aspirations and a powerful strategy for achieving market dominance, driving exponential growth, and skyrocketing profitability.

This strategy acknowledges that, while technology and data are vital, the essence of successful innovation lies in human creativity, decision-making, and ethical considerations. By focusing on the human element, organizations can develop solutions that resonate with their audiences, ensuring long-term success and relevance in an AI-driven world.

This session will outline and demonstrate practical steps and the tools our clients are leveraging to execute core Lux Innovation Model stages to take a truly human-centric approach to innovation.

SPEAKERS:

Tim Ferrone
Account Manager

Regan Wieneke
Account Executive

11:30-11:55

What Drives Consumer Trust:
Fostering Authentic Consumer Connections

Consumer skepticism is at an all-time high. As trust in institutions, media, and brands declines, consumers no longer accept corporate claims at face value. Instead, they scrutinize messaging, question motives, and demand proof of authenticity before engaging with a brand. In this landscape, aligning with consumers' beliefs is a necessity.

Recent missteps highlight the risks of misunderstanding consumer expectations. Google's Gemini showcase eroded trust by failing to reinforce confidence in the company's commitment to surfacing the best information. And Bumble's users saw its ad campaign attacking celibacy as a betrayal of the platform's promise to empower women. Both brands miscalculated because they relied on traditional demographic segmentation rather than recognizing the belief systems that create meaningful consumer connections.

This session will explore how brands win or lose consumer trust — whether through their handling of price increases, their corporate responsibility efforts, or their engagement with niche communities like gamers. Through real-world case studies, Associate Director Alia O'Brien and Product Manager Derek Gingrich will demonstrate how addressing consumer beliefs directly, rather than simply signaling demographic alignment, builds credibility and prevents missteps that come across as insincere. By understanding the deeper motivations behind consumer trust, brands can avoid the pitfalls of virtue signaling and foster genuine connections. We'll also discuss the challenges and opportunities of engaging belief-driven consumers — helping brands navigate how to build trust without overstepping, alienating audiences, or falling into the trap of performative branding.

SPEAKERS:

Alia O-Brien, Ph.D.
Associate Research Director

Derek Gingrich, Ph.D.
Product Manager

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