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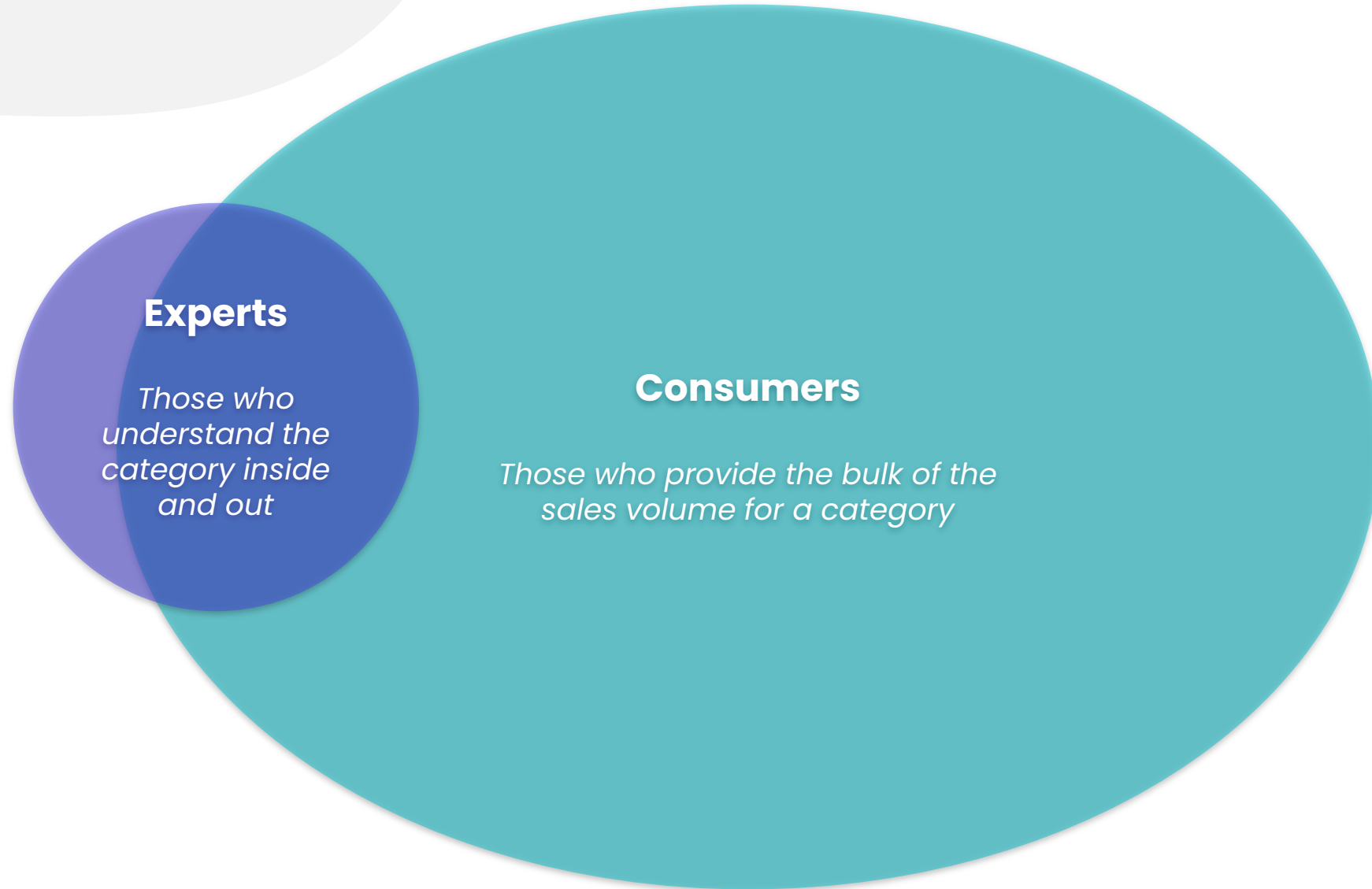
How System 1 consumer input can untangle categories, inspire design and create new products

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Quirks | Mindlab | 2022

In this talk...

- **Experts don't always know best**

- **Putting a consumer lens on categories – at scale**

- **Insights and how they can be used**

- **Example categories**

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Only a small proportion of consumers are true category experts...

Experts

Those who understand the category inside and out

Consumers

Those who provide the bulk of the sales volume for a category

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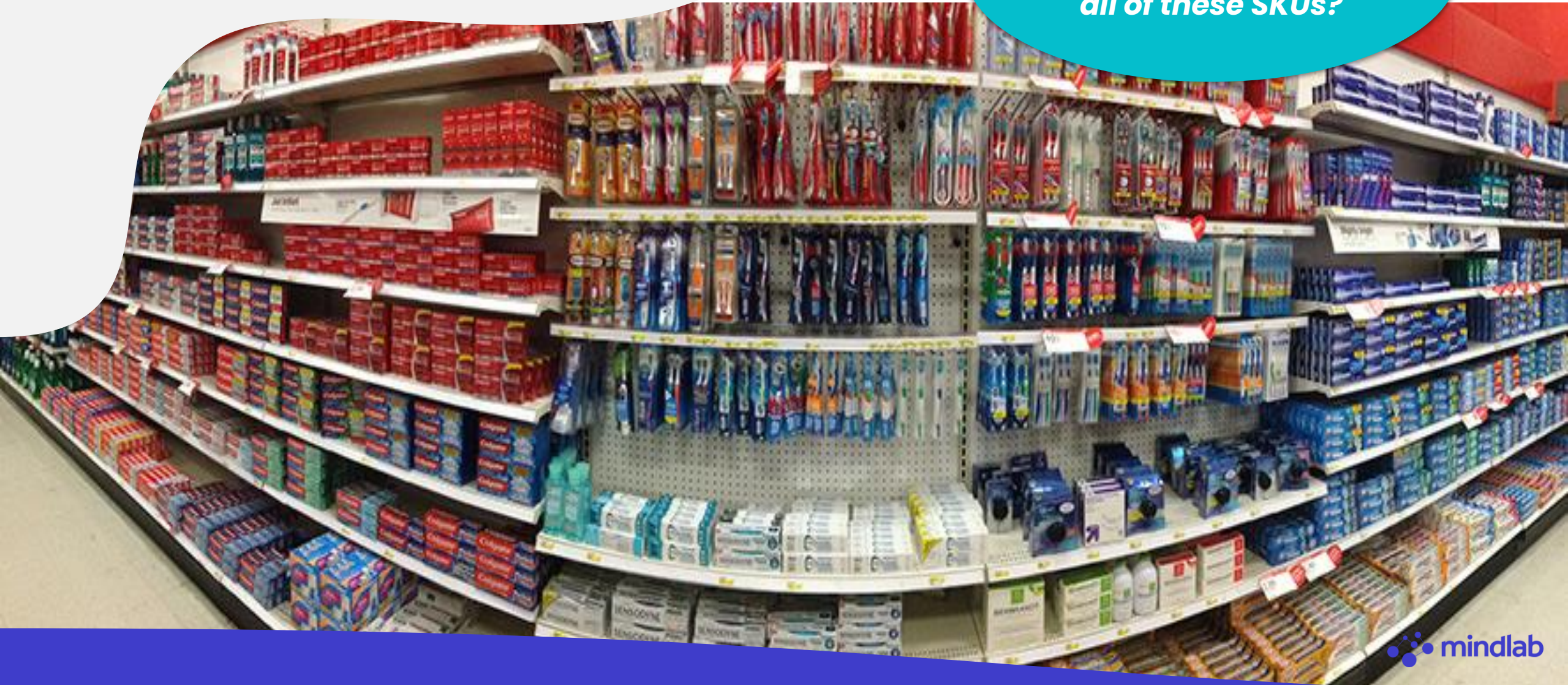# ...but it is the experts who get to influence the category.

- ❖ Merchandising strategies
- ❖ Designing product ranges
- ❖ Developing new products
- ❖ Visual appearance

...consumer input is not used often enough to answer the overarching questions.
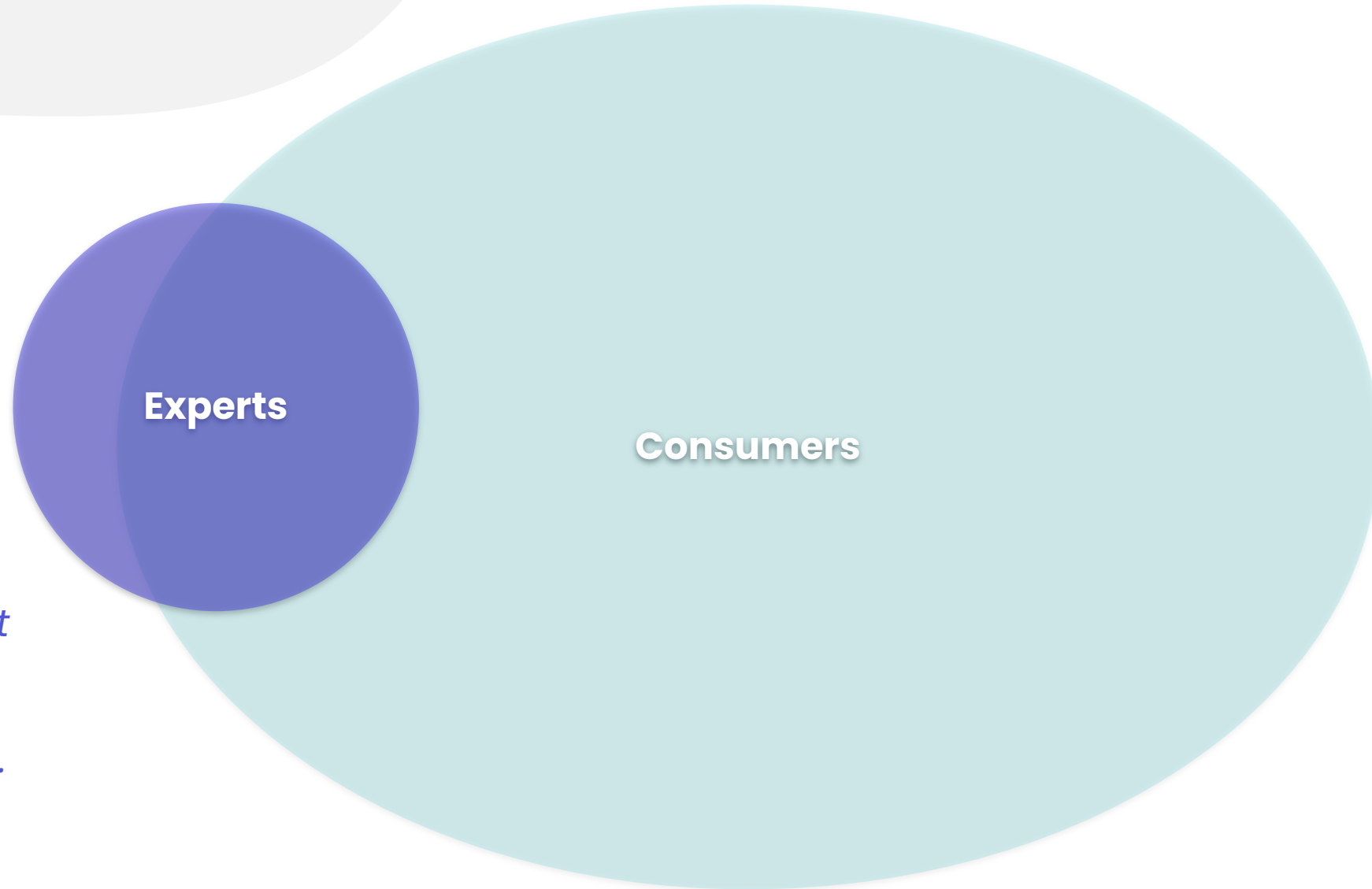
Experts

Consumers

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This can lead to:
Confusing product and packaging design

Examples we see all the time:

- Disconnect between colours used and flavours cued

- Packaging shape not communicating product type clearly

- Unclear variants – is this white wine or red?

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Other issues

Launching too many non-distinct products

A lack of understanding of consumer needs and NPD potential
(not looking beyond narrow category definitions)

Not understanding consumer decision-making journey
(how important really is single malt vs blended Scotch?)

Products failing not because they aren't good, but due to poor design and merchandising strategies

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Dark spirits are generally quite siloed, and classed by how and where they are made.

Scotch

Irish

single malt

Tequila

Rum

Bourbon

Brandy

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Why should you think differently about spirits?

Cross-consumption: People switch across product types a lot more than research / recruitment strategies acknowledge

Lack of education: Many consumers don't intuitively know the difference between single malt or blend, or truly care whether their whisk(e)y is Scottish or Irish
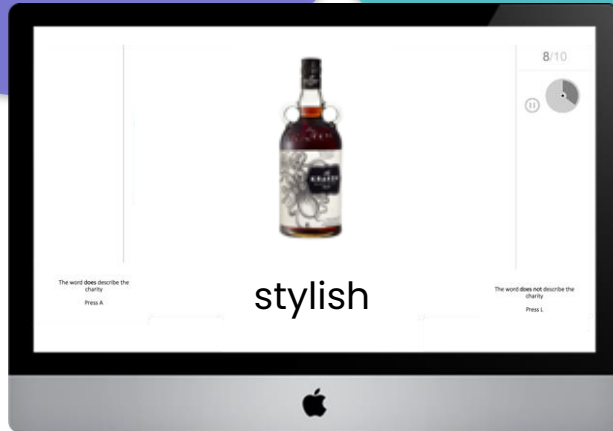
Occasions and desires: Products from different categories can fulfil the same 'need'

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Mapping out associative networks
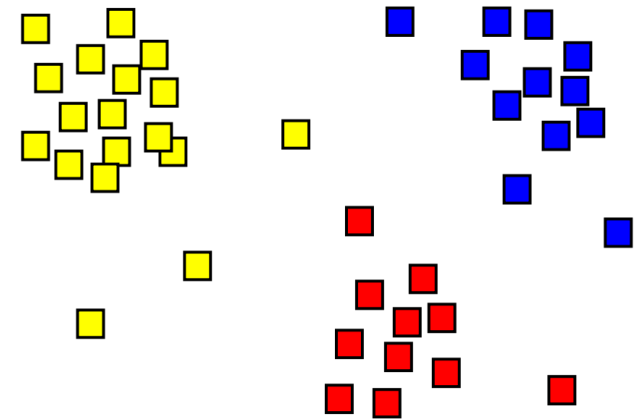
Intuitive associations *(timed sorting task)*

150 spirits

50 words

Cluster analysis

Identifying themes, relationships and groups in the data set

stylish

8/10

The word **does** describe the charity
Press A

The word **does not** describe the charity
Press L

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How consumers truly see dark spirits

At a broad level, dark spirits split into two distinct categories:

Group 1:

deliciousdark
European
fancy smooth creative
strong exclusive
rustic
contemporary
stylish special
rich silky
distinguished
heritage smokey comforting relax
sophisticated
edgy refined bold
authentic
aged expensive
masculine
warm

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Group 2:

simple
heritage
masculine
contemporary
warm
authentic
American
smooth
strong

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Getting a little more specific

deliciousdark
European creative
fancy smooth
strong exclusive
rustic
contemporary
stylish special
rich silky
distinguished
heritage smokey comforting relax
sophisticated
edgy refined bold
authentic
aged expensive
masculine
warm

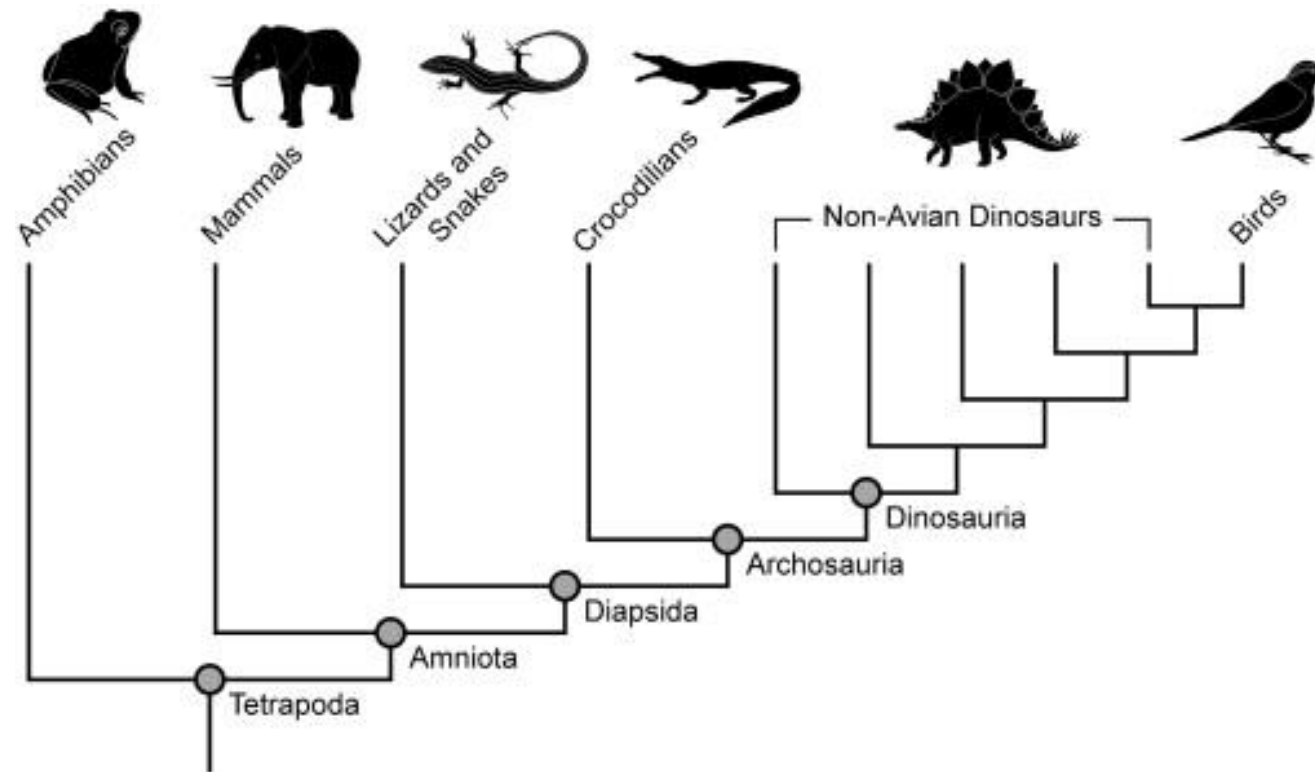*Distinguished, stylish, expensive, fancy*

Distinguished, strong – masculinity, boldness and heritage play a stronger role

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Remember those "dinosaur family trees"?

Dendrograms can show us how closely different species are related

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...the same thing works for spirits too:

Relationships between products can be visualised using the same kind of 'family tree'

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Zooming in a little:

Distinguished, stylish, expensive, fancy

Sophisticated, exclusive, smooth, expensive

Rich, fancy, aged, expensive, exclusive

Bold, dark, refined, special, authentic

Strong, sophisticated, warm, bold

Refined, creative, expensive

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Product type is clearly not the most important factor in how the spirits are perceived.

Distinguished, stylish, expensive, fancy

Brandy, tequila, whisky

Brandy, whisky

Rum, tequila, brandy

Tequila

Whisky, tequila, brandy

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How can this type of insight be used?

Inspire design

Make merchandising shopper-friendly

Identify gaps in the market, and prompt NPD

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Inspire Design

Visual cues for a spirit that is rich, fancy, aged, expensive, exclusive:

❖ Rounded, unusual, squat bottle shape
❖ Glass texture
❖ Dark liquid colour
❖ Warm, golden and caramel tones
❖ Flared bottle stop
❖ Central label

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Make merchandising shopper-friendly

Sorting products by how people really understand & shop the category, e.g.:

Wine: Taste & occasion rather than just grape or country of origin

Laundry detergent: Fragrance and effect rather than format

Plant milk: By type / flavour rather than by brand

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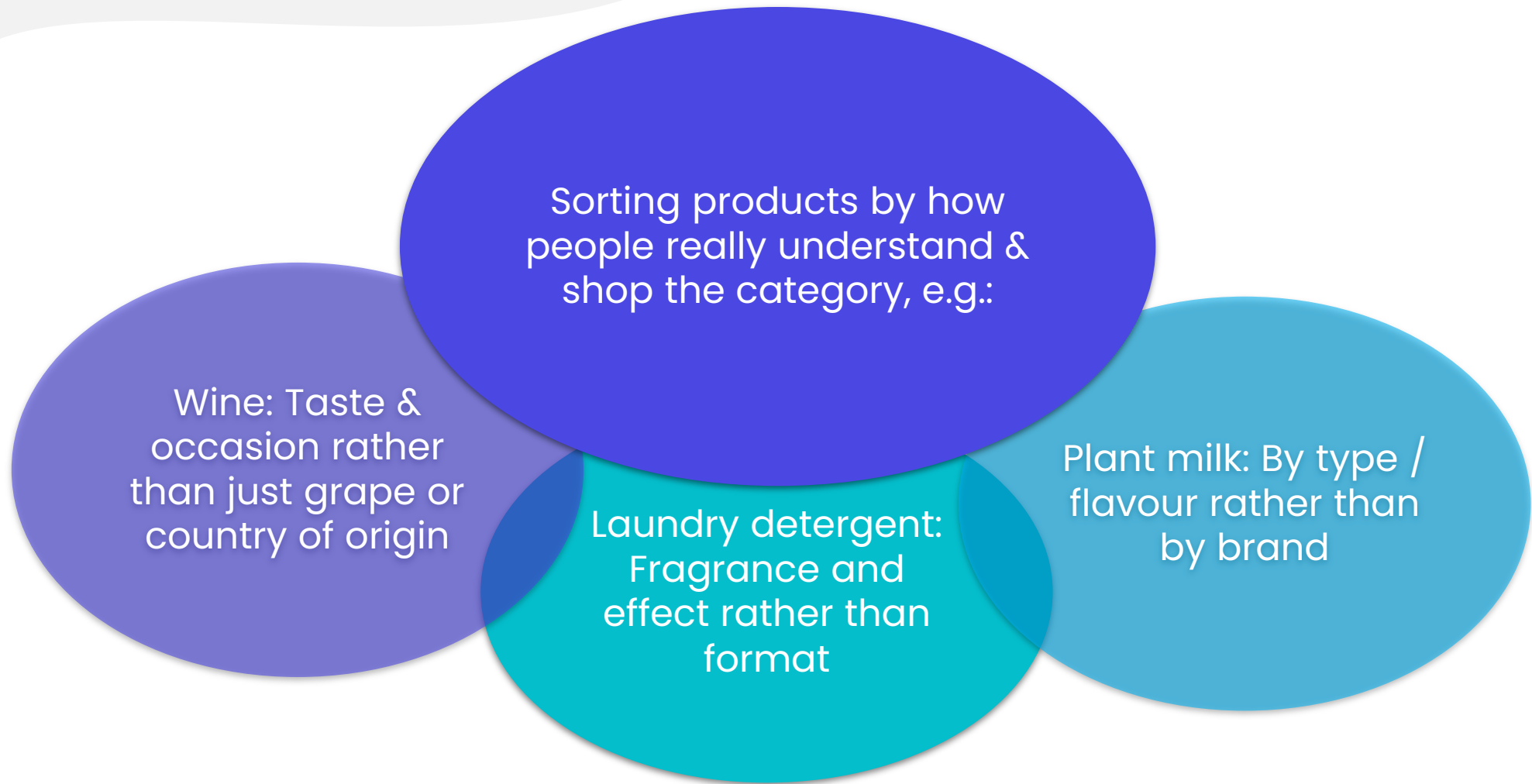
Identify gaps in the market, and prompt new product development

Is there space for a high-end Irish whiskey, a really giftable tequila, an up-tempo occasion brandy, ...?

Some of the categories we have applied this to:

- Personal care products
- Spirits
- Children's charities
- Deodorant
- Oral Care products - toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc
- Soap
- Free-from & vegan food
- Body lotion
- Fabric softener & conditioner
- Food delivery services
- Household cleaning products

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Some takeaways:

Implicit, quantitative research can be used to map out categories at a large scale (gaining insights that have historically been owned by qualitative approaches and semiotics). This understanding gives stakeholders greater confidence and can guide decisions moving forward.

There can be serious drawbacks when an expert view doesn't align with the consumer perspective. Create products consumers are looking for and organise them in a way that makes intuitive sense.

Mapping out existing product perceptions gives you clear guidelines for future design – be it redesigning an existing product to look more expensive or finding the perfect colour scheme for your new product launch.

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Thank you!

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