
The Grand Illusion of Marketing To A Consumer's Rational Mind

As an entrepreneur, businessman, marketer, Are you basing your strategies on 'insights' gained from the conscious mind?



Imagine you found a random beautiful girl, awestruck by her beauty. Though you have no intentions of offending her, do you struggle to control your mind from a small desperate gaze at her?

At the end of Buffet in a restaurant, the waiter brought you a Dessert — nice looking chocolate ice-cream. Immediately your intuitive mind or emotional system lights up with good feelings associated with the ice-cream. Though your rational mind provides you reasons to avoid the dessert, reminding you the fat, calories, You go, take and eat the ice-cream. You have fallen victim to intense pleasures of the cake. Did things similar to this have happened? Our brain values our feelings more than the facts(Rational thinking).

CHECK YOURSELF

Can we do a simple exercise? While sitting in a chair, lift your right leg and make a clockwise circle. Easy? Now lift your right hand and draw "6" in air using right index finger? What happened?

Two things would have happened. Your leg would have frozen or your leg started circling in the opposite direction. Why did this happen?

Making a circle with a foot is a conscious activity. Drawing 6 is a habitual activity(Learned behaviour) — we are used to this — this activity is controlled by our unconscious mind. From this exercise, we can understand that our sub-conscious or unconscious mind has greater control over our conscious mind. Dominant unconscious mind easily overrules our conscious side.

WOODEN PLANK AT A HEIGHT

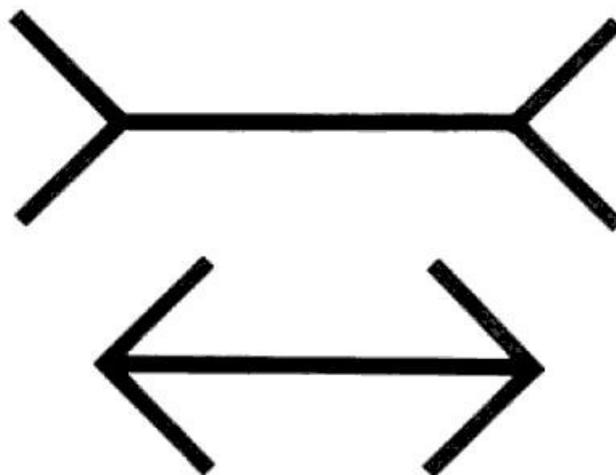
Don Norman in one of his books, mentions an example. Take a 6m long 1m narrow plank, keep it on the ground and walk the plank. Do you fear walking the plank? No. Perhaps, you would be fine to dance on them. Lift the plank 3m off the ground. You may still walk now....but with a little caution. Right? How about lifting the plank 100m off the ground? Though walking the plank remain same whatever the height of situation, do you feel confident to walk? Does fear dominate for some people? Though the rational mind(Reflective part of the brain) may tell you that it is safer to walk, your emotional and intuitive mind controls the mind against walking the plank.

BLIND TEST

A social science researcher did a blind test on taste. He gave two cups with one having Pepsi and the other having coke but didn't label them. Most people preferred the taste of Pepsi than coke, but when they go out to shops, they purchased Coke? How can one brand preferred in taste and another in the purchase? Coke visuals are stored in our sub-conscious mind, associated with past memories, experiences and taste.

MULLER-LYER ILLUSION

The first time, when you saw the following image, you would have felt that the top line is longer than the one below it.



As you can easily confirm them by measuring with a ruler, the horizontal lines are identical in length. Our intuitive mind jumped to the conclusion immediately stating the top line is longer in length. Once you

were made aware of the fact, by waking your conscious mind, you could create a new belief. Our conscious mind or rational mind is slow to react.

JETTA

A group of Japanese people were shown the images of Volkswagen Jetta. Everyone told the researcher that he or she considered the car as a utility vehicle to take them from A to B. He or she was happy with Toyota and proud of Japanese culture focusing on functionality.

Then the researchers asked the users to estimate the price of Jetta after showing them the car. They estimated the cost to be around 20k. When the researcher announced the cost is around 15k, everybody was surprised. Some of the users went ahead and bought the Jetta.

HIT OR SMASHED

One researcher did an experiment by showing a video clip of car accident to a group of people. She then asked the following question to some users- *How fast would you estimate the car was going when it 'hit' the other vehicle?* To other users, she asked the questions — *How fast would you estimate the car was going when it 'Smashed' the other vehicle?*

People who heard “Smashed” word estimated the higher speeds.

HABITS

Habits are formed by the gradual learning of associations between an action and their outcomes. A cue in the environment unconsciously activates the behaviour, before we are aware of what's happening. When you are in the supermarket and you are conversing on the phone, you would have sub-consciously picked up some products from the shelf. Our conscious interpretation of the behaviour occurs after it happens.

A fast food restaurant wanted to increase sales. Looking at the consumer's health conscious trends, studying the focus group, the restaurant developed a low fat/low carbohydrate sandwich. Taste tests with the focus group were successful. After spending enormous amounts in advertising, promotion, the sales of the healthy sandwich was dismal.

What happened? In focus group interviews, consumer's rational mind

knows that healthy food is better for her. Rational mind answered truthfully to the researcher's questions. He or she told that she would eat the healthy sandwich.

In reality—When he or she enters the fast food restaurant—there are many cues to activate a habitual behaviour. The smell of french fries—Smell of the burger—Visual images of nuggets—People eating pizza in the nearby table—One of the cues force me subconsciously activate the habitual behaviour—he or she goes and order whatever they are habituated. Before the conscious mind engaged, the behaviour has happened.

When the restaurant is crowded, you will just go and order combo lunch. Again, a habit based on the environmental cue.

From the above examples,

- It is clear that many processes in the brain occur automatically without involvement of our conscious mind.
- Most of our daily behaviour is governed by our intuitive mode. Once you see the cue, behaviour happens automatically due to the learned behaviour.
- Conscious minds are engaged only when we are in a novel situation. The conscious mind is the gateway to enter sub-conscious mind as we saw in Illusion example.
- **A Conscious or rational mind is in control is an illusion.**

Most of the marketers are focusing their product or communication towards User's conscious mind. As Pepsi and Jetta example illustrates, many consumers were not aware of their likings or dislikings. When you question and ask reasons about their likings, the users most often post-rationalise and make up evidence, offering some logical reasoning that seems plausible. You cannot rely on those replies. The conscious mind is designed to think up stories to try to explain the action of subconscious mind and make logical meaning of the hidden forces that guide the behaviour.

Marketers and researchers have to dig deep to unearth desires and motivations. Our communications, products have to cater to sub-conscious mind.

Research shows that people whose emotional mind or the limbic system is affected by accident were not able to make decisions in life. So, If you are focussing only on Conscious Mind, let me bow down to you.

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