

Seven deadly sins



According to Christian tradition, the seven deadly sins, or cardinal sins, are envy, gluttony, greed, lust, pride, sloth and anger – and there is an app that caters for each Biblical vice.

Each of these apps is a micro-reflection of the fourth industrial revolution and the greatest transfer of value in stock market history. Trillions of dollars have migrated from traditional industries and companies to the tech titans that own these apps. Some of these giants – such as Apple, Amazon and Microsoft (owner of LinkedIn) – have individually become the first trillion-dollar-quoted companies in history.

1 Envy. Facebook, with more than 2bn subscribers worldwide – nearly 30% of the global population – is the prime site for inciting envy and jealousy. Photos and information posted encourage voyeurism and stoke feelings of discontent and resentful longing of someone else’s possessions, experiences or luck. Deep down, envy is caused by a dissatisfaction with one’s self-image. This dissatisfaction reflects low self-esteem – a poor self-appraisal, with feelings of inferiority and shame – which is reinforced by engaging with Facebook.

2 Gluttony. Just Eat, Deliveroo and Uber Eats all cater to humans’ habitual greed and propensity to eat and indulge to excess. Food we love, delivered to our door, desk or dining table in as little as 15 minutes – with no calories expended in preparing it and many consumed in eating it. Call it binge eating or overconsumption, gluttony is widely seen as an emotional cry for help. As author Peter De Vries says: “Gluttony is an emotional escape, a sign something is eating us.”

3 Greed. Amazon and LinkedIn cater for the human desire of more goods and more opportunities. Amazon Prime offers unlimited one-day delivery at low prices, while LinkedIn manages the professional identity of its 500m members, building their personal brand and professional network. Greed is defined as an intense and selfish desire for something, especially wealth, power or food.

4 Lust. Tinder is a location-based social search app used as a dating site, which claims 30bn matches to date. It is the world’s most popular app for meeting new people, with user

information based on pictures, a short bio and an optional link to Instagram or Spotify. Lust is not just a strong sexual desire, but an overwhelming desire for a human being that transforms the human from a subject to an object that is solely meant to give one pleasure.

5 Pride. The photo and video-sharing social network Instagram encourages users to capture and share ‘the world’s moments’. Users add captions, edit filters and tweak settings, posting the photos and films they take pride in, which make their lives appear glamorous and exciting. Pride is a feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one’s own achievements, qualities or possessions that are widely admired.

6 Sloth. Netflix sells online streaming of movies and TV shows to your smart TV, game console, computer, mobile and tablet. It has nearly 150m paid subscribers – or couch potatoes – worldwide. Sloth is the reluctance to work or make an effort; it is laziness and idleness. What better way to encourage insolence, inactivity and inertia than to provide the whole of Hollywood on tap?

7 Anger. If it’s happening anywhere, it’s happening on Twitter. The latest news and world events, faster – from breaking news and entertainment to sport, politics and everyday interests. Unsurprisingly, a platform where all voices are heard and instant responses elicited, strong feelings of annoyance, displeasure or hostility follow. Anger is easily incited by an unfair or insulting comment that provokes pique and displeasure.

It remains to be seen what the long-term ramifications on society and human behaviour will be – but, in stock market terms, these companies and apps have had a profound impact already. Their high valuations, reflecting their high growth, have been driving all stock market performance, leaving legacy companies far behind.

The social media products of the tech players are reminiscent of the structured products of the banks that pushed the envelope to its very limits in the run-up to the global financial crisis. The banks did what was legally possible, but morally dubious. Is there a parallel here?