



# The **Human** Factor.

BEHAVIOURAL PLANNING FOR MARKETERS

1. Introduction
2. How we research consumer behaviour
3. Incorporating key areas of behavioural understanding into marketing and media
4. Conclusion

## About the authors



Total Media is the only media agency built on the principles of Behavioural Science, from our people to our methodology and our use of technology. Today's business environment is becoming increasingly challenging and disrupted and we can no longer rely on just traditional approaches to understand, target and influence people.

We produce award-winning media strategies based on the knowledge of people's behaviour; how people think, feel and act. Behave, our specialist behavioural consultancy, uncovers these insights by deploying a full range of research capabilities, from ethnography to neuroscience to behavioural economics to data analytics. It's through this behavioural approach that we deliver authentic, creative and effective solutions that drive sustainable growth for our clients.

## Posterscope

Posterscope is the original Out-of-Home media agency. We have a deep understanding of what people think, feel, and do out of the home, making us experts in reaching and influencing audiences in the physical world. At a time when attention is in short supply, we help our clients to Be Seen.

We have partnered with Total Media for more than 20yrs and have worked with them to develop behavioural OOH planning frameworks that identify the right time, place and context to capture people's attention and influence their brand decisions.



1

# Introduction



# Why understanding behavioural science is important

Behavioural science is a multi-disciplinary field that draws insights from psychology, economics, sociology and other related fields to better understand human behaviour and the decisions we make. It helps us to identify what consumers do, why they do it, and most importantly how we can influence what they do.

Within marketing our ultimate job is to identify, understand, respond to, and influence consumer behaviour - to buy, to pay more, to download, to subscribe, to donate, or the many other myriad of decisions we want consumers to make.

Behavioural science is essential to this because it is the most rigorous, evidence-based information and framework we have for understanding consumer behaviour and how we influence it. Currently too much of our analysis is still flawed and often built on what people say they do rather than actually what they do.

Behavioural science acknowledges that our time and attention are limited, we are creatures of habit, and don't have the mental capacity to process all of the information around us all the time. Decision making therefore, is impacted by a wide variety of factors.

Understanding our needs, attitudes, motivations, and decision making, and how they change within different contexts and environments, has huge implications for society, government, and business. Its principals are

already being employed across both public and private sector organisations in disciplines such as product design, social policy, and HR.

We put this report together to explore how different types of behavioural influences help us to better understand how we make decisions and to show you how that learning can be applied to your marketing planning to better influence consumers and build better marketing solutions.

## Behavioural science should underpin all aspects of marketing

- **Product:** developing products and services that people actually want, will buy, will experience positively, and will buy frequently.
- **Price:** understanding how to get consumers to accept higher prices and still trial the brand or buy the brand as frequently.
- **Place:** understanding what will get consumers to notice a product on a shelf, convert on a website.
- **Promotion:** understanding what type of messaging will increase the short term and long-term likelihood of brand purchase.
- **Media:** understanding the impact of location and the influence of context when delivering brand messages.



Because of this, an understanding of behavioural science is key across all areas of marketing, and we will show you how key elements of human behaviour should inform your marketing strategy - from the product you develop, to the message you use to promote it, to the place, context, moment and media that message is consumed in or on.



# 2

## How we research consumer behaviour



# The danger of trusting claimed behaviour

Consumers are not always reliable at describing their own behaviour, what they want, or what will influence them.

A great example of this can be found with the launch of 'New Day' a new newspaper launched by Trinity Mirror in the mid 2010's.

They undertook a significant amount of quantitative and qualitative research to find out what newspaper readers wanted from a newspaper. Off the back of this they developed and released New Day - which set out to be a positive politically neutral paper that focused on long form articles.

It was launched in February 2016 and [closed](#) at the beginning of May 2016. Sales were at 30k a day when they needed to be at 200k a day to breakeven.

Talking about the launch Simon Fox, CEO Trinity Mirror [said](#):

*"I think because, at the end of the day, what consumers told us they would do, and what they actually did, were different things."*

So how can a behavioural approach mitigate for some of the inaccuracies of traditional research?

A great example of how a behavioural approach to planning can be more effective was when content streaming service BritBox was launching in the UK.

They found that their quantitative and qualitative research, which relied on self-reporting, suggested the audience who would be most interested in the proposition was an audience of 25-44s who already had a SVOD subscription. But the traditional survey simply captured those who were most likely in a survey to get another SVOD subscription. It failed to recognise who was most likely to get BritBox in a real-world context.

In addition, the key players in the market, Apple, Disney+, Netflix and Amazon Prime (and many other smaller providers) were also going after that audience - with billions of pounds worth of content and hundreds of millions in ad spend.

As behavioural science would tell you self-reporting alone is not a reliable way to understand consumer behaviour, and it is more effective to understand people's decisions within the contexts that they will be made.

**So, an analysis of actual behaviour in context focused on:**

- Who were the current viewers of BritBox biggest shows at launch?
- Sentiment analysis of people posting on social media about BritBox by demographic and affinity
- Market analysis of where competitors were targeting and identification of the gap
- Analysis of trends in SVOD behaviour and habits - biggest growth rate coming from 55+

This approach created a totally different audience for targeting - British Content fans who watched the shows posted positively, had growing SVOD rates, and liked BritBox in the context of the other SVOD options available.

This new audience of British Content Fans was run at the same time as the original target of 25-44s with 1 existing streaming service.

As a result, the audience built on behavioural planning had a CPA that was 2.5 times cheaper and ended up driving 85% of the customers at launch (vs. 15% of the original audience).

Finally, it should be noted there are numerous ways to write surveys that incorporate behavioural science learnings to better illuminate what people's behaviour will actually be. For example, people are better at estimating what percentage of their future purchases will be in a certain shop, than estimating how often they have shopped somewhere historically.

People are much better at telling you their recent behaviour, or behaviour in specific contexts, than estimating their overall behaviour.



1

2

3

How we research consumer behaviour

# The danger of relying on too few sources of information about consumer behaviour

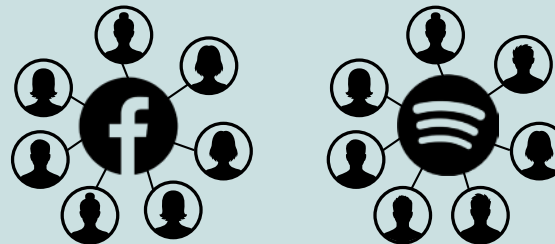
There's a huge amount of data available to marketers. We know what age, gender, life-stage people are at. We can see what they buy, what they say, and where they say it, we can even track their movements.

But data points such as attitudes or demographic profiling can be a poor indicator of actual behaviour, and it's a mistake to assume that data drawn across all touchpoints represent the majority of customer journeys entirely accurately.

It is not that behavioural science should take the place of more traditional data sources, claimed data can indeed be very useful, but that it should be used in conjunction with them to help hone the target audience and inform strategic and executional choices.

By combining our data, and understanding it through a behavioural lens, we can get much closer to understanding how audiences think, act and respond to stimuli.

A famous example that illustrates this is marketing Katy Perry. If you just use her Facebook fans as a guide to her audience, then it is overwhelmingly female. But if you use Spotify listening as a guide to her audience, it is a 50 50 split.



Neither piece of data gives a full picture by itself. Facebook shows the people who are publicly her fans, and therefore who it is worth marketing her merchandise to. Spotify shows who listens to Katy Perry and therefore who it is worth marketing her album releases to.

By combining different data sets and research methodologies you start to get a less biased, and more complete and nuanced picture of who you should target, with what message, and when.

# The benefit of using tools that incorporate neuroscience, behavioural science and ethnography

There has been a significant growth in new behavioural science technology and data that can help grow the sources of insight for understanding consumer behaviour and feed behavioural planning. For example:

- Lab based and remote biometric and neuroscience tools that capture how consumers respond to external stimuli such as sight, sound and touch based on biological and cognitive reaction. This captures consumers' genuine reactions rather than having to ask them how they feel and can be used to improve creative, websites, packaging and products
- Tools that enable you to analyse the emotion, sentiment and personality of any text from reviews, social posts, conversations, CRM data etc.
- Mobile tracking data that anonymously captures consumers' location and mobile usage (such as search) enabling you to target, track and correlate real behaviour
- Ethnographic tools that enable us to cheaply and effectively capture and observe consumer behaviour in real time, and then get qualitative feedback based on the observation

By bringing these additional behavioural research tools into their armoury marketers can widen their sources of information on consumer behaviour, to supplant or complement claimed research, getting them to a much closer and genuine understanding of consumers' reactions, wants and influences.

This is illustrated by work undertaken for social media app TikTok, who wanted to improve the reach and efficiency of their media activity against their target audience of 18 - 32s as they tried to grow beyond their young teenage user base.

## A range of emerging behavioural insight tools were used to find the real challenge:



Biometric data showed that the target audience disliked their current advertising and it actively put them off downloading the app



Ethnographic tools discovered that they also found the content on the app unappealing and it quickly turned them off



Quantitative and qualitative research informed by the behavioural research dug deeper into their dislikes and dissatisfaction

By going beyond traditional claimed research and using emerging behavioural technologies and data sources it was possible to identify the real challenges for TikTok.

## But importantly it also found the solution by:



Providing a deep dive analysis of the actual social behaviours of this audience by market revealed the types of content and content creators they responded to and the potential social communities of 18 - 32s that could be tapped into



Sense checking this with biometric analysis ensured the new context would work

Influencer content was created to replace the existing advertising and a content creator strategy was developed for growing the type of content that would attract and keep 18 - 32 audiences. So, they had a campaign and a product that would work.





3

# Incorporating key areas of behavioural understanding into marketing and media



# Using behavioural science we can significantly improve our process for how we research and understand consumers.

But behavioural science can also arm marketers with a bank of researched behavioural biases that can be used by marketers to:

- Inspire powerful ideas that can transform the performance of brands
- Make small but powerful tweaks that can significantly improve marketing performance in key areas

There are arguably too many biases to go through in a report like this, but we have pulled out some key ones to show the power they can have. We have also provided well known case studies on using them so that you can see how they can be practically applied.



## Social Norms

Social norms are rules that determine what is 'acceptable' and what is not for certain groups of individuals. We often underestimate how much we are influenced by social norms, and studies have shown that one of the most powerful motivators to change behaviour is the suggestion that everyone is doing it.

This analysis suggests that changing any human behaviour requires us not to change someone's individual opinion but make them feel that everyone else around them has changed theirs.

Obama used this tactic when looking to increase voter turnout - he issued a simple press release stating that 'A record turnout expected' at the polls that year.

This notion can work without mentioning other people. Speeding signs offer an interesting example of this. A frowning face, as opposed to a speed camera, is not only more immediate, but it evokes the notion in someone that they are breaking a social norm, which is more effective than the threat of a speeding fine, at reducing drivers speed.



For many brands there is great value in making it seem like everyone else is buying their product or service. This can be done with simple tweaks to copy in ads that emphasise how many people have bought already.

Brands can however build social norms into their products and strategies in much bigger ways. For example, this has been seen in the headphones & portable music market. Firstly, when iPod launched they used distinctive white headphones, that were heavily featured in the advertising, which meant that people noticed how many other people had an iPod.

This approach was matched by Beats headphones who owned the distinctive red colour for their headphones. They also gave out the headphones for free at the 2012 Olympic games building up a social norm around the best athletes using the headphones.

Sports nutrition brand Maximuscle provided free water bottles to customers so that they could use them in the gym, creating a social norm that gym focused people use the Maximuscle product. This was run alongside OOH ads talking about people and celebrities using Maximuscle. Interestingly it took almost 4 years for this activity to reach an inflection point where they became a perceived social norm and sales skyrocketed.

OOH can also be really powerful by helping brands to localise their social norms. A famous example of this comes from the Nudge Unit who sent a variety of letters by Revenue and Customs reminding people to pay their outstanding taxes and those which stressed other people living in the same area had already paid theirs had a higher return rate.

Digital OOH can apply this successfully to locations including:

- Localising social norms by saying how many people in the nearby area have already given blood significantly increasing blood donations
- Cadbury using OOH outside supermarkets (Source: JCDecaux EPOS Research Tesco Cadbury's Dairy Milk February 2015) to say what the favourite chocolate in that area was (and recommending similar alternatives as well)
- Subway localising people's favourite Subway sandwich creating a norm for people in that area eating Subway

One final consideration with social norms is that they can work in reverse too. This is often really important for government or brand campaigns that want to reduce negative behaviours. By emphasising the scale of the problem you can actually make the problem worse as the main message people hear is that it's okay if they do it as everyone else is. As such, if you want to reduce smoking, binge drinking, littering, water usage, or any other objective, it is often better to let people know how unusual their behaviour is, or how many other people are adopting more positive behaviours that you want them to emulate.



## Making the choice easy and the choice overload effect

Behavioural science teaches us that people's ability to choose a brand is often just as important as their motivation to pick that brand. As such, brands should always be thinking about how they can be more easily bought.

This can take the form of behavioural UX on their website (something that should be a hygiene factor as it can have a significant impact on completion and sales rates), to finding new distribution channels, to reaching consumers with ads at moments when they can act on the message.

But alongside these more traditional methods, brands should think about how they can make their purchase a simple choice. This is because too much choice or choice overload can overwhelm and confuse people making it feel difficult to make a decision. And often when faced with overwhelming choice consumers decide to make no choice, rather than put in the effort to make the right one.

In the year 2000, psychologists Sheena Iyengar from Columbia University and Mark Lepper from Stanford University conducted a notable study focused on jams. Their research explored the impact of varying jam choices on consumer behaviour. During an ordinary day at a local food market, participants encountered a display table featuring an extensive selection of 24 different types of jams. On another day, the same food market presented participants with a limited array of only 6 jam choices.

Iyengar and Lepper discovered that while the larger display table, showcasing 24 jams, generated more curiosity among shoppers, it resulted in significantly fewer actual purchases compared to the smaller display table (approximately ten times fewer purchases, to be precise).

This study has not always been replicated in additional research. But it provides a potential counter intuitive insight that sometimes consumers prefer less choice. Using that insight of choice overload the Chief Digital Officer of clothing company American Apparel tested having fewer tabs on the American Apparel website. By changing their homepage from 9 tabs to 4 tabs they increased conversion by 12% driving a significant increase in sales.

Advertising giant Rory Sutherland has frequently talked about the subject, with his client BA who also improved website conversion by offering fewer flight options when people search for holidays.

## Price relativity, anchoring and priming

One of the key areas marketers need to think about is how they should price their products. There is a large range of research that can help marketers make these decisions including quantitative approaches that range in complexity from simple surveys, to more detailed conjoint analysis or statistical modelling from econometrics - that over time can capture the impact of brand on reducing price elasticity.

Behavioural science however, can introduce ideas, small and big, that can change how consumers interpret your price - causing significant jumps in potential profitability.

These methods are all helpful and can drive significant growth in profit either by finding the correct price, or with econometrics helping justify a longer-term branding approach that reduces price elasticity.

One example of this is by creating a comparison set that changes how the price is perceived. Dan Ariely talks about a great example of this in his book Dollars and Sense. In it he describes Italian diamond dealer Salvador Assael trying to sell Tahitian black pearls as a form of jewellery. He didn't sell a single one.

He then convinced his friend, jeweller Harry Winston, to feature his pearls in a Fifth Avenue store window surrounded by diamonds and other precious stones. In no time they were a hit. Prices skyrocketed. A year before they had been worthless, and now they were worth a fortune. Because they had been introduced in the context of expensive stones, everyone assumed they were worth a lot.

Brands can learn from this. Famous examples include Nespresso launching and making their price comparison the cost of takeaway coffee, rather than homemade coffee, or [Seedlip](#) launching alongside alcohol brands rather than the more similar cordials - and as such able to set their price 15 times higher than cordial because the price looks reasonable when compared to spirits.

This emphasises the importance of using premium media at launch. If it's the first place consumers see your brand it will help establish the comparison set they use in their minds. The right context lands the type of comparisons you want.

This has been proven in OOH with a study on wristwatches which showed that more expensive formats (a premium 48 sheet compared to 6 sheets) influenced consumers to believe that a watch was worth much more. With a limited understanding of what makes a watch expensive, we infer the value from the type of media used (a form of contextual bias).

This shift in price perception can also happen outside of launches. [Jacob's mallows](#) (little biscuit bases, covered in chocolate, topped with jam, then covered in marshmallow and coconut) were in the biscuit aisle where they seemed expensive. So they moved them to the cake aisle where their comparative price seemed cheap. This significantly grew their sales by anchoring their price to a new context.

There are lots of other ways brands can use behavioural science to get consumers to accept higher prices:

- How brands state their price can impact how consumers respond. By showing the price per day or week, rather than per month or year, brands can come across as cheaper
- Dropping the pound, euro or dollar sign from price lists can reduce the perception of pain from the cost meaning consumers accept higher costs
- Adding expensive options in price lists can shift consumers to pick the best value option rather than the cheapest increasing the total price they are prepared to pay

Finally, price can actually change how a consumer perceives a product. For example, studies have shown that painkillers become more effective when they are more expensive, and wine becomes more enjoyable and energy drinks become more effective as the price increases<sup>2</sup>.

The reverse of this is that brands can significantly harm the experience of their product by offering price promotions that are too high - and cause consumers to think there must be a reason the product is reduced.

2. Source: 'Placebo Effects of Marketing Actions: Consumers May Get What They Pay For' by Baba Shiv, Ziv Carmon, and Dan Ariely, Journal of Marketing Research 383 Vol. XLII (November 2005), pp. 383-393. One of Ariely and his team's most ingenious experiments to show that when drinking a soft drink meant to increase mental sharpness, increasing the price of the drink actually seems to make people smarter.

## Habits and moments of change

Research suggests that on any given day, 45% of our decisions are habitual - made instinctively and consistently.

There is a huge opportunity here for brands. By tapping into habits, a product can become embedded into consumers' behaviour long term, driving frequent usage and purchase of their product from current customers and protecting their sales from competitors.

A famous example of a brand tapping into the power of habits is Febreze. When it was launched it had no scent and was marketed as a product to mask bad smells.

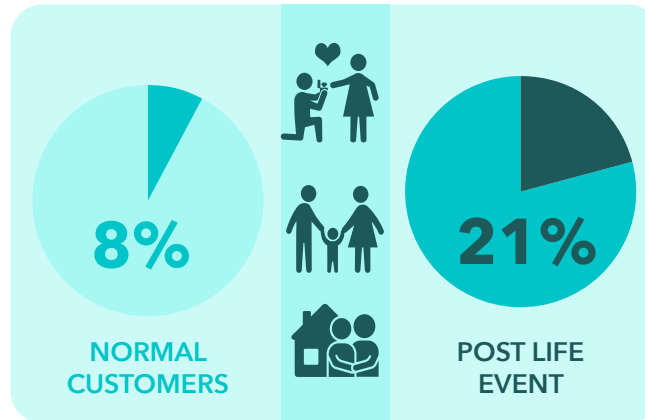
It was not successful.

But when Febreze added a nice smell and advertised the product as a spray to use at the end of cleaning - using the tagline 'two sprays & we're clean' - it became very successful. This is because it created a consistent trigger and reward for use by adding an additional product benefit with smart advertising campaign.

The trigger was when someone finished cleaning. The reward was the added nice smell, which customers came to associate with a cleaning job well done. By having a consistent trigger and reward, the product shifted from a failing launch to a billion-dollar brand.

Understanding habits can also help brands steal customers from competitors. It is extremely difficult to break existing customers habits. But research shows that during disruptive life events, such as getting married or divorced, having kids, starting a new job, or moving house, people are more likely to break habits and try new brands.

For example, the Universities of West England and Essex and the Department of Transport found that people who had got married were four times more likely to change cars than the population as a whole. And in Richard Shotton's book, The Choice Factory, a survey of 2,370 people showed that 8% of normal consumers switched brands recently, compared to 21% of consumers who had experienced a life event.



Life events create psychological uncertainty that requires a person to readjust and re-evaluate their current behaviour and consumption needs. When someone undergoes a life event it destabilises the environment they make decisions in, thereby disrupting their habits and causing more of their choices to be made consciously. Crucially this means consumer behaviour becomes more susceptible to change. Interestingly, research showed that the life event that had the biggest correlation with getting new streaming subscriptions was recently divorced men.

Brands can use this to attract new customers who would normally not switch brands.

For example, when the energy drink brand Carabao was launched they knew they had to overcome strong existing habits - with Mintel research showing that 92% of purchases in the energy drink category is habitual. So Carabao targeted consumers going through life events, such as getting a new job, getting married, having kids, or starting to train for a marathon. This strategy helped them achieve the first successful energy drink launch in the UK in 10 years.



## Targeting the right moment, moods and contexts

As well as showing us how numerous biases and contextual factors influence our decision-making, behavioural science also shows how biases and contexts impact how we perceive and process advertising messaging.

- Adverts that are relevant to a person's physical location are, according to the Good Push Index published by mobile app developer, Airship, up to 5 times more effective at driving response than generic advertising
- A study at the University of Amsterdam asked participants to flick through a newspaper and then answer questions about which ads they could remember. When the data was split by the reader's mood, the results were conclusive: readers in a good mood remembered 28% more ads than those in a bad mood
- People are more likely to remember ads that are not just contextually relevant but also mood relevant and fit with the emotion of the context they are consuming in
- Counterintuitively people are more likely to donate to charities when they are in a negative mood as the jolt of self-satisfaction about being a good person is more helpful in changing their mood from negative to positive.

One of the best studies in this field is the Point of Search study (conducted by Clear Channel, JC Decaux, Global and Posterscope) which used three research techniques (showing the benefit of multiple research approaches) to explore consumer search behaviour and how to optimise out-of-home advertising.



The research showed how consumer's search behaviour changes depending upon the context they are in:

- Mobile searches conducted out of home are more diverse and 38% more likely to lead to a purchase compared to searches conducted at home.
- People who spend more time out of home search 58% more on their smartphones than those who spend less time out of home, and they search across a wider range of products and services.
- Mobile searches out of home are triggered by location needs, senses, and feelings, and they add value and enhance consumer experiences. These searches are more likely to take place on weekdays and in the company of others.
- Optimising out-of-home media involves tailoring messages to needs and motivations and utilizing specific creative elements and dynamic digital out-of-home (DOOH) features.



## Conclusion

Behavioural science helps us to better understand the factors that drive consumers decision making and how we can influence them. Which at its core, is one of the fundamental purposes of marketing.

As such behavioural science should be essential to how we approach marketing, from the start of the process and how we think about researching our consumers and positioning, to providing heuristics that can transform how we price and communicate the brand, to a range of behavioural tools and biases that can help us improve creative or land media more effectively.

By embracing the insight, ideas, and inspiration that behavioural science can provide we can develop better solutions that will get consumers to notice our ads, respond to ads, buy our product, pay more for our brand, and ultimately help us beat the competition to grow revenue, profitability and market share.

We hope you have enjoyed this report and found plenty of food for thought.

If you'd like to find out more about how we can help your business or your brand to leverage the fundamentals of behavioural science in your marketing and media activity then please get in touch.

[pedro.martins@totalmedia.co.uk](mailto:pedro.martins@totalmedia.co.uk)

[alex.marks@posterscope.com](mailto:alex.marks@posterscope.com)



Posterscope