

## HOW BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMICS CAN HELP YOU BUILD BETTER BRAND COMMUNICATIONS

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**For pharma marketers, accelerating brand performance means maximising return on investment, whatever the marketing spend. It's not enough to deliver clever campaigns – they need to be optimised to trigger the right emotions, and the right actions, to the right audience. Combining behavioural economics, technology, and artificial intelligence can make a world of difference...**

In today's pharma industry, there's increasingly less time available for HCPs to interact with sales teams, absorb marketing materials, or learn about new products. And when marketers have just moments to make an impact, it's crucial they present those target HCPs with material that resonates and positively influences their future prescribing. To do that requires a deep understanding of how audiences consume marketing materials and messages – something that's improved significantly in recent years. But while there's now an appreciation of the subconscious behavioural biases that influence how we respond to marketing, our industry's still developing and testing most communications campaigns using more traditional insight gathering. Behavioural economics is your chance to go deeper.

### The power of unspoken reactions

In his book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Nobel Prize-winner Daniel Kahneman introduced the concept of system one and system two thinking – a way to understand how humans react, process information, and make decisions. System one thinking is all about instant gut reactions – the mental shortcuts, biases, and heuristics hard-wired into the human brain to help us survive. It happens so fast that it reflects how you instinctively feel about something, and the emotions it triggers. Meanwhile, system two is about more logical, considered, slow decision-making. Instead of reflecting what you feel, it reflects what you think. It's what traditional marketing insights – based on qualitative interviews, surveys and focus groups – have tended to draw on. You ask people a question, they consider the answer and tell you what they think.

### Identifying the emotions that drive action

The problem is, the traditional, direct question and answer format of primary market research doesn't give you people's instinctive, emotional, system one reaction – and that's what they're far more likely to act on. But there's good news. Tech is giving us a whole raft of new ways to tap into target audiences' system one thinking – to better understand their gut reactions to brands and campaigns, and the actions they're likely to take. For marketers, these tools are a hugely valuable opportunity to create more impactful campaigns through deeper pre-launch testing and development. Building them into your creative process isn't about throwing out everything you've done before; it's about making it even better. In-depth, qualitative interviews and surveys are still powerful, but by adding new tools and techniques into the mix you can get an even clearer picture of how HCPs perceive your creative content – and make brand and prescribing decisions. Armed with that extra level of insight, you can refine your messaging, resonate better with prescribers, and make sure your product reaches more patients. Let's take a closer look.

### Eye tracking... with added AI

The concept of tracking people's eye movements to see what draws their attention isn't new, but developments in AI have made it more accurate and – crucially – more accessible. In traditional eye-tracking research, respondents would sit in front of a screen, either on site or at home, and a webcam would monitor where their eyes were drawn as they were shown new material. The problem with that approach is a practical one. It demands a sizeable number of respondents, all sitting in front of the right technology, and capable of using it properly. Building in AI software that measures attention takes that complication away, enabling you to assess work faster and streamline your projects, using tech to replace real-life respondents for this aspect of the insights. It's a biological algorithm developed by Dragonfly AI, and is based on years of academic research into how the brain responds to visual content across five neural pathways. By applying the algorithm to pre-launch campaigns, you can replicate the way the human brain, regardless of country or region, will ingest and prioritise your content. The tech identifies where people will look first, what they'll focus on and what they'll overlook, enabling you to develop and strengthen your campaign.



### Implicit response testing

What eye tracking can't tell you, even with the addition of AI, is what people feel about what they're seeing – and that's important. We know that, in addition to the rational reasons for believing a particular treatment is the right choice, prescribers need to emotionally feel it's the right decision if they're going to commit to doing it. That's where implicit response testing, or IRT, comes in. While the tech behind it isn't new, it's a tool that's starting to attract marketers' attention for the powerful customer insights it brings. The idea is to access your audience's instinctive, unspoken, system one reactions to whatever you're showing them, whether it's new branding, campaign work, or wider marketing content. While traditional research interviews tend to give us people's explicit, considered responses, IRT taps into their more implicit emotional responses by making them react at speed, and in the face of distractions. One application of the approach works by showing a piece of branding or comms, then displaying a series of adjectives on the respondent's screen. For each adjective – 'strong' or 'trustworthy' for example – they're asked to instantly hit a yes or no button to indicate whether the content they saw triggers that feeling. The tech doesn't just track the responses they give, it measures how many milliseconds they take to respond. Faster responses indicate more conviction, so you might see that while 80% of people said they felt your campaign conveyed trust for the brand, far fewer answered quickly enough to indicate they felt it with conviction – showing clear potential to improve before you launch.

### Facial coding and voice analytics

While it tends to be used most in consumer advertising, facial coding is another useful way to identify the emotional responses generated by your communications. Based on years of academic research into the known meanings of instinctive facial expressions, it captures images of respondents as they look at your work, overlaying their faces with a grid and running a coded analysis of what various areas of the face tell us about positive, negative, and engaged responses. By aligning those responses to a range of emotions, researchers can give you a picture of what respondents were feeling. In a similar way, voice analytics software works to identify people's emotional responses to what they're being shown. They're asked to talk about what they see, but as well as collecting their considered, system two thoughts, voice analytics can decode the emotions behind particular expressions and voice patterns, helping you access their unspoken feelings too.

### Availability analysis

Understanding how your campaigns and communications make HCPs feel in the moment is hugely powerful, but we can also use behavioural economics to go further, identifying which elements of your messaging or creative work stay with them days or weeks later. To do that, we use a technique called availability analysis. While it's lower-tech than some of the tools above, it's a highly effective way to understand which elements of your creative are working hardest – what sticks in people's minds and which messages really, truly land. It's built around the premise of the availability heuristic – a well-known behavioural bias – which describes our tendency to use information that comes to mind quickly and easily when we're making decisions. Improbable but pertinent things can cloud our recall, for example a strong association with a serious adverse event, even if incredibly rare, can stick in a prescriber's mind. It comes down to the fact that, as humans, we just can't retain all the information that's given to us. For that reason, it's essential that marketers understand which elements of their messaging are likely to be retained long-term, and how that will influence prescribing decisions. For example, if you spoke to a doctor for an hour, using various pieces of visual comms, and then called them back an hour later to see what they remembered, chances are they'd be able to recall the majority of what you'd said. But if you called them a week later, the amount they'd be able to remember would be much, much smaller, with recall dropping off dramatically after a few days. Availability analysis helps you identify which pieces of information remain 'available' in the HCP's mind, so you can understand the stickiest parts of your messaging and check whether your key messages are as memorable as they should be.

### Turning insights into strategic recommendations

Each of the above approaches is an opportunity to understand, and influence, your target audience more effectively. But once you've got these insights, it's crucial to apply them strategically – identifying gaps, adapting content and format, and improving your branding and campaigns so you get a better return on investment from your marketing spend.