



A TECH MARKETING DILEMMA

5G: the tricky balance between hype and reality

Richard Snoxell | Head of Tech | richard.snoxell@walnutunlimited.com





5G hitting the mainstream

5G has truly hit the mainstream consciousness in recent weeks, but not in the way anyone sane could have imagined! The emergence of coronavirus conspiracy theories shows that it doesn't take much for the lack of understanding to spiral into something else – making it even more important to frame the benefits of 5G right. If 2020 is the year that 5G coverage truly arrives then so too does the pressure to start recouping the billions of pounds in investments made. Branding experts, marketers and retailers are currently refining communications but have a dilemma to tackle: where to position on the 5G hype vs reality spectrum? As experts in the telco sector we have pulled together some thoughts on how applying some of the principles of neuroscience and behavioural science can help address this question and create more impactful comms.

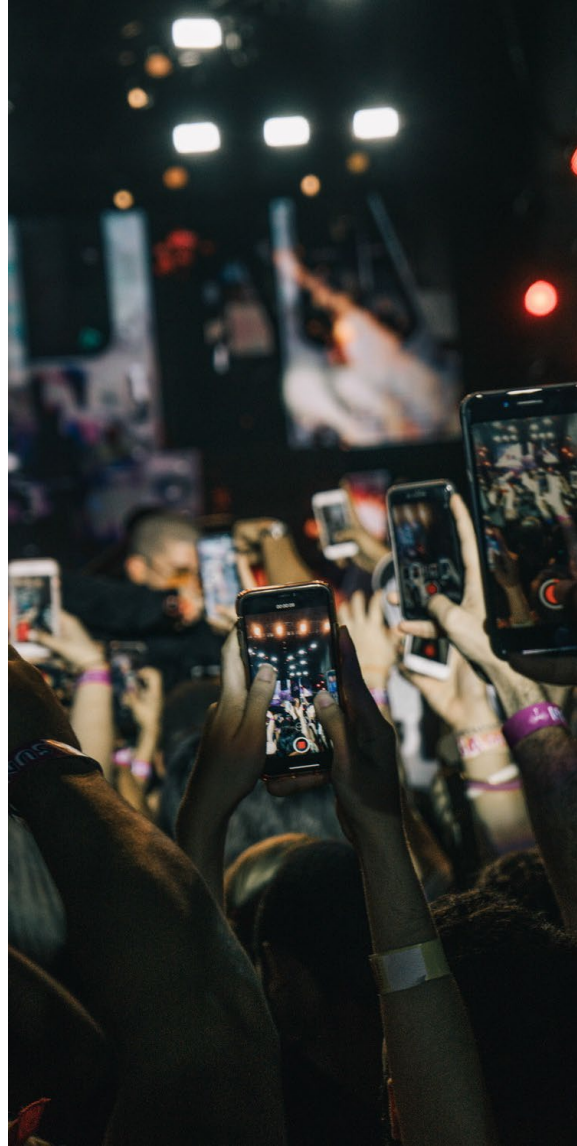
The marketing dilemma

Going for the hype will raise interest but also expectations, possibly leading to early disappointment where the brand is blamed if it doesn't deliver. On the other hand, positioning 5G as merely a significant improvement on what customers have now may not generate enough excitement and bring in the numbers needed to start paying back the investments made. This is the dilemma.

Keep it simple

To those in the telecoms industry it's the Fifth Generation of Mobile Networks...but for everyone else it's yet faster mobile internet as speed is the first meaningful benefit.

We've seen first-hand where ads can succeed, but also where they can fail – we know the brain is going to make split second judgement on any comms seen. Your comms need to deliver standout clarity of messaging and emotional engagement. When we've tested comms around technology and telecoms in the past we know that it can often be the small things that get in the way of the brain processing the message – from comms lacking the ability to stand out due to the colours used, lacking an emotional connection in the absence of human faces, the claim not quite matching the images, or even down to key words in the terms and conditions causing the brain to switch off.



Rather than just saying 'it's up to 10 times faster than 4G', people need a contextual frame relatable to their everyday experiences. If on your daily commute, for example, you see an ad suggesting 'you could download a movie in 5 seconds between the office and the station' this makes immediate sense.

Alexandra Baines,
Walnut Behavioural Scientist



How the networks might differentiate themselves

The technology behind 5G makes any communication strategy a challenge. The service that users will enjoy will partly depend on location and possibly what mobile network they're on. Three declare that 'We've got more 5G than any other network' but with the twist that 'it's the good stuff, 100MHz of fine-tuned, full pelt, maxed-out 5G'; this after the ASA ruled that their previous ad 'If it's not Three, it's not real 5G' was misleading. EE have coverage on their side (like they did with 4G) and continue push this in their comms. But whatever network you're on the 5G experience will vary, even as you move around a city where signal strength will be at its strongest. Inconsistency may well be a byword for the 5G experience for its early adopters and while that group have the mindset to cope, when 5G hits more mainstream customers their disappointment may be more damaging.

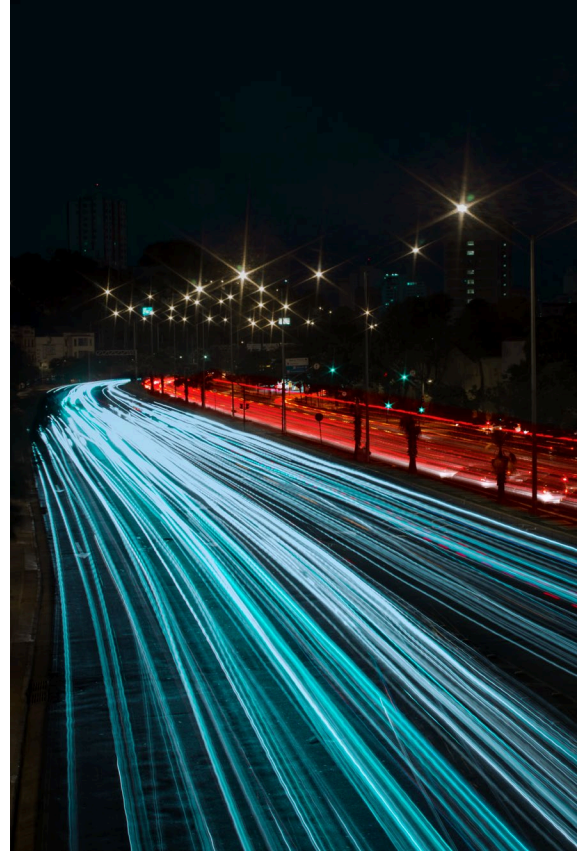
5G tariffs will also be more expensive than 4G tariffs and networks will also encourage customers to buy a lot of data with them. So, getting the message right is important. If you go with the wrong message and customer experience doesn't match or expectations differ it may diminish what you are setting out to achieve, on where to position the brand (and the potential to differentiate on key early aspects around 5G leadership).

Behavioural Science in comms

At Walnut we embed behavioural science into any message testing to ensure that your claims are framed in the right way for greater impact. Claiming to have 'the best network' will prompt a different reaction in your target consumer than saying your network is the 'number one choice for people like them' (an example of Social Proof). There could also be an opportunity to leverage Loss Aversion and Scarcity, especially among early adopters, e.g. 'Don't miss out on our summer 5G deals - be the first to enjoy the incredible speeds of 5G'.

We use our behavioural science shortcuts framework to identify what heuristics you can use to leverage your brand and the 5G experience to create greater impact.

By testing messages using our implicit reaction time claims testing approach we can optimise your comms planning by mapping which messages cut through to the subconscious brain and are both appealing and believable.



Inconsistency may well be a byword for the 5G experience, but early adopters will have the mindset to cope.

Richard Snoxell
Head of Tech, Walnut



Urban vs rural

There's no getting round that you'll need to be in a city or big town to get 5G at first. However, we'd expect there to be demand even in hard to reach areas, so testing and optimising your campaign executions both inside and outside of cities will be important.

Apple

Whilst the networks are responsible for the launch of 5G, the big smartphone brands have taken full advantage to create a buzz around their new models that will be released with 5G capability. Apple however is exercising its authority by waiting until autumn 2020 for the release of the 5G iPhone. As we know, when Apple say it's OK that's when mass adoption will really start to kick in.

In conclusion

Like a fine wine, the 5G user experience will improve over time as the infrastructure matures. However, right now the industry will be trying to strike the perfect balance on the hype vs reality spectrum: key to this will be creating the consumer appetite for 5G in 2020 but to do that successfully will involve understanding what *truly* motivates the target audience and then hitting the right notes with comms and offers.

How Walnut can help

At Walnut we have a range of techniques that can help optimise your 5G plans - from understanding the drivers (and barriers) to take-up, to optimising your claims and comms or identifying 'white space' to evolve brand positioning in crowded markets. We do this by using blending traditional approaches with cutting edge techniques using neuroscience and behavioural science to get to the heart (or brain) of what customers really think. That's what makes us the human understanding agency.



Richard Snoxell

Head of Tech, Walnut Unlimited

+44 (0) 1962 833609

richard.snoxell@walnutunlimited.com


Click [here](#) to see what we're great at and how we can help you.



Thank you.

The human understanding agency.



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