

The Psychology of marketing, Pt. 2

Leveraging its principles to become a better marketer

pinkorange



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Introduction

Now that we've covered how Psychology can help you understand how consumers - particularly students behave, let's explore some ways that marketers use these insights to increase student enrollment.

When we study human behavior, there are a lot of market research firms that come up with the "classic principles" of how to trick consumers into spending money, signing up for an educational course, or joining a paid community. But there is more than one way to use Psychology in marketing, and many misinformed people.

In this guide, we cover some different approaches and apply the fundamentals of Psychology to illustrate how you can create more effective enrollment campaigns using Psychological techniques.

The Psychology of marketing is a vast field, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to using it effectively.

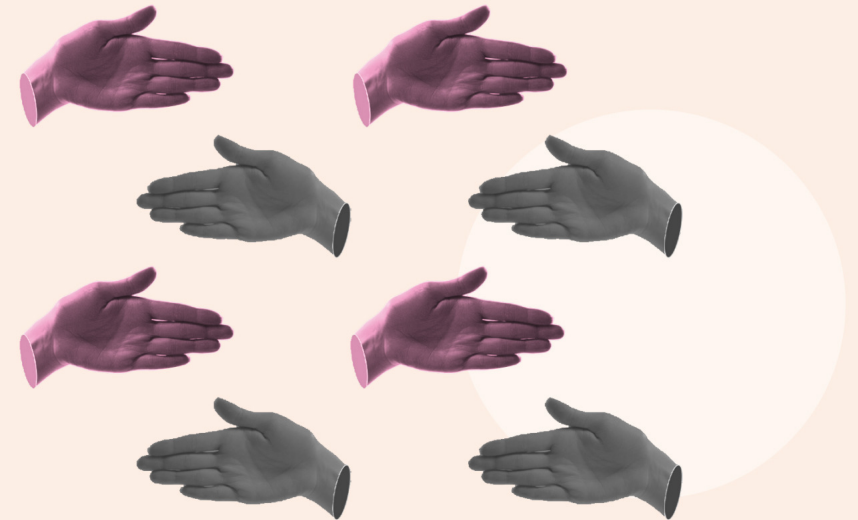
That said, there is a lot of overlap between marketing and Psychology. Many of the ideas we use daily share common ground with Psychological frameworks. What's more, becoming an expert on Psychology helps us learn even more about marketing.

Human beings are creatures of habits, and whatever you build good habits regularly makes you happy as per the famous quote "Happiness is a habit". The psychology behind it is that your brain is dependent on external sources to feel pleasure.

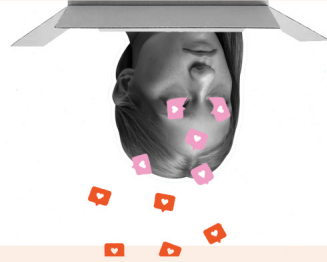
Once your brain is programmed to expect these pleasures, then the best way to achieve this happy state is by doing certain actions that are associated with these pleasures, especially the ones that have been done historically.

This essentially results in building a routine or a habit by triggering Behavior Routine Theory. Behavioral science and various scientific studies have shown that humans make more conscious decisions based on emotions rather than logic.

Now for the good part - how it all fits together to create a seamless puzzle, each piece representing an option backed by science, just waiting for the ed marketer to build.



Unpacking human behaviour



As an education marketer, you're likely familiar with the concept of human behavior. But have you ever wondered why we do the things we do? Or how this could apply to educational marketing campaigns?

In this chapter, we explore **what human behavior** is, and share ways that it affects our educational marketing efforts.

Concepts, methodologies and tools in marketing have remained unchanged for a relatively long period. However, changing market structures (e.g., offline to online, globalization, hyper-competitive environment, increasing demand) demand new marketing methodologies and tools that can adapt to this new situation (Hackley, 2009; Armstrong et al., 2018).

And that is exactly where education marketers come in with their ever-agile approach to “rolling with the punches”

What is human behavior?

Human behavior is the study of how people **think, feel, and behave**. It also includes the study of how we make **decisions, interact** with others and **learn**.

It's a broad topic that covers many other disciplines such as Psychology and Sociology.

It is possible to go beyond just understanding human behavior by applying it to marketing campaigns to reach your target audience more effectively.

Why does it matter for education marketers?

Human Behavior Science is an important aspect of education marketing because it helps you understand why people do the things they do, and how you can use that knowledge to create better student marketing campaigns.

The benefits of understanding human behavior

- **A better understanding of your target audience:**
Understanding the drivers behind people's decision-making processes helps you create content that resonates with them. This allows you to use more effective messaging in your advertising and other communications, which translates into higher conversion rates.
- **Increased efficiency when creating future campaign materials:**
Once you've identified the most effective ways to engage with students (and their parents), it becomes easier for you to plan future strategies for reaching out to these groups through new channels or with different messages.

How can you apply human behavior science to your marketing campaigns?

- Understand your audience
- Make it easy to take action
- Be consistent
- Be authentic and honest
- Use the right channels, at the right time, in the right way...
- Track and measure results

In the end, we all have a bias toward what we know.

A bias is the tendency to seek out information that is consistent with our beliefs and avoid information that contradicts them. We are all biased in some way, but often we are not aware of it.

Psychologists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman developed the concept of cognitive bias from their 1970s research into why people struggle to reason and judge objectively in certain situations.

Along with Paul Slovic, they published their early findings in their book, "Judgment Under Uncertainty."

Cognitive bias can be defined as a set of **predictable mental errors** that arise from our **limited ability** to process information **objectively**. It can result in illogical decisions, and it can cause you to **misjudge risks and threats**.

The researchers explained that cognitive bias is the tendency to make decisions or take action in an illogical way, caused by our values, memory, socialization, and other personal attributes.

There are numerous biases, affecting a wide range of behaviors including decision-making, judgment, beliefs, and social interactions. Bias can be a good thing - it helps us make decisions more quickly and efficiently than if we were to consider all available options.

For example, if you've decided that coffee tastes better than tea (which it does), then every time you encounter a decision between coffee or tea you will already have an answer ready.

If someone asks whether they should buy green apples or red apples for their apple pie recipe, your brain will immediately respond with "red". You don't even have to think about it because your brain has already decided that red apples are the best option for this scenario based on **experience** (i.e., tasting both types of apples).

That said, we need to remember that there are other factors involved in these decisions besides taste!

For example: what type of person do I want to appear like when eating my apple pie? Do I care more about being healthy than having fun at parties? How will people react if they see me eat green apples instead of red ones?

These questions might seem irrelevant when considering which type of apple tastes better but they may change how much enjoyment comes from eating something sweet after dinner each night.

The discipline of marketing has made great strides in developing and testing models related to markets, brands, channels, and consumer behavior. However, the discipline's continued relevance and academic value proposition founded on **theoretical and abstract research** are more important than ever as marketing managers (and scholars) face unprecedented marketplace and technological disruption. (Moorman et al. 2019).

Marketing may seem like a straightforward field, but there is a lot of complexity to it. It's not enough to just create content or build ads; you need to understand **how people make decisions and why they do what they do**.

This will help you make better decisions about what content to produce or where your budget should go next year so that you can reach your target audience more effectively.

Different types of cognitive bias

- **Confirmation bias:** Confirmation bias happens when you look for information that **supports your existing beliefs** and reject data that goes against what you believe. This can lead you to make biased decisions because you don't factor in all of the relevant information.

For example - if your prospect has grown up in a household filled with Harvard alumni, they will likely favor the institution. Why? Because they actively seek out reasons as to why the institution is right for them, and why others aren't.

- **Anchoring bias:** This bias is the tendency to **jump to conclusions** – that is, to base your final judgment on information gained early on in the decision-making process. Think of this as a “first impression” bias. Once you’ve heard “the anchor,” you’re likely to interpret it and make judgments based on it.

A prime example of this would be if your prospect has just started their research journey and is targeted (through a full-funnel approach) by a certain institution, they will very likely find themselves **anchored** to this institution, and judging others based on what they already know.

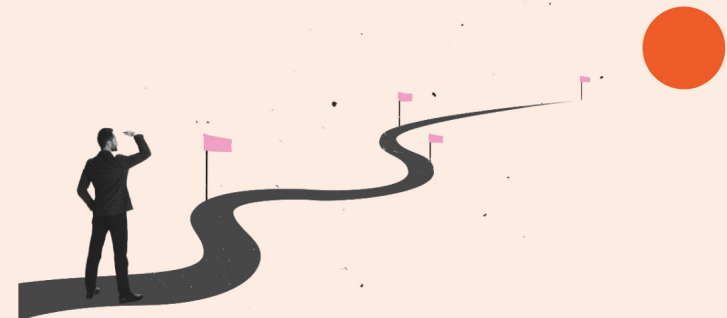
- **Overconfidence bias:** This happens when you place too much faith in your knowledge and **opinions**. You may also believe that your contribution to a decision is more valuable than it is.
- **The halo effect:** This is the tendency for a person’s positive traits to “spill over” from one area of their personality to another in others’ perception of them. In other words, it’s hard to believe that someone you like or trust in another context could be wrong now.
- **Gambler’s fallacy:** With the gambler’s fallacy, you expect **past events** to influence the future. When in actuality, the number of successes that you’ve had previously has little or no bearing on the future.
- **Fundamental attribution error:** This is the tendency to blame others when things go wrong, instead of looking objectively at the situation.
- **Bandwagon bias:** Bandwagon bias is a form of **Groupthink**. Here, the tendency is to form an opinion or take action because others have already done so. The probability of you “hopping on the bandwagon” increases as others adopt an idea.

Remember your high school years? How many of your peers ended up attending the same university simply because “that’s where everyone was going”? This is a great example of bandwagon bias.



- **Mere exposure effect:** In decision-making, this bias can manifest itself as a **preference** for opinions, people or information that you’ve already seen or heard before.
- **Hindsight bias:** Sometimes called the “I knew it all along” effect, hindsight bias is when someone believes that they accurately predicted the outcome of a decision before it was made, even if they didn’t.

Researchers Neal Roese and Kathleen Vohs argue that hindsight bias occurs when people feel that a certain outcome was obvious and expected, but only after the event has taken place – put simply, when they look back on a decision, they feel that they “knew what would happen all along” – even though they didn’t. (Roese et al., 2012)



A little anchor, a small cue - and a gentle nudge...

The use of Neuroscience tools to study consumer behavior and the decision-making process in marketing has improved our understanding of cognitive, neuronal, and emotional mechanisms related to marketing-relevant behavior. However, knowledge about Neuroscience tools that are used in consumer Neuroscience research is scattered. (Alvino et al., 2020)

What this means is that as with most things in life (and marketing in particular) - there is room for **optimization or improvement**.

You may have heard of anchors, cues, and nudges—each of which are all part of Psychology in marketing. **Anchors are the most common form of subconscious marketing you encounter.** Cues tell you what to buy and how to buy it; nudges make it easier for someone to choose one option over another.

The power of these tools comes from their ability to **influence our decisions** without us realizing that they're doing so at all!

An anchor is a number, word or phrase that guides your feelings, thoughts and behavior.

Anchors are the most common form of **subconscious marketing** you encounter. When you hear the words “you save 50%” at the end of an ad for mattresses or towels, it's not just to add emphasis to the final price tag—it's also a way to help people make decisions by offering a starting point for negotiations.

Anchors have been used in all sorts of areas: pricing strategies, product placement on shelves and even customer service.

The most effective anchors are those that are memorable because they're unusual or extreme in some way—like how \$1 seems like nothing compared with \$2 million but \$2 seems like a lot if you're buying milk at Publix (as opposed to Whole Foods).

Cues are **subtle prompts** that tell you what to buy and how to buy them. They can be visual, auditory or tactile.

Here are some cues that you may already be familiar with.



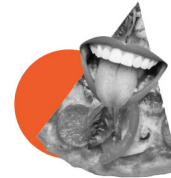
- **The sound of a cash register**

You hear this sound and know exactly what it means—someone has just bought something from a store, and you may want to buy something too!



- **A red price tag on an item in a retail store**

This says we should pay attention because this item is on sale today (and maybe we can get a better deal).



- **The smell of pizza cooking at home after school lets out**

We expect pizza when we smell this, so our stomachs start grumbling right away!

Nudges are about making it easier for someone to choose one option over another.

A perfectly good product can sometimes be nudged into being more highly preferred and purchased simply by putting it closer to the register.

Reciprocity is a pretty straightforward concept.

Reciprocity is one of the basic social norms that we follow in our day-to-day lives. It's a pretty straightforward concept; in essence, it means that people feel obliged to repay or return favors done for them by others.

For example, if someone offers you a gift, you might feel obligated to give them a gift of equal value.

Social proof is similar to peer pressure but in a good way.

When potential customers see what other people are doing they feel more comfortable doing the same thing.

As long as they believe that those people know better than they do, people will follow the crowd to avoid feeling out of place or wrong.

Social proof can be used to increase sales and customer loyalty by making consumers feel like their choice will be popular with others.

For example:

If you're trying to market your master's program online and it has an average review score of 4 out of 5 stars, put that on your website! It will make your prospects more likely to consider your institution because if enough (like-minded) students have already liked it then there's no reason for them not to!

Scarcity is often used to create urgency and limited sales are often employed with scarcity in mind.

People have an instinctual desire to **have rare things**, so if you tell them that there's only a certain amount left or that your deal won't last forever, you will likely create a sense of urgency that inspires action on the part of the customer.

Authority is also crucial for marketers.

The reason why celebrities and influencers are often used in commercials is that customers assume that like other high-ranking individuals, stars must also be high-ranking when it comes to determining what makes a quality product.

In the case of celebrities or influencers, it is the perceived authority that makes them so appealing to marketers and consumers alike. People commonly perceive these individuals as **being experts in their field, trustworthy, more attractive and more intelligent than 'ordinary' people.**

These characteristics are very important when deciding what to buy because they can increase the perceived value of a product.

The more **credible** a source seems to be, the more likely we'll believe what they say about a particular product or service.

Think back to those times that you've purchased something based on advice from someone you know (or even don't know) who has good taste in fashion or food—if this person recommended something highly enough for you to purchase it yourself, then his/her credibility was likely enough for you to make a decision based on what he/she said alone.

Understanding human behavior using Psychological principles

Psychological principles are a set of theories that help us understand how humans think and behave.

They explain why we do things in certain ways and can be used to understand your prospect better by predicting their behavior.

For example, if you know that people feel compelled to take ownership of something they've done themselves, you may want to make them feel like they have some control over their experience with your product or service.

Before we go any further, it's crucial to note that Psychological principles aren't the same thing as cognitive biases - although many cognitive biases will also be applicable in marketing (and vice versa).

Cognitive biases are errors in judgement that happen because our brains don't always work perfectly; Psychological principles describe how people think naturally, without being skewed by any mental errors.

Human behavior is never cut and dry. It's unpredictable. Sure, it follows a pattern - most things do, but the unstable variable remains - and that is the human mind.

So, let's dive deeper!

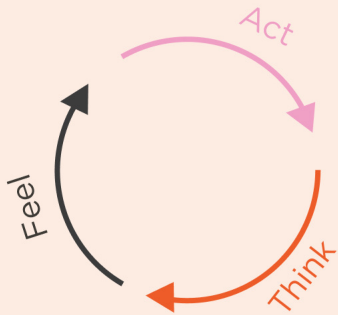


Facets of human behavior



From a scientific perspective, human behavior is a complex web, based on 3 fundamental components: **Actions, cognition, and emotion.**

It's not all that complicated if you address them at a micro-level.



Actions are behavior.

An action is essentially anything and everything that can be observed, either with the naked eye - or through a more intricate measurement, like a Psychological sensor.

Think of it this way, an action is an **initiation** or **transition** from one state to another.

A behavioral action can take place on multiple scales - from muscular activation to sweat excretion, food consumption - or sleep.

Behavioral actions can take place on various time scales, ranging from muscular activation to sweat gland activity, food consumption, or sleep.

In marketing, particularly education marketing, our end goal is to **inspire positive action.** We want a prospect to take an action, to make a decision - and our processes should be centered around that aspect.

Cognitions are behaviors.

Yes - your thoughts are behavior's too.

Cognitions refer to thoughts - or mental images that you carry with you. These can be verbal - or non-verbal. "I have to remember to pay the admission fee", or, "I'm curious to find out what my classmates think of my accent".

These would be considered **verbal cognition.**

Conversely, to imagine what a dorm room would look like - or the face of a potential lecturer would be considered a non-verbal cognition. Tapping into this as an education marketer could be as simple as taking a stroll down memory lane, (activate those cognitions team!) and placing yourself in the shoes of the prospect.

Their thought process will likely look something like this.

1. "Eeek, I am almost done with high school, what's next for me?"
2. "Well, all my friends are going to ABC university - maybe I should have a look at their courses."
3. "I see that XYZ offers scholarships - and a course that I am interested in, it's time to do some research."
4. "This is too overwhelming. Let me ask my mom for advice."
5. "Mom thinks it's a good idea to pursue my path, even if it means making new friends, let's see what other courses XYZ offers."
6. "I have all the prerequisites! This institution is perfect for me, let me just have a look at their socials, see what other students think about being an XYZ student."
7. "They love it! Everyone looks so happy, I wonder if I will fit in"
8. "Oh look, they're hosting a virtual open day - I wonder if I will know anyone online?"
9. "I am so excited! Time to apply."
10. "I hope that I have made the right decision, I am going to need the support."

The point here is that as an education marketer, you need to have a **message** and a **value** that aligns with this thought process. At every step of the journey - you need to make sure that your institution is present, and answer the questions that the prospect didn't even know that they had.

They **will** do their research.
They **will** ask for advice.
They **will** stalk you on social.
They **will** feel overwhelmed and hesitant.

They will need someone to hold their hand throughout the journey - and after.

Make sure that you're there.

Doing this will turn a stranger into a prospect.
A prospect into a student.
And a student into an advocate.

Emotions are behaviors.

You read that right. Feeling stressed, or overwhelmed is behavior too.

Emotion is any (relatively) brief or succinct conscious experience that is characterized by intense mental activity. I.e. Your prospect may be going through the process of researching 10 different institutions in their area. Their mind is exhausted, they know more about your institution than you do. They're scared. They're worried that they will invest in the wrong place. Their future is on the line.

You are already evoking an emotion - simply by existing.

With that in mind, it's imperative to make the entire process as simple as possible. From your website and landing pages to booking forms and applications.

Make. It. Simple.

Anticipate that they will feel stressed - and cater to that emotion. Doing so will allow them to feel safe, understood - and at ease.

Other aspects of physiology that are indicative of emotional processing - such as increased heart rate or respiration rate caused by increased arousal - are usually hidden from the eye.

Similar to cognitions, emotions cannot be observed directly. They can only be inferred indirectly by tracking facial electromyographic activity (fEMG), analyzing facial expressions, and monitoring arousal using ECG, galvanic skin response (GSR), respiration sensors, or self-reported measures, for example.

Now - your prospect won't be measuring these responses. But they will know if you're contributing to a negative emotion - so make sure that you're facilitating a positive holistic experience.

Everything is connected

The proper combination of **actions**, **cognitions**, and **emotions** allows us to perceive the environment around us, pay attention to our inner desires, and act appropriately toward those in our proximity.



Turning our head (**activity**) and recognizing a familiar face could result in an unexpected outburst of excitement (**emotion**), which may be followed by an internal realization (**cognition**), but it can be difficult to determine what exactly is cause and effect.

Action = emotion (joy) + cognition (oh, it's Sarah, I better say hello!)

Now - that's a positive. And we know that human emotions, behavior and action are always a combination of positive and negative! (Even for the ray of sunshine in your office, waving at you while you read this - ready to tell you about her precious little Daschund at the water cooler).

In some cases, the sequence of cause and effect could be reversed. (Even for Happy Harriet from the office)

If you're feeling sad (emotion) and ruminating on a relationship issue (cognition), you may decide to take a walk to clear your head (action).

Emotion (sadness) + cognition (I should go for a walk) = action

Let's look at both scenarios from your prospect's perspective. We'll start with the positive, because - why not?



Say hello to Julia.

Julia, a 17-year-old student is already aware of the fact that she needs to choose a university. She comes from a family of graduates and has grown up knowing full well that her school career wouldn't end at 18.

She is excited about the process and ready to start her research. She has a notebook prepped, and a drive ready to save all the relevant information from multiple institutions.

During the process, she considers her future and what it might look like. She wonders about life on campus, whether her friends will join her - and what her accommodation will look like.

She is ready to go!

In Julia's case, the process would look like this:

Action = emotion(excitement) + cognition(I'm almost 18 - time to make a decision)



Say hello to Andrew.

On the other end of the scale, we meet Andrew - a 17-year-old scholar from a middle-class family, who is less than prepared to have a life outside of the four walls of his high school.

Andrew's parents are self-made. They didn't complete tertiary education, and he has grown up hearing statements like, "a degree isn't everything Andrew, learn a trade", or "I didn't study and I still earn more than most of my friends who have a degree", and even, "a degree doesn't mean employment - so what's the point?".

Andrew is stressed.

He sees both sides of the coin. He knows that a degree doesn't guarantee employment, but he also knows that he doesn't want to spend 10 years of his life moving up the ranks until he earns a livable wage.

He wants a foot in the door, he is looking for an opportunity - and he is doing it with less support than his classmate, Julia.

To put it lightly, **this kid is freaking out.**

With Andrew in mind, the process could be:

Emotion (anxiety) + cognition (I need to keep my options open) = action

Now, of course, these two fictional characters represent the opposite end of the (extreme) scale.

But the point remains - no two student journeys are alike, and we need to tailor our campaigns to speak to **them all.**

Julia will want to hear a different story than Andrew. She will be open to **mid and bottom-funnel content.** She knows that she will study - she is now just choosing where. Her enrollment journey will be significantly **shorter** than Andrew's.

Andrew on the other hand has no idea where to begin. He has no solid plans for his future, his skills are limited - all he knows is that he has an opportunity, and he wants to take it. In his case, the enrollment journey will be much longer, simply because he hasn't been "prepped" to make a decision - he is typically going it alone.

In this instance, the focus would be on top funnel content - guiding him towards his inevitable decision.

Andrew may not decide, or commit for a few years! He won't be the typical 18-year-old first-year. He may sign up to your funnel, receive your comms - and then put you on the back burner while he makes his decision.

The key takeaway is:

Nurture your prospects - no matter how long and tedious the journey seems.



What can marketers learn from human behavior?

Marketing can be considered a sweet combination of science and art - what more could a curious and agile mind want from a career? It's not enough to know how your prospects behave and what they want; you also need to understand the cultural context in which they live and work.

Psychology is a complex subject. However, marketers in the education sector do not need to understand every aspect of Psychology to create a successful marketing campaign.

By learning about some of the basics, marketers can better understand their audience and use this insight to (really) personalize their message. (Not just to tick a box, change a few words and say that the message is tailored.) By taking these principles into account, marketers can create more effective campaigns that speak directly to their prospects at every phase of their decision-making process.

Historically, marketing has borrowed insights from Behavioral Economics and the science of human decision-making. These insights can be applied to education marketing strategies.

Behavioral Economics is a branch of Economics that studies how people make economic decisions. It considers the roles of **cognitive limitations, emotions, social norms** and other factors in shaping economic decisions. Behavioral Economists view human beings as imperfect beings who often make irrational decisions because they are **influenced by their environment** or other factors such as social pressure or cognitive bias (e.g., confirmation bias).

Driven by insights from Behavioral Economics, marketers have begun to cater to the **systematic irrationalities of their consumers**. This means understanding how consumers behave, as opposed to how they should behave.

More recently, however, the smartest marketers also want to go beyond the science of decision-making and instead tap into the broader field of psychological science.

Decision-making may be a crucial area of Psychology for marketers to understand, but it's only a narrow sliver of what it means to be human. Marketing Psychology is about understanding these more general principles and incorporating them into marketing practice.

Where do they all meet?

Social Psychology, is the branch of Psychology that studies how people's thoughts, feelings and behaviors' are influenced by the **actual, imagined or implied presence** of others. Social Psychologists typically assume that an individual's thoughts, feelings and behavior are **determined** by the situation in which they occur. Simply put - this branch of Psychology deems emotion and behavior to be a result of any extenuating circumstance.

In particular social Psychologists have developed a set of theories about how people respond to other people (including themselves) in different situations - this is known as social cognition.

Similarly, marketing Psychology can glean vital insights from cultural Psychology, particularly when expanding into international markets.

If your mind jumps straight to social media when you hear "Social Psychology" and "marketing", you're not alone.

Social Psychology undoubtedly has a significant impact on how people use technology, but this is just the beginning of its influence. Because humans are highly sociable beings in general, social media has a significant impact on the way that consumers think, act - and purchase.

For instance, a consumer's social identity greatly influences the things they purchase and the brands they identify with. Budweiser never lets you forget its strong ties to the "American identity," whereas Jif peanut butter advertises to mothers with the slogan "Choosy Moms Choose Jif."

Other brands successfully tap into social drives to communicate implicitly to their social group. Luxury brands, for example, allow consumers to signal their wealth and status, while sustainable brands have come to signify environmental values. (Johnson, 2022)

A marketer who is **knowledgeable** about the mechanisms of social Psychology will be better equipped to tailor their marketing strategies to the **right audience**.

Evolutionary Psychology plays a part too

The study of Marketing Psychology, like Psychology more broadly, acknowledges that the human brain is an organ that has been shaped by evolutionary forces. With current software running on antiquated hardware, we feel like outsiders. The brain hasn't altered much despite the changes in the world. (Johnson, 2022)

We have a lot of biological similarities with our prehistoric ancestors.

Our environment is what has changed so drastically.

This stance makes it clear that the human brain was not created for the present consumption of society. This implies that each consumer's behavior is influenced by neurological structures and natural tendencies that evolved for quite **distinct purposes**.

Take the mere exposure effect, for instance: The more we are exposed to something, the more we enjoy it. This explains why trending songs or memes usually grow on us over time and why Coke and other high-ranking brands spend billions of dollars on advertising each year even if its brand awareness is at (what one would assume would be) its peak.

It has been suggested that the evolution of humans is the source of this universal propensity. Finding the same thing repeatedly suggests that it is safe for us, whether it be berries, an animal, or an insect. Benign things are inherently good from an evolutionary perspective. (Johnson, 2022)

Overall, a deeper appreciation of evolutionary Psychology can aid in the development of creative marketing strategies that make use of these tendencies in addition to helping make sense of contemporary customer behavior.

What is to be said about Cultural Psychology?

Because culture doesn't exist at the level of personal Psychology, it is frequently overlooked.

It affects almost every aspect of human Psychology, including Consumer Psychology, and functions at the **level of society**. When entering new markets, brands that neglect the influence of culture on Consumer Psychology are doing so at their peril. (Johnson, 2022)

Learning about Cultural Psychology can (naturally) help you better understand your audience.

For example, when developing a marketing campaign for an educational product in the United States, you might be tempted to emphasize how the product will make students more employable and give them a competitive edge in the US job market.

However, in many Asian countries with high youth unemployment rates, this message might not **resonate as well** because fewer young people have access to good jobs and there is less incentive for them to invest in their future careers. In these circumstances, it could be more effective and meaningful for your target audience if instead of focusing on career skills and work readiness you emphasized how your product will help them develop **social** and **emotional** competencies—skills that are increasingly important but not always valued by employers (Chen & Chen 2018).

Most research on cultural influences on judgment and persuasion has examined the implications of individualism versus collectivism or independent versus interdependent self-construal. (Koo & Shavitt, 2010)

In general, the findings suggest that the prevalence or the persuasiveness of a given type of appeal matches the cultural value orientation of the society (Shavitt, Lee, and Torelli, 2009).

For instance, appeals to individuality, personal benefits, and achievement are usually more **prevalent** and **persuasive** in individualistic (compared to collectivistic) cultures, whereas appeals to group benefits, harmony, and conformity are usually more prevalent and persuasive in collectivistic compared to individualistic cultures. (Koo & Shavitt, 2010)

The evidence for “cultural matching” in the nature of appeals has been followed by studies examining the distinct Psychological processes driving persuasion across cultures.

Put simply: Culture is an element that marketers cannot afford to ignore - particularly when marketing such a high-value item, such as education. Maintaining cultural **awareness**, and **sensitivity** to cultural boundaries and preferences is crucial to the success of any marketing campaign.

Cultural Psychology theories also inform us that while some messages may appeal universally across cultures (e.g., “do what makes sense”), others are viewed differently depending on one's cultural background (e.g., “don't give up until you've tried everything possible”).



What about Consumer Psychology?

Consumer Psychology is what people think of when they want to know exactly **why a consumer makes the decisions that they do**. After all, even impulse buying has underlying Psychology: A person might crave sugar at the sight of a chocolate bar while going through the checkout lane and might decide which candy to buy based on past experiences.

Consumer Psychology examines consumers' **perceptions, beliefs, feelings** and **thoughts** and considers all of them when examining purchasing behavior. It also accounts for social **persuasion** and **motivation** from third parties to purchasing decisions, such as commercials or advertising.

One of the biggest influences of Consumer Psychology is how its findings can be directly applied to marketing campaigns. For example, a Consumer Psychologist could determine that a household with an income of less than \$65 000 would be more likely to apply for enrollment at a prestigious institution only where scholarships were on offer. With that in mind, the marketing team (using these insights) could tailor their campaigns to speak directly to the needs of that audience. **Better targeting usually yields better results.**

In short: Learn to market smarter - not harder.

It's no secret that education marketers have to do a lot of work. From writing compelling content to creating the right marketing messages, they have their hands full. And while it's true that you can never know too much about your audience, there are some easy ways to get started on the right foot.

Take the time to research and learn about your audience—which includes everything from demographics to preferences and beyond. Then use this knowledge to (really) personalize your message as much as possible. Try using different kinds of language based on who you're talking with (casual vs professional; casual vs formal).

Use images that appeal more specifically toward certain people within your target demographic—and don't forget about video! Different audiences prefer videos at different rates: millennials may be more interested in watching clips than reading text, while older generations may prefer written content instead of videos on social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter; when doing research into where certain groups spend their time online (and what types of content they consume), take note!

In our increasingly digital world, marketers have many tools at their disposal. However, these tools are **not a substitute** for understanding human Psychology.

To be successful, marketers must understand the decisions behind the data they collect and analyze. **By learning from** other disciplines and **applying** their findings to your own practice, you can create effective campaigns that resonate with your audience and achieve your goals!



Tapping into the mind of the consumer (ethically)



It's one thing to use Psychology to sell products. It's another thing entirely to do it **ethically, legally and morally**. In this section, we'll talk about how you can make sure you're doing things right when it comes time to market your educational programs.

The key question is whether or not your marketing uses false claims or undue influence and deception in order to get people interested in buying what you have available for sale.

There are three ways that marketers might be able to use Psychological tactics without crossing those lines:

- Using Behavioral Science to increase higher ed enrollments
- Ensuring authenticity and integrity throughout the funnel
- Focusing on the needs of the prospect and not the needs of the institution

What's the big deal about ethics?

The foundation of marketing ethics is a set of morally sound guidelines and standards that demonstrate proper marketing behavior. Understanding ethical marketing is extremely important because it is an essential component of the marketing definition.

As **moral guidelines and ideals** that should be upheld in marketing communication, marketing ethics exist for a reason. They operate as the standards that businesses use to choose their new marketing tactics. But keep in mind that it also depends on one's interpretation of what is "good" and "wrong."

Any unethical conduct is not always illegal. For instance, it may be considered unethical activity if a business makes claims regarding its products yet is unable to abide by those statements.

Fairness and honesty are encouraged by marketing ethics in all of their advertisements. Any false statements made to clients, invasion of their privacy, use of stereotypes, and targeting of the weaker demographic (such as youngsters and the elderly) are all considered unethical. It is deemed unethical to even attempt to harm the reputation of the rival.

A product or service's optimum presence in its target niche depends (entirely) on ethical decision-making in marketing.

An ethical marketing strategy must take into consideration a variety of criteria, including:

- **Internal aspects:** Your business culture, values, morals, and opportunities
- **Individual factors:** Your moral compass - what you deem right and wrong
- Stakeholder interest, concern and objection
- Ethical decision-making
- Evaluation of ethical, moral, and socially acceptable outcomes

When it comes to ethical marketing, honesty and transparency are essential.

As consumers, we rely on companies for information about the products we buy and the services we use.

This means that marketers have a responsibility not only to provide accurate information but also to provide enough detail so consumers can make informed decisions about their purchases or their use of the product or service being offered by the company.

Here are 5 reasons why your moral compass matters to your education marketing strategy.

1. Consumer loyalty
2. Heightened credibility
3. Long-term institution growth
4. Leadership and authority positioning
5. Enhancement of brand value

Is there an ethical way of tapping into a consumer's mind?

There is nothing inherently wrong with marketing. It's only bad if you use it to manipulate your consumer and their decision-making process.

Ethical marketing means giving your consumer the information they need to make an **informed choice** and providing them with a clear path from beginning to end of the enrollment funnel so that you can be sure they are happy with their decision.

Ethical marketing decisions must be made at every step of the marketing strategy, from designing new products and services that fit into consumers' lives, to finding new ways for those products or services to reach customers who may not even know what they need yet!

The creation of thorough buyer personas has been one strategy used by marketers to better understand their target audience. This is a **composite of traits** from numerous (actual) clients. A **hypothetical consumer** is created by marketers, who give him or her a name, an image, and a range of distinguishable traits and attributes.

Unfortunately, buyer personas have a significant flaw: they are entirely fictional.

There is no guarantee that the persona you come up with accurately captures your particular target buyer, even if they are well-researched. There are many more ways to understand clients, so while they can be a fantastic place to start, they are not the only ones.

4 Ways you can tap into the mind of your prospective students

Put yourself in their shoes - and mean it.

Even when they become customers, marketers don't think like consumers. They have a distorted view of how their customers think since they are far more analytical, psychologically astute, and technically advanced than the average client. Even the buyer personas they create reflect their own thought processes.

You can learn more about how actual customers think in customer forums by lurking anonymously and going beyond your preconceived notions of what they might believe.

Talk with other marketers.

It is possible to share marketing experiences on customer behavior and improve both of your understandings of your marketplace by prioritizing cooperation over rivalry.

Think of customers as friends you hope to influence by remembering the following wisdom from Dale Carnegie: "You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you."

Refine your listening skills.

Whatever type of business you operate, there are probably numerous points of contact where you may communicate with customers directly, such as through social media platforms, blogs, and live events. Be attentive during these interactions. The preferences of your customers will be communicated to you.

Ask consumers for their opinion - and use that data.

According to ProOpinion, customer surveys are particularly useful because "businesses, governments, public bodies and similar organizations are interested in the views and attitudes of the people who use their products and services. The more they know about what customers and citizens think, the easier it is for them to improve and adapt what they supply."

Where does that leave marketers?

All human activity is motivated by Psychology. It stands to reason then that Psychology, whether we are aware of it or not, also influences consumer decisions.

As a result, marketers can deliberately employ Psychology to influence the decisions they want consumers to make.

The education marketer has a unique landscape to cover. The prospect of implementing a campaign that seeks to educate and inform creates an inherent ethical high ground requiring a certain level of transparency, trust building and openness.

Using these insights in the marketing of educational products assists in positioning an institution as one which cares about its student body, prospects and existing students alike. When applying these strategies to your holistic marketing strategy it's helpful to understand how the education marketer can use these insights to leverage student enrollments. .

We need to be aware that marketing to students is different to marketing to other demographics. While the principles are the same and marketers should grasp this, it's important that they recognize these nuances. They should also remember that if students are to make an informed choice then marketing must be honest about its intentions and the costs involved in attaining an education.

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