

Gerald Goodhart died of coronavirus in May, aged 90

By Phyllis Vangelder

Gerald Goodhardt was not only a powerful influence in the Market Research Society, but a towering figure in the industry, responsible with his colleague Andrew Ehrenberg, for seminal new thinking about laws of marketing and consumer and audience behaviour. When he moved from business to academia, he inspired his students in the understanding of market and social research and how it could be used for the benefit of organisations.

Gerald served on the MRS Council for many years, becoming Chairman of the Publications Committee, and in 1973, Chairman of the Society. The Market Research Society awarded him its Gold Medal for outstanding work in the field not once, but twice, the only person to have been so honoured.

Gerald's towering intellect allowed him to win scholarships to both Marylebone Grammar school and Downing College, Cambridge which would otherwise have been beyond the reach of his parents, whose business life was based on tailoring and dry cleaning.

Following a degree in mathematics, and a graduate diploma in statistics, he was tasked, during his national service with devising a test which would weed out those with an intelligence level too low to allow them to serve, which would simultaneously detect those who were deliberately trying to fail.

His early market research career was spent first with Attwoods Statistics, followed by the Research Department of the advertising agency, Young and Rubicam.

In 1965 Gerald joined Andrew Ehrenberg in his market research consultancy, Aske Research, which had as clients many of the blue-chip British companies e.g. Mars, Cadbury-Schweppes, Shell and Unilever. When Andrew left in 1970 to become Professor of Marketing at the London Business School, Martin Collins joined Gerald at Aske. But Gerald, also moved to academia, with a readership at Thames Polytechnic in 1975. In 1981 he became the Sir John E Cohen Professor of Consumer Studies at the City University, raising the level of its MBA programme to an international standard.

Gerald and Andrew's joint work in formulating the Laws of Marketing and modelling consumer and audience behaviour was seminal. In 2016, a Dutch marketing expert – Wiemar Snijders – wrote an article comparing the work he and Andrew Ehrenberg had done with the work of Isaac Newton. Whilst Newton described the natural laws by which the physical world operates, Ehrenberg and Goodhardt explained how the world of brands and business work, with similar accuracy. According to Snijders, their work has similar significance.

The University of South Australia established an entire school of Marketing Science based on the work done by them. They named the school after Ehrenberg, and in 2015, on the occasion when they awarded Gerald an honorary doctorate, established an annual Goodhardt Fellowship, which will now be an appropriate memorial to him.

Because of the Virus, Gerald's funeral was held via Zoom. Friends, relatives and colleagues from Israel, Australia and the US, as well as those in this country, were able to see the very

moving service from St John's Wood Synagogue. Rabbi Ian Goodhardt, Gerald's son, spoke of his father's goodness. "At the centre of my father was a core of goodness. And even though it was wrapped within many layers, from the beginning to the end of his life, his goodness kept shining through. But how was his core of goodness shown? In the 1970s my father realised that most of the people who actually carry out the market research, standing in the wind and rain with clip-boards, walking up to houses and knocking on doors, were middle aged women, many of them widows. Some of them were falling on hard times and so he established the Market Research Benevolent Association, to take care of them".

Gerald was a founding Trustee of Market Research Benevolent Association (MRBA) and a prime mover in its establishment. He continued to support the work of the MRBA and indeed of many other charities throughout his lifetime. He would have been pleased to know that the MRBA is able to help researchers in this current crisis.

Many of Gerald's papers are to be found in the Archive of Market and Social Research, particularly in the Ehrenberg Collection, a special collection of papers and offprints relating to the classic work of Andrew, Gerald and their colleagues.

Listen to Gerald's interview with Lawrence Bailey as part of the Oral History Project.

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