

# Automaticity induced branding

Automaticity is associated with the unconscious influence of the mind with respect to our thoughts, feeling, and behavior. The author explores its implications on marketing and branding...

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Automaticity induced branding. By [S Ramesh Kumar](#)

In the era of artificial intelligence (AI), the [automaticity](#) induced [branding](#), which is at a nascent stage (relative to number of other recent [marketing](#) practices) is likely to gain ground in the days to come.

Consider an established brand of jewelry, introducing a new offering or iPhone introducing its latest 'i' version-would consumers feel as excited as the previous brand launches? How does a marketer know reactions of the consumer? By [marketing](#) research - quantitative or qualitative? Are there a non-invasive, techniques that can be useful in studying the consumer reaction in such situations?

Another scenario- organic salad getting gobbled up at a corporate cafeteria, when the bowl containing it is placed in front of several delicious fried foods (than the bowl being placed

behind the dishes). Are the diners, aware of the change in the arrangement or about their own behavior, when the arrangements were changed?

Much away from branding, research published (co-authored by Denziger ,2011), in an unconnected domain has shown that judges in Israel, were prone to grant parole either after the proceedings begin in the day or immediately after lunch/taking a break, as compared other times of the day or before lunch to. Hunger seems to influence decision making in an area, that is considered highly objective.

These contexts are important to demonstrate the power of neuroscience and behavioral economics (the latter made popular by noble laureates Kahneman and Thaler, though their work is not focused on branding!). Some of the writings of Barry Schwartz on the application of choice also deserves a mention as they cover marketing contexts.

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### **Applications in marketing and branding**

\* **Promotion:** Several large retailers, run promotional programs (including web portals and online shopping brands). For instance, a promotional program can make use of the [Prospect Theory](#) as appropriate to the schemes /contests / consumer segment /profitability. This theory states that we dislike (relatively with a higher intensity) the displeasure of a loss as compared to an equivalent gain (feelings of positivity) given a context. Another variant of the application of this theory is the “law of diminishing marginal utility”. A consumer may be happy to get a discount of ten percent to enjoy 15 units of subjective satisfaction, but this level of satisfaction may not increase proportionately when the discount is made twenty percent. It becomes imperative to research this aspect when a retailer plans a sales promotion across different product lines and segments of consumers.

A yet application of the prospect theory is the fact that it gives raise to endowment effect-reluctance on the part of individuals to part with something that creates a feeling of ownership as it creates a sense of loss. Most consumers do not feel like using the money back guarantee given by brands (does not mean that defective ones will not be given up). Most consumers may not even be ware of the endowment effect. In this digital age of online selling of second- hand products, do we quote more than what the product is worth, it after being used. This may be because of the endowment effect working on our judgement.

\***Neuromarketing** is about the study of brain signals using appropriate techniques to gain insights into consumer` behavior with respect to decision making involving several marketing initiatives. A study was published in the Journal of Neuroimaging, investigated consumer`s choices (with functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging), with reference to their choice of brands, among coffee and beer brands that were indistinguishable. The study established, that when consumers saw their favorite brands, those parts of the brain associated with memory and decision making were activated with lower intensity; however, the parts of the brain involving self and emotion were activated to a greater intensity.

The implication is that once we become emotional with a brand, it becomes difficult to skip it, when it comes to the preference. This is well illustrated by a neuropsychological, explanation given by Jonah Lehrer, in his book, “How we Decide”, using the example of the manner in which [Tom Brady](#), the iconic footballer “plans” his moves on the field. There is a preconscious phase, in which he makes up his decisions and the footballer “plans” his

moves more out of emotion and intuition than out of logic (not to say that logic is not important in contexts). Harvard marketing researcher Zaltman had a decade back, established that 95% of our thinking is associated with unconscious processes.

**Eye tracking research:** Drawing from research literature, eye tracking is one of the methods used to assess the value attributed to products by consumers without realizing they are doing so. Drift diffusion model is associated with the eye movements back and forth, between two stimuli (this may be a brand, or an image or any object). There is research to show that consumers may look at the products they like longer than they look at its prices, if they assign a better value to the product. A likable brand may need to ensure that consumers look at it longer, than its prices. This will have interesting implications for point of purchase at outlets or even in designing websites.

Space colonies may be become a reality someday, more of [Alexa](#) types of “friends” may be created; machine learning and algorithms may become the order of the day. But till the time, the human mind exists, marketers and consumers will use it for decisions on anything, ranging from perceived risk to one upmanship (read branding), even as critics debate about the ethics of automaticity associated with the study of consumer behavior.

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Views expressed are personal.*