# The Psychology of Buying 

How to Apply Behavioural Science for More Sales (In Difficult Times)

## DAN THWAITES

## CO-FOUNDER,

## CAPUCHIN BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE

# Practically apply <br> psychology and data <br> for hard, commercial results 

## FOR EXAMPLE, BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE TELLS US YOU COULD GET...

$8 \%$ higher spend levels if you remove the $£$ signs from your pricing

- $50 \%$ higher conversion if you use personality-targeting - extraverts prefer bright colours but disagreeable people don't like conformity and social proof

Double the number of acceptances if you ending your request with "...but it's up to you"

This is because consumers are subconsciously influenced by mental shortcuts known as heuristics. Understand these heuristics - and particularly how they differ between different customer groups - and you can tap into psychology for sales success.

## APPLY PSYCHOLOGY AND DATA



This is a typical message.


Recycle all your plastic before it's too late.
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This is a behaviourally optimised message.


Recycle just one plastic thing a day to protect turtles like Ronnie.


This is a behaviourally optimised message targeted to liberals.


Can you recycle just one plastic item each day to care for turtles like Ronnie?

## GET HARD COMMERCIAL RESULTS



Get more attention, clicks, visitors


Get more conversions, sales, profit


Get more customers, shift their behaviours

## DOES IT WORK?

## 39\%

lower cost per acquisition for
a financial
services brand

## x2

double the conversion rate for a multichannel marketer
$+7$
percentage point improvement in downloads for an international client

## 4,000

new customers signed up in a week for a challenger brand

## SCIENTIFIC THINKING FOR IRRATIONAL MINDS

Make a more direct, scientific link between minds and money.


To find opportunities that might otherwise be missed.
And show how to address them.

# APPLY PSYCHOLOGY AND DATA TO GET HARD COMMERCIAL RESULTS 



How do you apply the psychology of online ordering to persuade different groups of people?

## 井 <br> How do you prime and persuade purchase across channels, moods and modes? <br> How do you prime and persuade purcnase across cnannels, moods ana modes?

How do you get people to adopt new ways of payment and other new behaviours?

How do use price psychology to increase conversion and maintain premium pricing?

## PREVIOUS

 PROJECTSHow do you sell more of a "Christmas" product at a new time of year?

What is the psychology of your home, its value and making improvements?

How do you apply behavioural nudges to improve mobile app downloads?

What are the different psychological drivers for health products and how do you practically apply them?

How can you persuade senior financial services decision-makers to take on a security product to sell to their customers


Practical
Behavioural Nudges


The Science of Attention


Psychological Profiles


The Psychology of Money

## PSYCHOLOGY AND TOUGH TIMES



$$
\odot_{\odot} \& \odot
$$

## FEAR OR <br> ANGER?

A study looked at fear vs anger as a response to the 2008 recession, and found:

- our perception of whether someone is responsible for a threat is a key determinant of whether we react to that threat with fear or anger
- anger is the more likely emotional reaction if the threat has an identifiable external cause.
- anger is more likely than fear among individuals who believe that the actor responsible should be under their control and should care about their welfare

These create very different mindsets as a result.

## FEAR OR ANGER?

Fear vs Anger Response

- Fear makes us more risk-averse and vigilant (avoidance/surveillance systems)
- Anger increases our readiness to address the threat directly while relying on previously learned routines (approach/disposition systems).
e.g. some studies show that it is anger rather than fear that leads citizens to engage in protest behaviour by taking part in demonstrations or in other forms of political mobilization


## FEAR OR ANGER?

THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF THE LAST RECESSION IN 2008

Wagner, M. Fear and Anger in Great Britain: Blame Assignment and Emotional Reactions to the Financial Crisis. Polit Behav 36, 683-703 (2014). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-013-9241-5
(van Zomeren et al. 2004; Leach et al. 2006; Smith et al. 2008).



## FEAR IN THE THEATER OF THE MIND

DIFFERENTIAL FEAR CONDITIONING WITH IMAGINED STIMULI

From fears of monsters in the closet to the internal replay of traumatic events of our past, mental imagery plays an important role in how people acquire and generalize fear responses.

In other words, when fear acquired from one stimulus transfers to another stimulus.

Real as well as imagined images engage learning processes in similar ways.

In the study participants acquired fear conditioning to both viewed and imagined objects, as measured via self-reported fear responses and skin conductance.

After acquiring fear for either visual or imagined objects, people's fear responses generalized to the corresponding imagined or visual objects, respectively.

In other words, people become conditioned to respond with real fear to imagined stimuli.

## FEAR IN THE THEATER OF THE MIND

DIFFERENTIAL FEAR CONDITIONING WITH IMAGINED STIMULI


SEEDS OF
OPTIMISM


During times of recession
Millennials lower their expectations regarding the work-life balance and social atmosphere.

However, their expectations regarding job content, training, career development, and financial rewards remain high, suggesting that these expectations are largely embedded within the generation

Perhaps indicative of a "heads down" and work response to recessionary pressures and concerns. Approach, rather than avoidance

## SEEDS OF OPTIMISM

MILLENNIALS' CAREER PERSPECTIVE AND EXPECTATIONS

OPTIMISM
IS GOOD
FOR YOU

Previous studies reported that more optimistic individuals are less likely to suffer from chronic diseases and die prematurely.

One study further suggests that optimism is specifically related to 11 to $15 \%$ longer life span, on average, and to greater odds of achieving "exceptional longevity," that is, living to the age of 85 or beyond.

These relations were independent of socioeconomic status, health conditions, depression, social integration, and health behaviors (e.g., smoking, diet, and alcohol use).

## OPTIMISM IS GOOD FOR YOU

Lewina O. Lee lewina@bu.edu, Peter James, Emily S. Zevon, +4 , Eric S. Kim, Claudia Trudel-Fitzgerald, Avron Spiro III, Francine Grodstein, and Laura D. Kubzansky-4
https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas. 1900712116

Optimism is related to numerous work/life choices:

More optimistic people work harder, expect to retire later, are more likely to remarry, invest more in individual stocks, and save more.

Interestingly, however, moderate optimists display reasonable financial behavior, whereas extreme optimists display financial habits and behavior that are generally not considered prudent.

Moderate optimists work significantly harder.

BUT NOT TOO MUCH OPTIMISM!

Extreme optimists, on the other hand, work significantly fewer hours.

Lewina O. Lee lewina@bu.edu, Peter James, Emily S. Zevon, +4 , Eric S. Kim, Claudia Trudel-Fitzgerald, Avron Spiro III, Francine Grodstein, and Laura D. Kubzansky-4
https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas. 1900712116

PATRICK FAGAN
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## HELLO!

6
$■$ Given name (e.g., Patrick) ■ Nickname (e.g., Pat)


## THE POWER OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE




## LIMITED CONSCIOUS MINDS

Had to Memorise...


Chose Cake


2-digit no. (e.g. 62)

7-digit no. (e.g. 4811505)


## THE \$300M BUTTON



The site used to ask people to register in order to continue with their purchase (presumably in an attempt to increase loyalty). By simply changing "register" to "continue" and removing the barrier to purchase, sales went up phenomenally. One shopper told the UX team, "I'm not here to enter into a relationship. I just want to buy something."

What People Would Pay for a Beer in...


Evaluation When Package had Product on the..


Amount Spent on Wine When the Store Played...



## HEURISTICS IN ACTION



## HEURISTICS IN ACTION

Present Bias If you put it off, you're less likely to actually do it

Loss Aversion Reminding you of everything you'll lose if you leave

Left-to-Right Bias
Our eyes look at the bottom right last of all


## THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO NUDGE


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## THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO NUDGE


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## THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO NUDGE



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Marketing Cookies (optional)

(a) Button-Same


(c) Button-Highlight-Reject

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This website requires some cookies to function. If you allow us, we will addition
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Marketing Cookies (optional


65\%
(b) Button-Highlight-Accept

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und
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Accepu All
(d) Link-End

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## MINDSPACE



## BearingPoint. Institute



## EVEN WHEN YOU THINK WE'D BE RATIONAL...



Fig. 3. A panel of three graphs. The top graph shows the overlap of the day-to-day difference of DJIA values (blue: $\mathbb{Z}_{D_{t}}$ ) with the GPOMS' Calm time series (red: $\mathbb{Z}_{X_{t}}$ ) that has been lagged by 3 days. Where the two graphs overlap the Calm time series predict changes in the DJIA closing values that occur 3 days later. Areas of significant congruence are marked by gray areas. The middle and bottom graphs show the separate DJIA and GPOMS' Calm time series.

Standardized Residual Index Level and Log-Ins


Fig. 3 S\&P 500 index and Vanguard account logins. The figure plots standardized residuals from the following two regressions: LOGINS $_{t}=\alpha_{0}+\sum_{i=\text { TWRF }}^{1, i}$ DAY $Y_{i, t}+\alpha_{2}$ TREND $_{t}+\alpha_{3}$ VOLUME $_{t}+e_{t}$ and INDEX ${ }_{t}=b_{0}+\Sigma_{i=\text { TWRF }}^{1, i}$ DAY $_{i, 1}+b_{2}$ RREND $_{t}+e_{t}$ whe LOGINS is the daily number of vanguard investor account logins, $D A Y_{i, t}$ are day-of-the-week dummy variables, $\operatorname{TREND}_{t}$ is a linear time trend, $\operatorname{VOLUME}_{t}$ is the S\&P 500 trading volume, and INDEX $X_{t}$ is the level of the S\&P 500 stock index. The sample period is January 2, 2006 to June 30, 2008

## WE'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE!





STATUS

Average Purchase Intention ("He Who Dies with the Most Toys Wins")
■ Control Group ■Morality Salient

"Individuals may avoid experiencing existential anxiety by making an enduring mark on the world, for example, through acquisition of items that symbolize high value within their culture.


GUCCI



## Watches of Switzerland sales surge as luxury demand 'remains robust'

By Luke Tugby | 16 August 2022

## THE HAVES AND THE HAVE-YACHTS

Luxury ships attract outrage and political scrutiny. The ultra-rich are buying them in record numbers.

By Evan Osnos
July 18, 2022



A study of COVID-19 behaviour found that people stockpiled, on average, approximately 6 items, and toilet paper was the item most commonly procured. Approximately 25\% of the sample acquired a gun or other weapon in response to the pandemic and approximately $20 \%$ of participants stockpiled gold or other precious metals.


Gold is a proven hedge against inflation - although note that gold jewellery is purchased more for hedonic and symbolic purposes, while coins and bars are purchased for utilitarian investment goals.

There is empirical evidence for an intertemporal substitution effect, where people spend more money today because they expect goods to be more expensive tomorrow. Other studies have also shown that expenditure increases during inflation, perhaps since people 'feel' they have more money to spend.

# "LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE." 



ESCAPE

Beer Consumed (ml)
—Control Group —Morality Salient




"In the past year a more unpredictable and unstable world is shaping the future, leading people to seek refuge in a more comfortable past. Zoomers are fascinated by the pre-internet world, we have seen that with the Y2K revival and the 80's revival before that, both of which are still popular thanks to TikTok trends (focused on music and fashion) and popular shows."
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## OF COURSE, THERE IS MORE ONLINE SHOPPING

## Amazon reports biggest prime day in history

15 July, 2022 | by Natalie Fresen
Amazon shoppers bought more than 300 million items during this year's Prime Day sale, up from roughly 250 million in 2021, making it the biggest Prime Day event in Amazon's history, the company announced Thursday.

## Closely related

Online sales closely tracked mobility trends during the pandemic. (deviation from trends)

Time at home, Google Mobility


[^0]Online sales share of total


IMF

## Online retail

The share of retail done online is settling back in line with prepandemic trends across various economies.

United States, retail online share


Brazil, retail online share


Searches for cheap holidays have grown globally by over 400\% year over year.

TOP SEARCHES INCLUDE:
cheap holidays 2022
cheap holidays abroad
cheap holidays to turkey
cheap holidays to spain

Searches for cheap and
best have grown globally
by over 40\% year over
year.
TOP SEARCHES INCLUDE:
cheap and best salon
cheap and best restaur
cheap and best restauraut nearn
cheap and best mobble
cheap and best laptop

Searches for designer
outlet have grown globally by over 90\% year over year.

TOP SEARCHES INCLUDE:

## mcarthurglen designer outle:

 designer outlet roermyork designer outlet

Searches for specials this week have grown globally by over 60\% year over year

TOP SEARCHES INCLUDE:
shoprite specials this week pick $n$ pay specials this week Idi specials this week
a Walmart Jumps Most Since 2020 After Tempering Gloom Over Profit

- Company sees progress on inventory bloat, supply-chain costs
- CEO touts boost from wealthier customers, falling fuel prices
. During times of economic crises, consumers do tend to be more cautious and reflective on average, for example doing more research and price-comparison (see Puelles, Diaz-Bustamante \& Carcelen, 2016).
- Einarsdottir (2016) summarised that economic crises result in more brand switching, more private label purchases, more retailer disloyalty, more price consciousness, more importance on quality and durability, fewer purchases in general, more postponing of purchases and hanging on to current goods, less impulsive buying, and more simplicity-seeking (including growing your own food, cooking at home, and focusing on health and fitness).
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## NUMBERS ARE FAIRLY NEW TO US



A woman spills coffee on herself at McDonalds, and requires a skin graft. She decides to sue McDonalds. How much compensation should she get?

## m


t

THE SAME APPLIES TO PRICES



In 1994, Stella Liebeck asked for $\$ 2.9 \mathrm{~m}$. She got $\$ 640 \mathrm{k}$ - well above the norm. The skin graft cost \$11. Malouff and Schutte (1989) found the amount awarded in a case is often anchored towards the lawyer's demands.

## m.

## ANCHORING IN ACTION

A stall in California sold CDs next to t-shirts; customers could pay whatever they wanted for the CDs.


## THE DECOY EFFECT



57\%



60\%



13\%
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## How can 'reference prices' be improved?

## 4

We've price matched hundreds of products.
Look out for the red bubble in-store.
TESCO
Every lorte Adps

## CONGRUENCE EFFECT

## Was Now Was $\$ 10 \quad \$ 5$ $\$ 10$ <br> Now \$5

## NUMERICAL COGNITION

## \$3,500,000

\$3,617,265

## INCREASING PRICE TO－99 CAN INCREASE SALES！



Representativeness：We associate prices ending in－99s with discounts，so when we see a－99 ending，we assume it must be a promotion．

Anchoring：We anchor to the first digit we see on the left，and fail to fully adjust for those on the right（so $£ 3.99$＇feels＇less than $£ 4.00$ ）．

Obfuscation：When the digits on the right are printed in a smaller font（e．g．， $£ 3 .{ }^{99}$ ），the right－digit bias is exacerbated．

Phonemes：The lighter，higher sounds in ninety－nine（like＂teeny tiny＂）are associated with smallness．

## We assume yellow is a discount, even when it isn't

## 誉 <br> UNIT PRICE

RETAIL PRICE

16 OZ ALCOHOL BAASED


## THE VALUE OF 'FREE'




Raghubir (2004) showed that once a "free" product has been bundled together with another product and offered for one price, consumers are willing to pay less for the free product when it is sold alone.

Kamins, Folkes, and Fedorikhin (2009) found that describing one of the products in a bundle as free decreased the price consumers were willing to pay for each product when these were sold individually.

## TIME DISCOUNTING

\% Choosing a More Enjoyable Movie to Watch..


Today


Tomorrow

37\%


The day after tomorrow

$$
\begin{gathered}
\$ 15 \\
\text { today }
\end{gathered}
$$

$$
=
$$


in a month

PRICE FAIRNESS


## PRICE FAIRNESS

- If people feel they have been unjustly treated, they may shop elsewhere, even if they end up paying higher prices (Bechwati \& Morrin, 2003).
- When a price goes up, consumers automatically assume unfair motives, such as profits (Bolton et al., 2003).
- A price rise is seen as fair when covering necessary costs, but not when it increases profits (Kahneman et al., 1986).
- When rising a price, estimates of profits can be reduced by explicitly mentioning labour costs - the more detail the better (Bolton et al., 2003).
- Describing costs which are beyond one's control (e.g. climate) make for a more acceptable price increase (Vaidyanathan \& Aggarwal, 2003).
- As does the price increase benefitting poor agents (e.g. Fair Trade; Gielissen et al., 2008).


## THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENTION

"Occasionally we attach signs marked 'Everyday Low Price' in front of two randomly selected brands in several product categories throughout our store, leaving their prices unchanged... sales typically double for those brands..."<br>Manager of the H.E.B. Grocery Co.<br>(From Inman et al., 1990)

## SO...



Provide a Route to Status and Control


Provide Certainty and Escape


Nudge Perceptions of Good Value

## IT'S NOT ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL


the trusted way
to borrow cash


Dear
Congratuluations! You are now eligible for a special interest rate on a
cash loan trom
cash loan from 1
come in by 31 October 2003
You can use this cash to pay off a more expensive debt, or for
anything else you want.
Enjoy low monthly repayments with this offer! Here is one
Example of a loan you can get under this offer:

| Loan <br> Amount | Loan <br> Term | Monthly <br> Repayment |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| R1000.00 | 4Months | R379.90 |

Loans avaiable in other amounts. There are no hidden costs. What you see is what you pay.

## How to apply:

Bring your ID book and latest payslip to your usual branch, by 31 october 2003 and ask for

Customer Consultant



## DIFFERENT PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPES EXIST

What type of person lives in this bedroom...?


## PERSONALITY IS OBSERVABLE THROUGH CUES




## DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS

Openness Conscientiousness Extraversion Agreeableness Neuroticism

## THEY CAN BE QUITE ACCURATE



## RESONANT AESTHETICS



Openness
( $r=.354, r=.307$ )


Conscientiousness ( $r=.242, r=.157$ )


Extraversion ( $\mathrm{r}=.285, r=.261$ )


Disagreeableness ( $\mathrm{r}=.261, r=.210$ )


## RESONANT NUDGES

Change in Likelihood of Visiting a Restaurant if it has Many Reviews (vs. No Reviews)


## RESONANT NUDGES

|  |  |
| :---: | :---: |
| Subway Northwood Hills |  |
| 10-20 min - American - Sandwiches . C <br> $\star 4.2 \operatorname{Good}(500+) \cdot 0.60$ miles away . <br> $£ 9.00$ minimum - $£ 0.99$ delivery - Get $f$ | at 22:00 livery |
| (1) Into <br> Into Map alerges sand hyiene ating | > |
| Nearly there! <br> © <br> rewards card <br> days left • E15 minimum spend • Age <br> estricted items excluded |  |
|  | Change |
| $20 \%$ off entire menu - For orders over E10. T\&Cs apply |  |
| Please refer to this webpage to find all information on allergens https://www.subway.com/en-GB/MenuNutrition/Nutrition |  |
| (1) Spend E10.00, get 20\% off |  |



Emotional Response (1-5)
■ Control ■ Experimental


## PSYCHOMETRIC SEGMENTATION

Fighters | Psychometrics


Fighters | Framing



## THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME...



Dance like no one's watching (but they totally are)


Low Extraversion


Beauty doesn't have to shout


BEHAVIOURAL RESPONSE TO NUDGE IMPROVES MACHINE LEARNING ALGORITHM


## Capuchin כ


[^0]:    Source: Google Community Mobility Reports and Mastercard Economics Institute.

