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# Intuitive thought and consumer decision making

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Intuitive Thought and Consumer Decision Making

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An Honors Program Project Presented to  
the Faculty of the Undergraduate  
College of Business  
James Madison University

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Bachelor of Business Administration

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by Morgan MacKenzie Moore

May 2015

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Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Marketing, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Business Administration.

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## Abstract

Anytime the human mind makes a decision, intuitive thought has played a hidden role. There is more to consumer decision making than just logical, slow cognition. Exploring the intuitive mind through the works of Johnathan Haidt and Daniel Kahneman helps researchers understand the roles and origins of intuition. Proof of the presence and power of intuitive thought in cognitive processes is offered. A subset of the intuitive mind, termed *the righteous mind* by Haidt, is shown to be responsible for moral intuition. As the role of intuitive thought in consumer decision making is considered, numerous marketing applications are applied. Whether it is termed rapid cognition, the adaptive unconscious, System 1, or a gut feeling, intuition is vastly important and largely mysterious; it plays a much larger role than most people think. Reasons for decisions are often not reasons at all. They are merely logical justifications for the answer, which was initially offered through silent intuition. The degree upon which intuition, including moral intuition, is at play depends on a variety of factors, such as the significance of the decision and an individual's culture, political affiliation, environment, and beliefs. There remains a question left largely unanswered by marketers: "How can I make a connection between my brand, product, or service and my consumer's intuition?"

## Intuition and I

As Johnathan Haidt says in *The Righteous Mind*, “Anyone who values truth should stop worshiping reason” (Haidt 89). People value the ability to reason through situations, problems, and decisions. People tend to be afraid of any truth that they cannot rationally explain because this steps out of our linear way of thinking. Think of any gut feeling you have had, preferences you have had, or snap decision you have made. The fact that we humans have these intuitive urges without any rational cause or evidence is something that many reject. We like to think we are in control of our minds, but that is just not true. Intuition is not a myth or a wives’ tale, nor is it something which should be left to be observed only by the superstitious. Intuition is very real and affects our decisions constantly, whether or not we are consciously aware of it. This adaptive unconscious is responsible for intuitive thought. Our rational mind is like a greedy child, always taking credit for its quieter sibling, the intuitive mind who shyly gives our rational mind most of the answers from the shadows.

The introduction to Malcom Gladwell’s *Blink* contains an example of the power of the intuitive mind, “the statue that didn’t look right” (Gladwell 3). Gladwell describes a series of events at the J. Paul Getty Museum in September 1983. Gianfranco Becchina arrived at this museum with what he claimed was a *kouros*, a marble sculpture of a naked young male in a particular stance. This statue purportedly dated back to sixth century BC. It stood almost seven feet tall and was in nearly perfect condition, unlike the other 200 other known *kouroi*, most

of which are badly damaged or completely broken. For this impressive ancient wonder Becchina wanted \$10 million.

An extensive investigation ensued in which the Getty was determined to test the legitimacy of this extraordinary ancient artifact. They left no stone unturned. Stanley Margolis, a geologist from the University of California, performed a stereomicroscope examination of the surface of the statue for two days. This was followed by the removing of a core sample that was analyzed using an electron microprobe, electron microscope, X-ray fluorescence, X-ray diffraction and mass spectrometry. It was concluded that the statue was made of dolomite marble from the ancient Cape Vathy quarry on the island of Thasos. Margolis also concluded that the surface of the statue was covered in calcite. Dolomite can turn into calcite only over the course of hundreds or thousands of years. After fourteen months of investigation, the Getty was convinced that this was in fact an ancient *kouros*. They purchased it, and in 1986 it went on display for the first time, an event that was marked with a front-page story in the New York Times.

The Getty had proved beyond any reasonable doubt that the *kouros* was a truly rare and impressive ancient artifact, but there was still a problem. The evidence that the logical mind had searched for, found, and validated was all there, yet to experts, the statue still did not *look* right. Frederico Zeri, an Italian art historian “found himself staring at the sculpture’s fingernails. In a way he couldn’t immediately articulate, they seemed wrong to him” (Gladwell 5). Another expert on



Greek sculpture, Evelyn Harrison, saw the statue and immediately had “a hunch, an instinctive sense that something was amiss” (Gladwell 5).

The next person to have seemingly irrational doubts about the *kouros* was former museum director Thomas Hoving. “Hoving always makes a note of the first word that goes through his head when he sees something new, and he’ll never forget what that word was when he first saw the *kouros*. ‘It was “fresh” – “fresh,”’ Hoving recalls” (Gladwell 5). When looking at a statue which is supposed to be thousands of years old, “fresh” is not a logical word to have on your mind. Hoving asked the curator if they had paid for the statue yet. “If you have, try to get your money back’, Hoving said. ‘If you haven’t, don’t” (Gladwell 6).

At this point, with all the unexplainably negative expert opinions, the Getty was concerned. They decided to hold a symposium in Athens where the country’s most senior sculpture experts could examine the *kouros*. “This time the chorus of dismay was even louder” (Gladwell 6). The head of the Acropolis Museum in Athens, George Despinis, only needed one look at the statue to exclaim that “Anyone who has ever seen a sculpture coming out of the ground... could tell that that thing has never been in the ground” (Gladwell 6). The head of the Archeological Society in Athens, Georgios Dontas “saw the statue and immediately felt cold. ‘When I saw the *kouros* for the first time,’ he said, ‘I felt as though there was a glass between me and the work” (Gladwell 6). The director of the Benaki Museum in Athens said that when he first laid eyes on it “he felt a wave of ‘intuitive repulsion” (Gladwell 6).

When the dust settled, one thing was clear. “The Getty, with its lawyers and scientists and months of painstaking investigation had come to one conclusion, and some of the world’s foremost experts in Greek sculpture – just by looking at the statue and sensing their own ‘intuitive repulsion’ – had come to another” (Gladwell 7). Eventually, the evidence crediting the *kouros* as a real ancient artifact began to fall apart. The letters which linked the statue back to its original owner turned out to be fakes; they referred to a bank account and postal code which did not exist until many years after the 1952 and 1955 dates on the letters. This left the problem that the dolomite marble had formed calcite, substantiating that it was very old. The Getty, now armed with the information that the letters were fake, began another investigation. The eventual conclusion was that it would be possible to “age” the surface of the statue using potato mold. This *kouros* “didn’t come from ancient Greece. It came from a forger’s workshop in Rome in the early 1980s” (Gladwell 8).

When the experts “looked at the *kouros* and felt an ‘intuitive repulsion,’ they were absolutely right. In the first two seconds of looking – in a single glance – they were able to understand more about the essence of the statue than the team at the Getty was able to understand after fourteen months” (Gladwell 8). This is the power of the intuitive mind. The ability to understand its vastness leads to limitless applications in the marketing world.

## Metaphors of the Mind

In *The Happiness Hypothesis*, Jonathan Haidt describes the difference between the rational and intuitive capabilities of our mind beautifully in an extended metaphor about an elephant and its rider. Imagine that the rider is the rational mind responsible for conscious reasoning, while the elephant is the intuitive mind responsible for all other mental functions, and that together they encompass all mental processes. The relative size of the rider and elephant is important in this metaphor. While the relatively small rider may guide the elephant, if the elephant really wants to go in some direction, it will do so, regardless of what the rider wants. The rider thinks that he is in control, making all of the decisions, but in reality “the rider’s job is to serve the elephant” (Haidt xxi). The rider can “learn new skills, and master new technologies, which can be deployed to help the elephant reach its goals and sidestep disasters. And, most importantly, the rider acts as the spokesperson for the elephant, even though it doesn’t necessarily know what the elephant is thinking” (Haidt 54).

The elephant represents the vastness of the intuitive mind and all automatic cognitive processes. It is “the other 99 percent of mental processes--the ones that occur outside of awareness but that actually govern most of our behavior” (Haidt xxi). Despite this greater magnitude and influence of the elephant, most of the credit for decision making is often wrongly given to the rider. The elephant is responsible for intuitive, gut feelings which guide our cognitive process without our awareness. It is automatic, unconscious, and highly complex. It is the reason

experts were able to tell that the kouros presented to The Getty was a fake even though they could not say why. Their intuitive minds painted a highly detailed picture of what the kouros should look like. This normative picture was based on years of observing the appearance of every little piece of the various kouros statues. The intuitive mind compared this normative kouros with what was in front of their eyes and found that something was not right. They did not know why, but they intuitively knew that something in the pattern was off. This type of intuitive thought is in play in almost every decision made.

Imagine that each person has a mind that is comprised of a rider and an elephant. In order to persuade that person to do anything, one must speak to the elephant. Good salespeople already use these tactics today. Being friendly, being a good listener, never telling someone that they are wrong, all of these things are a part of speaking to the elephant. They were the advice of Dale Carnegie in his book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Carnegie was crowned the elephant whisperer by Haidt. The main thing to remember is that someone has to *want* to agree at the elephant level before their rational minds will start creating *reasons* to agree. Haidt shows that people will stick to highly irrational beliefs, even when proven wrong, because their rational mind is only searching for things which support their current subconscious belief. The rider is serving the elephant, and they are affectively grabbing at rational straws. Hume pointed out this phenomenon long ago when he said, “as reasoning is not the source, whence either disputant derives his tenets; it is vain to expect, that any logic, which speaks not to the

affections, will ever engage him to embrace sounder principles” (Haidt 57). The best way to get someone to take the action you want them to take is by speaking to their elephant. It is a lot easier to get someone to go where his or her elephant already wants to go.

This relationship between automatic unconscious cognition and purposeful cognition can also be visualized through Haidt’s metaphor of the intuitive dog and its rational tail. In this metaphor, the tail is the rational mind, is the equivalent of the rider, and the rest of the dog is the intuitive mind, or the elephant. “A dog’s tail wags to communicate. You can’t make a dog happy by forcibly wagging its tail. And you can’t change people’s minds by utterly refuting their arguments” (Haidt 57). The tail, or the intuitive mind, if you will, responds to intuition rather than guiding it.

The rational mind’s reaction to intuition is what we call reasoning. People think that they consciously make decisions, but in reality, those decisions are made unconsciously. The rational mind then comes up with reason for decisions that they already unconsciously made. “Intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second” (Haidt 106). Therefore, reasoning is often, in reality, post-hoc rationale. In many situations, let us say a purchase decision, intuition secretly guides what is done. It is often only in order to avoid cognitive dissonance and feel in control of the process that the rational mind comes up with reasons why this is, in fact, a good and logically sound decision. When asked, one states reasons for a decision, not realizing that the decision was actually made by unconscious mental processes. This is

apparent in instances like the kouros situation when people feel the intuitive pull, but cannot think of logical reasons that fully validate their intuition. They are forced to say things such as, “it just doesn’t *feel* right.” This type of intuition plays a role in each of our lives, every day, in ways we are typically not aware.

## Evidence of Intuition

In the history of psychology, the two functions of the mind have been continually alluded to. Plato had the view that reasons ought to be the master, and passions should be restrained. Jefferson stated that reason and sentiment ought to be independent co-rulers. Hume, who most fully shares Haidt's view, but with obvious differences, thought that reason ought to serve the passions. The Roman poet Ovid said, "I am dragged along by a strange new force. Desire and reason are pulling in different directions. I see the right way and approve it, but follow the wrong" (Haidt 32). The realization of the tension between these two mental processes has been a consistent theme in psychology, but it has been largely ignored in present day marketing.

Scientific evidence of intuitive thought (and perhaps where it resides in the brain) is pointed to through the unusual pattern of symptoms revealed by neuroscientist Antonio Damasio. Damasio realized that patients who suffered brain damage to the prefrontal cortex all had extreme drops in emotionality. "They could look at the most joyous or gruesome photographs and feel nothing" (Haidt 39). Although these people still knew what was right and wrong, they did not *feel it*. "In their personal lives and at work, they made foolish decisions or no decisions at all" (Haidt 39). What can be concluded is that gut feelings are necessary to the ability to think rationally. For example, try to consider the pros and cons of killing your mother. This exercise is impossible for most of us because we are automatically horrified at the thought. Damasio believed that the prefrontal cortex had the sole

responsibility for integrating that kind of gut feeling with rational decision making. This means that the patients that suffered brain damage in this region “could think about anything, with no filtering or coloring from their emotions...every option at every moment felt as good as every other. The only way to make a decision was to examine each option, weighing the pros and cons using conscious, verbal reasoning” for every single decision in their lives, no matter how small (Haidt 40). As Haidt puts it, imagine the last time you shopped for an appliance that you cared very little about, like a washing machine. If there are more than six or seven options, this can become extremely difficult. For people with damage to this specific area of the brain, every tiny decision one makes every day on what to do, how to act, and what to say is like picking a washing machine out of a set of 10. No decision is ever obvious again. You have no gut feelings, no automatic preferences, and the resulting extra work placed on your rational mind creates chaos.



## **Views of the Consumer Decision Making Process**

Despite the involvement of the intuitive mind in decisions, the consumer decision making process has long been viewed as rational and linear. The most widely accepted model of the decision making process begins with problem recognition, followed by a search for information, an evaluation of alternatives, a purchase decision, and then a post purchase evaluation. There is no mention of subconscious preference, or other factors which automatically affect how we evaluate something. This model of consumer decision making assumes that all alternatives start out on an equal playing field until we start to logically evaluate them, but this does not appear to be an accurate description of the true process.

The elephant is in most cases determining the preference. The rider might think he is choosing the path, but the elephant already knows what path it wants and is leaning in that direction before the rider's analysis even begins. A proper account of the process should start with an automatic intuitive preference, and then the information search can begin. In other words, people do not often see three options and then begin to order them based on pros and cons. Rather, they tend to automatically pick something, and then engage in a search for information which will support that preconscious preference. Think of picking an apple out of a bin of high quality produce. Did you spend a lot of time comparing each piece of fruit, or did you just grab one that looked good, and then check it for bruises? This means that information search is often less of a decision making process, and more of a decision affirming process. People need to think they made a smart decision, and so

they look for reasons to justify their preconscious choice in the form of post-hoc rationales. Often, a decision is made, and then an individual comes up with justifications for why it was a good decision after all in order to avoid cognitive dissonance.

A different popular model for the consumer decision making process which seems to take intuitive thought somewhat into account is the elaboration likelihood model, developed by Richard E. Petty and John Cacioppo. This model shows that different mental processes are used for high involvement products than for low involvement products. The model allows for the fact that people do not have extensive logical reasoning for every decision, and implies that some decisions are just made intuitively. This can happen for decisions which are routine, or for those which are inconsequential. We make so many decisions each day, it would be impossible to actually rationally think through every one.

## **System 1 and System 2: A Model for the Functions of the Mind**

It is normal for people to believe that decisions are made totally on the conscious level. As Kahneman says, “You believe you know what goes on in your mind, which often consists of one conscious thought leading in an orderly way to another. But that is not the only way the mind works, nor indeed is it the typical way...the mental work that produces impressions, intuitions, and many decisions goes on in silence in our minds” (Kahneman 4). Kahneman makes the distinction between these two functions of the mind by calling them System 1 and System 2. Psychologists Keith Stanovich and Richard West originally coined these terms. Kahneman’s relevant discussion helps to solidify the picture of the relationship between the rational mind and the intuitive mind. System 1 is the intuitive or unconscious mind, and System 2 is the rational mind, exactly like the rider and the elephant metaphor discussed by Johnathan Haidt.

System 1 is quick and automatic with “no sense of voluntary control” (Kahneman 20). It is responsible for “associations between ideas...[and] skills such as reading and understanding the nuances of social situations” (Kahneman 22). This function of System 1 can be categorized as an advanced form of pattern recognition. Through extended practice, System 1 automatically recognizes letters and forms them into words and then sentences for a person to read, speak, and comprehend with very little cognitive (System 2) effort. System 1 is more than just a pattern recognition tool however. It can effectively compile information from many different sources through memory and experience to create a complete picture of

what something should look like. This completed picture is what led the experts to feel that the kouros was a fake. It is also described by Gladwell as the reason birdwatchers can identify a bird by its “giss” or essence after seeing it for only a fraction of a second in flight. It is responsible for impulses, “impressions, intuitions, intentions, and feelings” (Kahneman 24). System 2 often endorses these emotional responses subconsciously with reasons, which as was discussed earlier, are really just post hoc rationale. System 2 does not want to feel a cognitive dissonance between logic and the System 1 content, so it creates reasons in order to appease this feeling. For instance, bird watchers might say that they categorized a bird after a brief exposure to its ‘giss’ by pointing out several distinct features, when in reality their System 2s did not have time to inspect the different features. Instead, their System 1 recognized the complete picture and signaled to System 2 which type of bird it was. The distinct features which were mentioned were examples of post hoc rationale.

“ When we think of ourselves, we identify with System 2, the conscious reasoning self that has beliefs, makes choices, and decides what to think about and what to do” (Kahneman 21). But in reality, System 2 it is just a small part of the mind. It is often allocated to calculations and has very limited attention to give. There is only so much cognitive strain the rational mind can endure at a time. Unlike System 1, “the most effortful forms of slow thinking are those that require you to think fast” (Kahneman 37). That is why people cannot simultaneously

calculate  $879 * 1,458$  and tell you the circumference of a ball with a 6.358-inch diameter.

Not only can most people not do two calculations at one time, but also putting a lot of mental strain into any activity can make a person completely unaware of their surroundings. “Intense focus on a task can make people effectively blind” (Kahneman 23). Anyone who wanted to test this theory could just look up the invisible gorilla test on YouTube. During this the viewer is asked to count the number of times the basketball players in a circle wearing white shirts passed a ball, while ignoring the other team passing a ball in the circle whose players were wearing black shirts. Halfway through the video, a woman in a gorilla suit goes into the middle of the circle and is in view for 9 seconds before exiting. “Many thousands of people have seen the video, and about half of them do not notice anything unusual. It is the counting task... that causes the blindness” (Kahneman 24). The inability to see the gorilla may seem odd because even though System 2 was occupied, “seeing and orienting are automatic functions of System 1, but they depend on the allocation of some attention to the relevant stimulus” (Kahneman p #?).

In order for a mind to be operating efficiently, System 1 and System 2 must work together. Just think of the rider and the elephant metaphor. System 1 automatically produces intuitive thoughts and impulses, which when endorsed by System 2 turn into beliefs, decisions, and actions. Most of the time this works out, but sometimes our System 2 can be too lazy or too cautious, both of which are

dangerous. System 1 thoughts have a lot of merit on their own, but especially for bigger decisions, they need to be checked by System 2. However, in the other direction, System 2 can stifle the power of the intuitive mind by refusing to trust anything short of solid logic. “Conflict between an automatic reaction and an intention to control it is common in our lives” (Kahneman 26). Discovering how the two systems interact in different consumers is the first step in starting to unfold the marketing implications of intuitive thought in consumer decision making.

## **Intuitive Thought Biases in Consumer Decision Making:**

Intuitive consumer thought is vastly important in a number of major areas in the study of marketing. One such area is familiarity. It is commonly known in the practice of marketing that likeability and familiarity have a positive correlation. This is because familiarity enhances confidence in the ability to evaluate product quality. In addition, familiar brand names are superior to less familiar brands because of superior recall of information (Richardson, et. al). This is commonly referred to as the mere exposure effect and it is the reason why 'no publicity is bad publicity'. People are prewired to have positive feelings towards familiar things because novelty is scary; "to survive in a frequently dangerous world, an organism should react cautiously to a novel stimulus, with withdrawal and fear" (Kahneman 67). This carrier over today as lack of familiarity is shown to remove brands from the purchase decision considerations (Richardson, et. al.) Familiar things are obviously easier to remember, and "cognitive ease is associated with good feelings" (Kahneman 67). Increasing awareness of a product or brand can connect it with so many positive associations. People intuitively feel more connected to familiar things, even if they never personally shared any experiences. "The experience of familiarity has a simple but powerful quality of 'pastness' that seems to indicate that it is a direct reflection of prior experience" (Kahneman 61). Interaction between a brand and its consumers is vastly important, and apparently just increasing awareness can aid to this goal because of the connection of familiarity with the feeling of prior experience. When something looks familiar it is because it is able to

be seen and remembered more clearly, and this is good because “anything that makes it easier for the associative machine to run smoothly will also bias beliefs.... Familiarity is not easily distinguished from truth, authoritarian institutions and marketers have always known this fact” (Kahneman 62). To be fair, just because someone is familiar with Starbucks coffee does not mean that this person will definitely be a Starbucks patron. If the individual is not a coffee drinker, the familiarity is useless. However, if the individual is a coffee drinker, next time they want to purchase a cup they will feel more comfortable buying Starbucks, even if they have never had it before, because it is more familiar and thus intuitively is seen as superior to a cup of joe from an unfamiliar brand.

The availability effect is another reason why increasing brand awareness and familiarity is so important. This effect prompts us to connect the ease of retrieval, or the “availability” of a memory, to the frequency and familiarity of the object in memory. Studies have shown that if someone cannot easily remember something, they believe this is due to its irrelevance in their life, instead of attributing it to a simple failure of their memory. A brand has to stay at the front of its consumers’ minds in order to stay relevant. People tend to trust that their memories capture the important stuff. Thus, the things people commonly encounter are remembered better and, therefore, are automatically regarded as more important or ‘worth remembering’. People who are guided more by System 1 are more susceptible to the availability effect because they are more likely to listen to these feelings instead of rationally thinking through all options when making decisions.



Another way to apply the effects of familiarity is through priming. The idea behind it is to ease cognitive strain, and when done correctly marketers can use it to reap the associated benefits. “Priming is not restricted to concepts and words. You cannot know this from conscious experience, of course, but you must accept the alien idea that your actions and emotions can be primed by events of which you are not even aware” (53). The power of priming is shown in the “Florida Effect,” uncovered in an experiment by psychologist John Bargh at New York University. In this experiment, he had students form four word sentences out of five word strings, such as “looks it she blue currently”. For some of the students, the set of five words contained words related to old age, such as “*Florida, forgetful, bald, grey, or wrinkle*” (Kahneman 53). The students exposed to the words primed for old age actually walked down the hall slower when they left the experiment than the students not exposed to the words. What is more, the students did not even notice a pattern in the words or think that there was any way the words could have affected their actions. The question to be answered is if a behavior such as walking more slowly can be effectively primed, can purchases be primed in the same way?

The ideomotor effect represents the phenomenon of the action being influenced by the idea. This is what is happening in the “Florida Effect,” and it becomes extremely important in sales situations. Another example lies in the measuring of monetary contributions to an ‘honesty box’ in an office kitchen at a British University. This box was put in place to collect money for the tea and coffee a person takes during the day. A list of suggested prices was shown, along with a

picture. This picture was changed each week and rotated between pictures of flowers or pictures of eyes. “On average, the users of the kitchen contributed almost three times as much in ‘eye weeks’ as they did in ‘flower weeks.’ Evidently, a purely symbolic reminder of being watched prodded people into improved behavior. As we expect at this point, the effect occurs without any awareness” (Kahneman 58).

Priming also occurs when the ideomotor effect is reversed and the idea is influenced by the action. Experiments have proven that just the mere act of nodding while hearing something makes a person more willing to accept it. In parallel, the act of shaking the head while hearing something makes a person more likely to reject it. (Kahneman 54)

Another form of priming which can irrationally affect decisions is the anchoring effect. “It occurs when people consider an unknown value for a quantity before estimating that quantity” (Kahneman 119). For example, imagine you are asked, “Is the number visitors to Carly’s Crafts per day more or less than 200?” You are then asked, “What is your estimate of the number of people who visit Carly’s Crafts each day?” Your answer to the second question would be higher than it would have been if the first question had asked you if the number of visitors was higher or lower than 10 per day. These anchors affect people every day, but experiments have shown that people always tend to say that the anchoring information did not affect their decision. People are not affected by anchors because they find them to be definitive answers. They are viewed as suggestions. But System 1 accepts the suggestion automatically and “tries its best to construct a world in which the anchor

is the true number,” in the absence of other information (Kahneman 123). System 2 also uses the anchor as a baseline, and then tries to gather facts to adjust that number.

One can see anchoring in play in marketing in arbitrary rationing. Kahneman shares an example in which shoppers were exposed to Campbell’s soup promotions in which 10% off soup was marked either “limit 12 per person” or “no limit per person.” Logically, the imposition of a limit should not affect the amount of soup a person will buy, unless the consumer believes there is a limit because the product is about to run out. Still, when the limit was shown, the average number of soups bought (7) was twice as high as when no limit was applied. The anchor of 12, combined with the limit suggesting high demand increased the rate of purchase. Adding these kinds of arbitrary limits will be profitable in many situations. The effects of anchoring are not limited to quantitative analysis. People can be made to hear, feel, or see things, simply by bringing it to mind. “For example, the question ‘Do you now feel a slight numbness in your left leg’ always prompts quite a few people to report that their left leg does indeed feel a little strange” (Kahneman 122).

Another focus of marketing in which the intuitive System 1 is heavily involved is heuristics. Just think about the way different colors can affect the human mind. For some reason, blue is calming, yellow promotes creativity, and so forth. This is huge in the marketing world as far as advertising and packaging. “You are more likely to be believed if your text is printed in bright blue or red than in middling shades of green, yellow, or pale blue” (Kahneman 63). Other heuristics

evidence shows that a brand should strive to make their message simple and memorable. “If you care about being thought credible and intelligent, do not use complex language where simpler language will do... couching familiar ideas in pretentious language is taken as a sign of poor intelligence and low credibility” (Kahneman 63). A simple message made memorable through something such as rhyming can have a huge impact on customers, but Kahneman warns marketers not to get carried away. The message must be accurate, above all else. Heuristics do not provide magic recipes to get customers to remember and engage with a brand, but rather provide ways to present a message that triggers positive intuitive associations.

## How Intuitively Involved is Your Customer?

The amount of intuitive involvement in a purchase decision depends on two main factors, the level of the customer's involvement in the purchase decision, and the level to which a customer relies on intuition versus analysis in everyday life. Low involvement products are often those which are inexpensive, common, simple, and represent very little risk. For example, most people probably do not spend much time thinking about which toothpaste to get. High involvement products are often those which are expensive, long term, complex, and represent a lot of risk. Consumers would spend much more time researching a high involvement product such as a car than they would a low involvement product such as a toothbrush. This is something which is highlighted in the Elaboration Likelihood Model. System 1 and System 2 have different jobs and prevalence depending on the type of product, as shown in the Table 1 below.

*Table 1: Products Characterized by Levels of Consumer Involvement*

<b>Type of product:</b>	<b>Example:</b>	<b>System(s) Used:</b>	<b>Process:</b>
Low Involvement	Toothpaste	Mostly System 1	Intuitively wanting something and not knowing why
Medium Involvement	Ice-cream	Systems 1 and 2	Intuitively wanting something and then explaining the decision with post hoc rationale
High Involvement	Car	Mostly System 2	Making decisions through a conscious linear process

Because System 1 is used more heavily for low involvement products, packaging, colors, and other things that evoke affective responses are more important for these items. The opposite is true for high involvement products in which System 2 is used more heavily. Here features, benefits, and purchase results need to be quantifiable in order to facilitate the inevitable analysis.

In addition to there being different levels of interaction with products, there are also different types of cognitive styles among consumers. Some people rely on intuition more heavily, while others are strict analyzers. This dimension, defined as judgement versus intuition, is used to categorize an individual on the Myers-Briggs Test. Still, “reliance on intuition is only in part a personality trait. Merely reminding people of a time when they had power increases their apparent trust in their own intuition” (Kahneman 135). The level at which people listen to their intuition makes a big difference in how they perceive products. Consider two people choosing crackers to purchase. The System 1 thinker, Susie, buys the box that catches her eye and ‘looks good’. The System 2 thinker, Megan, however, is reading the nutritional information and comparing prices. Level of System 1 versus System 2 reliance could vary by product for a person as well. Something that is a low involvement product for one person could be a high involvement product for someone else, depending on his or her needs and interests. For example, Susie might just grab the crackers that look good, but she reads all of the labels on her meat to make sure she is not buying a product of factory farming.

So how do these two factors, level of involvement and type of thinking, effect one another? Analytical involvement goes up for everyone with the importance of the purchase, but less for System 1 thinkers than for System 2. It is important to note that no one is entirely intuitive or rational, but for everybody one system is dominant. Rationality is necessary for informed decisions, but cannot be used all of the time because it is too effortful. Highly intuitive people sometimes are compensating for a lazy System 2. Table 2 shows how consumers react to high versus low involvement products depending on which mental system they were most reliant on.

*Table 2: Interaction of Cognitive Style and Type of Product*

	<b>System 1 reliant person</b>	<b>System 2 reliant person</b>
<b>Low Involvement Product</b>	Comfortable with abiding by heuristic assessment and impulse with little conscious involvement	Might look for more rational aspects of the product, such as price or ingredients, and decide based on that
<b>High Involvement Product</b>	Might only look at/for the information which supports their original intuitive decision	Comfortable with engaging in conscious, rational means of product assessment

## **The Righteous Mind (Six Moral Foundations)**

There is another piece of the intuitive mind that is different from system 1. It is described by Haidt as the righteous mind. The righteous mind is one part of the intuitive mind, a separate piece of what has been defined as system 1 and the elephant, which is responsible for all intuitive decisions which come from preformed moral ideals. It is not automatic subconscious pattern recognition, but it is still intuition. The righteous mind makes a person feel like something is right or wrong, or feel compelled to act in a certain way, even in the absence of any real logical explanation for the feelings. The righteous mind is comprised of the ethical implications of intuition.

In Haidt's book, *The Righteous Mind*, the intuitive mind is described as a tongue with six taste receptors. These taste receptors represent the six moral foundations which are often at the heart of intuitive feelings or compulsions. These moral foundations represent long-standing, innate feelings, which are shared by all humanity. They are extremely important in a marketing context because they are at play to some degree in every purchase decision, unbeknownst to the consumer. The moral foundations are the intuitive feelings of how one should relate to others and their surroundings. By categorizing the different intuitive thoughts each foundation is responsible for, one can begin to understand the origin of intuition. It can tell us not only how we intuitively feel, but also why. Understanding the origin of intuition could open up a whole new world of possibilities for marketers. However, marketing applications can only be explored once this understanding has



been reached. The table used by Hadit to summarize the original five foundations is recreated below. The sixth foundation, the *liberty/ subversion* foundation, was added later.

*Table 3: The Five Moral Foundations*

	<b>Care/ Harm</b>	<b>Fairness/ Cheating</b>	<b>Loyalty/ Betrayal</b>	<b>Authority/ Subversion</b>	<b>Sanctity/ Degradation</b>
<b>Adaptive challenge</b>	Protect and care for children	Reap benefits of two way partnership	Form cohesive coalitions	Forge beneficial relationships within hierarchies	Avoid Contamination
<b>Original triggers</b>	Suffering, distress, or neediness expressed by one's child	Cheating, cooperation, deception	Threat or challenge to group	Signs of dominance and submission	Waste products, diseased people
<b>Current triggers</b>	Baby seals, cute cartoon characters	Marital fidelity, broken vending machines	Sports teams, nations	Bosses, respected professionals	Taboo ideas (communism, racism)
<b>Characteristic emotions</b>	Compassion	Anger, gratitude, guilt	Group pride, rage at traitors	Respect, fear	Disgust
<b>Relevant virtues</b>	Caring, kindness	Fairness, justice, trustworthiness	Loyalty, patriotism, self-sacrifice	Obedience, deference	Temperance, chastity, piety, cleanliness

Each foundation of the righteous mind can be tracked to its “original triggers” which show how each foundation was important in an evolutionary sense for

survival.<sup>1</sup> The foundations were developed by Haidt and University of Chicago classmate, Craig Joseph. They followed the idea of “modularity” described by cognitive anthropologists Dan Sperber and Lawrence Hirschfield. “Modules are like little switches in the brains of all animals. They are switched on by patterns that were important for survival in a particular ecological niche, and when they detect that pattern, they send out a signal that (eventually) changes the animal’s behavior in a way that is (usually) adaptive. For example, many animals react with fear the very first time they see a snake because their brains include neural circuits that function as snake detectors” (Haidt 123).

These moral foundations are innate, in some degree, to all of humankind. However, it is important to distinguish that innate does not mean hardwired or universal. If this were the definition used for innateness, for anything to be considered innate it would have to be “unchangeable by experience, and found in all cultures” (Haidt 130). Instead, “we are born prepared to perceive the world around us, recognize objects, orient attention, avoid losses, and fear spiders” (Kahneman 21). “As the neuroscientist Gary Marcus explains:

“Nature bestows upon the newborn a considerably complex brain, but one that is best seen as *prewired* – flexible and subject to change – rather than *hardwired*, fixed, and immutable.’...The brain is like a book, the first draft of which is written by the genes during fetal development. No chapters are complete at birth, and some are just rough outlines waiting to be filled in during childhood. But not a single chapter – be it on sexuality, language, food preferences, or morality – consists of blank pages on which a society can inscribe any conceivable set of words” (Haidt 130).

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<sup>1</sup> However, the foundations are applicable to creationist views as well as they could be seen as the innate urge to maintain a higher order and preserve life.

In sum, Marcus defines innateness by saying that “Nature provides a first draft, which experience then revises... ‘Built- in does not mean unmalleable; it means “*organized in advance of experience*”” (*Haidt 131*).

## How Selfish Are You?

Before one can seriously consider each of the six moral foundations, it is important to consider whether or not the view that we act only in self-interest is true. Haidt points out that many social scientists have long “accepted the idea that *Homo sapiens* is really *Homo economicus*. “ This “economic man” does whatever will get him the most benefit at the lowest cost. He works only in self-interest. If this were a true representation of man, moral intuition, which is based in how one should relate to others and their surroundings, would be extremely shallow. It would either be nonexistent, or it would be unable to ultimately effect the actions of the selfish individual. To explore this, Haidt sets up scenarios in two columns. This is replicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Are You Homo Economicus?

<p>How much would someone have to pay you to perform each of these actions? Assume that you'd be paid secretly and that there would be no social, legal, or other harmful consequences to you afterward. Answer by writing a number from 0 to 4 after each action, where:</p> <p><b>0</b> = \$0, I'd do it for free  <b>1</b> = \$100  <b>2</b> = \$10,000  <b>3</b> = \$1,000,000  <b>4</b> = I would not do this for any amount of money</p>	
Column A	Column B
<p><b>1a.</b> Stick a sterile hypodermic needle into your arm. _____</p> <p><b>2a.</b> Accept a plasma-screen television that a friend of yours wants to give you. You know that the friend got the TV a year ago when the company that made it sent it to your friend, by mistake and at no charge. _____</p> <p><b>3a.</b> Say something critical about your nation (which you believe to be true) while calling in, anonymously, to a talk-radio show in your nation. _____</p> <p><b>4a.</b> Slap a male friend in the face (with his permission) as a part of a comedy skit. _____</p> <p><b>5a.</b> Attend a short avant-garde play in which the actors act like fools for thirty minutes, including failing to solve simple problems and falling down repeatedly onstage. _____</p>	<p><b>1b.</b> Stick a sterile hypodermic needle into the arm of a child you don't know. _____</p> <p><b>2b.</b> Accept a plasma-screen television that a friend of yours wants to give you. You know that your friend bought the TV a year ago from a thief who had stolen it from a wealthy family. _____</p> <p><b>3b.</b> Say something critical about your nation (which you believe to be true) while calling in, anonymously, to a talk-radio show in a foreign nation.</p> <p><b>4b.</b> Slap your father in the face (with his permission) as part of a comedy skit. _____</p> <p><b>5b.</b> Attend a short avant-garde play in which the actors act like animals for 30 minutes, including crawling around naked and grunting like chimpanzees. _____</p>
<p><b>Total for Column A:</b> _____</p>	<p><b>Total for Column B:</b> _____</p>

Because the outcome of each scenario stays the same across columns, *homo economicus* would perceive no difference between the two columns. Haidt notes, “If you found any of the actions in column B worse than their counterparts in column A, then congratulations, you are a human being, not an economist’s fantasy. You have concerns beyond narrow self-interest. You have a working set of moral foundations” (Haidt 128). We find column B to be worse because someone else is more adversely affected in each of the scenarios. But if we were truly selfish, this would not matter to us. Each of the scenarios in column B was written to give an “intuitive flash from each foundation... The five rows illustrate violations of Care (hurting a child), Fairness (profiting from someone else’s underserved loss), Loyalty (criticizing your nation to outsiders), Authority (disrespecting your father), and Sanctity (acting in a degrading or disgusting way)” (Haidt 130). These foundations become a part of human nature, and they affect our decision making constantly, even when we are not aware of it.

This is important in a marketing context because it is proof that our moral intuitions extend to others. Morality is not logical, and it is not selfish. Morality is largely intuitive, and it plays into consumer decision making in unexpected ways. Each of the foundation is responsible for moral intuitions that man could never have if he were truly *homo economicus*.

## Morality across Countries, Cultures, and Individuals

“We humans all have the same five taste receptors, but we don’t all like the same foods” (Haidt 113). In other words, even though we all share the same five moral foundations, we are still divided by moral issues because of differences in culture, societal involvement, environment, political leanings, and individual experiences and beliefs. “We were born to be righteous, but we have to learn what, exactly, people like us should be righteous about” (Haidt 26). The two dimensions that can help marketers understand the differences in large groups of people are differences across countries and cultures, which are examined in the paragraphs below. The other dimensions mentioned, such as experiences and beliefs, come into play on mostly an individual level. Haidt notes, “It will take a lot of additional work for us to connect the universal moral taste receptors to the specific moral judgments that a particular person makes” (Haidt 114). Understanding how different groups of people tend to think and behave is just the beginning of uncovering patterns of intuitive thought within different consumer segments to be applied to marketing efforts. Table 5 is recreated from *The Righteous Mind*, and shows some of the differences in moral thinking found between citizens of America and Orissa, India.

*Table 5: Moral Comparisons across America and Orissa*

<p>Actions that Indians and Americans agreed were wrong:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While walking, a man saw a dog sleeping on the road. He walked up to it and kicked it.</li> <li>• A father said to his son, “If you do well on the exam, I will buy you a pen.” The son did well on the exam, but the father did not give him anything.</li> </ul>
<p>Actions that Americans said were wrong but Indians said were acceptable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A young married woman went alone to see a movie without informing her husband. When she returned home her husband said, “If you do it again, I will beat you black and blue.” She did it again; he beat her black and blue. (Judge the husband.)</li> <li>• A man had a married son and a married daughter. After his death his son claimed most of the property. His daughter got little. (Judge the son.)</li> </ul>
<p>Actions that Indians said were wrong, but Americans said were acceptable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a family, a twenty-five-year-old son addresses his father by his first name.</li> <li>• A woman cooked rice and wanted to eat with her husband and his elder brother. Then she ate with them. (Judge the woman.)</li> <li>• A widow in your community eats fish two or three times a week.</li> <li>• After defecating a woman did not change her clothes before cooking.</li> </ul>

In Orissa, “social order is moral order,” but that is not the way things work in western societies such as the United States (Haidt 16). Some of the major cultural differences in moral judgments can be explained by considering John Stuart Mill’s harm principle. This principle states that “The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others...His own good, either physical or moral, is not sufficient warrant” (Haidt 147). If you are a member of an autonomous society, this harm principle should make perfect, logical sense to you. In this way, “even in the United States the social order is a moral order, but it is an individualistic order built up



around the protection of individuals and their freedom” (Haidt 20). Autonomous societies are comprised of individuals who act and think independently, or at least have the freedom to do so. Autonomous individuals like to think that something can only be wrong, morally or otherwise, if it hurts someone else.

There are obviously many differences in moral thinking across different countries, but there is also a lot of variance among cultures, and even among individuals. Understanding these differences is the only way to understand how moral intuition affects a certain person’s decision making process. Some western cultures take the harm principle farther than others, saying that “just because something is disgusting doesn’t make it wrong” (Haidt 147). To understand how you may have been influenced by this western way of thinking, consider the following two brief stories that Haidt used in experiments gauging moral reactions. After each story, decide if you think the people in the story did something morally wrong.

“A family’s dog was killed by a car in front of their house. They had heard that dog meat was delicious, so they cut up the dog’s body, cooked it, and ate it for dinner. Nobody saw them do this” (Haidt 3).

Most of the well-educated people in Haidt’s studies were hesitant to call this action morally wrong, even though they had “an initial flash of disgust” (Haidt 3). Why? Because as Americans, culturally they are hesitant to call anything morally wrong unless it has an adverse effect on someone. In this situation, it is disgusting, but no one was hurt, so can you justify that this was morally wrong? Now consider a second, more challenging story.

“A man goes to the supermarket once a week and buys a chicken. But before cooking the chicken, he has sexual intercourse with it. Then he cooks it and eats it” (Haidt 4).

“Once again, no harm, nobody else knows, and, like the dog-eating family, it involves a kind of recycling that is – as some of my research subjects pointed out – an efficient use of natural resources. But now the disgust is so much stronger, and the action just seems so... degrading. Does that make it morally wrong? If you’re an educated and politically liberal Westerner, you’ll probably give another nuanced answer, or acknowledge the man’s right to do what he wants, as long as he doesn’t hurt anyone.

But if you’re *not* a liberal or libertarian Westerner, you probably think it’s wrong - morally wrong - for someone to have sex with a chicken carcass and then eat it. For you, as for most people, morality is broad. Some actions are wrong even though they don’t hurt anyone. Understanding the simple fact that morality differs around the world, and even within societies, is the first step toward understanding your righteous mind” (Haidt 4).

Haidt told these stories to twelve groups of people, and only one group, the students from the University of Pennsylvania, had a majority of the people (73%) who were able to tolerate the chicken story. As one student said, “It’s his chicken, he’s eating it, nobody is getting hurt” (Haidt 96). And to quote another, “It’s perverted, but if it’s done in private, it’s his right” (Haidt 96). The Penn students had an unusual amount of devotion to the previously mentioned harm principle. They were also the “*only* group that frequently ignored their own feelings of disgust and said that an action that bothered them was nonetheless morally permissible” (Haidt 96). This goes to show how drastically different environments can shift our moral compass, even within one country. Understanding these differences is important because a different moral compass means a different intuitive thought process, and therefore a different marketing strategy.

## **The WEIRDEST People in the World**

Cultural psychologists Joe Henrich, Steve Heine, and Ara Norenzayan explain this phenomenon beautifully in an article titled “The Weirdest people in the world?” They did not mean weird in the ordinary sense of the word. Here WEIRD is an acronym for people who live in societies that are western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (such as the United States). “The WEIRDer you are, the more you see a world full of separate objects, rather than relationships” (Haidt 96). WEIRD people tend to think about all things in a very different, more autonomous manner than the rest of the world. “Even within the West, Americans are more extreme outliers than Europeans, and within the United States, the educated upper middle class (like Penn students) is the most unusual of all...For example, asked to finish a sentence starting with the words ‘I am...’ American’s are likely to list their own internal psychological characteristics (happy, outgoing, interested in jazz), whereas East Asians are more likely to list their roles and relationships (a son, a husband, an employee of Fujitsu)” (Haidt 97). Why is this significant? Because almost all research on psychology is conducted on the very small subset of human population who are WEIRD. We only understand our own, very unusual way of looking at things; we often do not understand universal morality because we are afraid of sacrificing our autonomy.

Maybe a Penn student can ignore the automatic feelings of disgust and say that it is not morally wrong for a family to eat their deceased pet because it did not hurt anyone. But eventually, as the situations get more disturbing, our sanctity

foundation overtakes even the WEIRD people. Just because a person cannot say how something is logically morally wrong considering the harm principle does not mean it is not intuitively morally wrong.

“In early 2001, Armin Meiwes, a German computer technician, posted an unusual advertisement on the Web: ‘Looking for a well-built 21-to-30-year-old to be slaughtered and then consumed.’ Hundreds of men responded by email, and Meiwes interviewed a few of them at his farmhouse. Bernd Brandes, a forty-three-year-old computer engineer, was the first respondent who didn’t change his mind when he realized that Meiwes was not engaging in mere fantasy” (Haidt 146).

Haidt warns his readers, and I warn mine, those who are squeamish will want to skip the following paragraph which exemplifies an activation of the sanctity/degradation moral foundation.

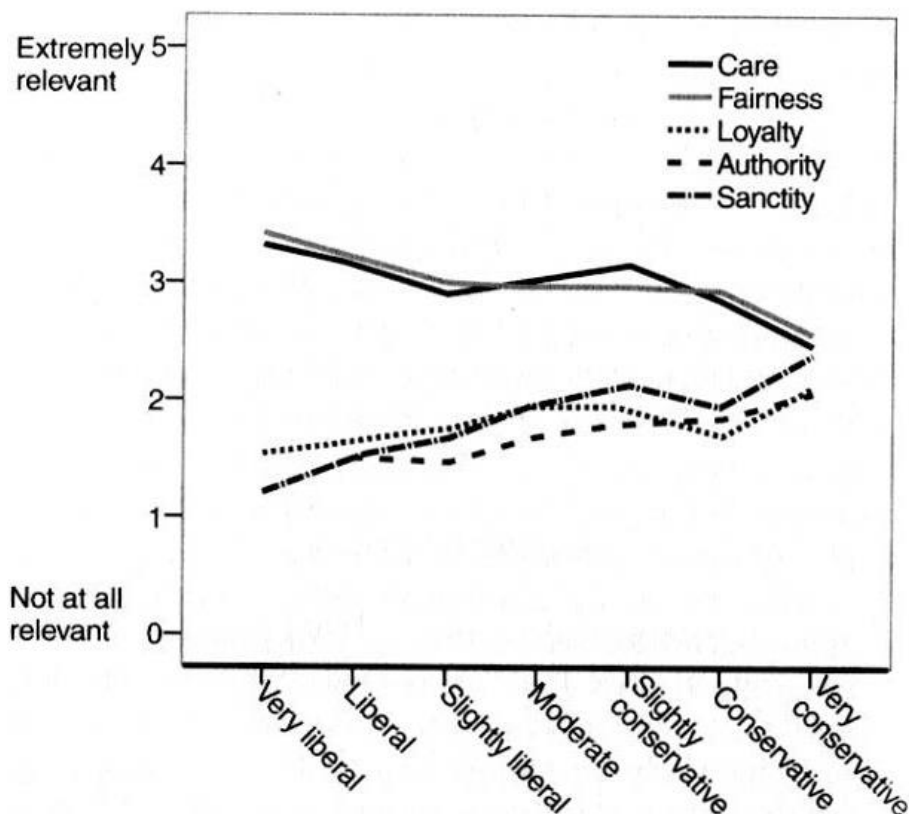
“On the evening of March 9, the two men made a video to prove that Brandes fully consented to what was about to happen. Brandes then took some sleeping pills and alcohol, but he was still alert when Meiwes cut off Brandes’s penis, after being unable to bite it off (as Brandes had requested). Meiwes then sautéed the penis in a frying pan with wine and garlic. Brandes took a bite of it, then went off to a bathtub to bleed to death. A few hours later Brandes was not yet dead, so Meiwes kissed him, stabbed him in the throat, and then hung the body on a meat hook to strip off the flesh. Meiwes stored the flesh in his freezer and ate it gradually over the next ten months. Meiwes was ultimately caught, arrested, and tried, but because Brandes’ participation was fully voluntary, Meiwes was convicted only of manslaughter, not murder, the first time the case went to trial” (Haidt 146).

To examine this case, we must first consider one thing. This revolting means of death was done with the full consent of two adults, and without an audience. Until the story was released, it had no way to affect anyone else. “Yet most people feel that there *was* something terribly wrong here, and that it should be against the law for adults to engage in consensual activities such as this. Why?” (Haidt 147).

The answer is the righteous mind. I decided to include this repulsive story for a reason. In this example, considering the harm principle, it would be difficult to make a case that there is a logical reason for the thought that this action is universally, morally wrong. This is also an example where it would be unusual to find someone who believes that it is, in fact, not morally wrong. Even WEIRD people would have a hard time signing off on the moral validity of this. These two facts combined point undeniably to one thing: there is a part of the mind that transcends logic and leads one to the very strong assertion that this is wrong, apparently for “no good reason”. But there is a reason. This is proof of moral intuition at work. The story triggered the sanctity moral foundation of the righteous mind which told us this was wrong. Usually, in time, we can find some post hoc, logical rationale for the decision we had already come to without knowing why. In this situation we cannot, even if we are WEIRD. This is something deeper, something more innate. Pretty much universally, humankind finds this sort of thing to be morally wrong, even in the absence of a logical reason. Both parties involved wanted this to happen, and without relaying the story it would have affected no one else, but still, we do not want him or her to be able to do this. It is just wrong. Even in the most independent and autonomous individuals have a line which can be crossed. At some point, even the WEIRDEST people will consider something that does not hurt anyone else to be too disgusting and disturbing to be morally acceptable. That innate and unexplainable feeling is the righteous mind speaking up.

In light of these stories, we can draw a better picture of where moral judgments of people across cultures, education levels, and political parties tend to differ. We already know that, according to Haidt, the WEIRDEST people are political liberals. Figure 1, borrowed from Jared Taylor's American Renaissance article, considers this fact in light of the different moral foundations. This figure is similar to one found in Haidt's *The Righteous Mind*, except in Haidt's version care and fairness intersect the other foundations at the conservative level. As you can see, the loyalty, authority, and sanctity foundations are not as strongly in play for very liberal individuals. The Liberty foundation was left off this visual representation, but Haidt shows it is highly important to both political parties, especially libertarians. Knowing what moral intuitions are prevalent in a desired consumer segment is extremely important to marketers.

Figure 1: Importance of Moral Foundations across Political Affiliations



## The Implications of the Moral Foundations

All the cultural and political differences aside, understanding the moral foundations allows us to understand their common triggers. As Haidt puts it, “universal ‘moral taste receptors’... would be adaptations to long-standing threats and opportunities in social life. They would draw people’s attention to certain kinds of events (such as cruelty or disrespect), and trigger instant intuitive reactions, perhaps even specific emotions (such as sympathy or anger)” (Haidt 123). This knowledge can be used to develop marketing strategies that will allow us to influence consumers’ intuitive minds, thus affecting their ultimate purchase decision. To do this successfully, we must “discover how the moral mind *actually* works, not how it *ought* to work, and that can’t be done by reasoning, math, or logic. It can be done only by observation, and observation is usually keener when informed by empathy” (Haidt 120). Each moral foundation comes with a set of important marketing implications because of the simple fact that the foundations are present in the mind of every consumer. They are not something the consumer can easily decide upon or change their mind on; they are each an innate part of how the consumer thinks. They play into every decision the consumer makes.

Understanding the moral foundations can therefore entirely change the way a business markets because it allows them to understand a large part of the intuitive process which is highly integrated with purchase decisions. Instead of trying to extrinsically convince consumers that their product is best, they can learn how the consumer thinks and become what was wanted all along. Instead of trying to

change a consumer's mind about a business, businesses can change themselves to fit the consumer's intuitive preference. Let us delve into each of the foundations to understand how this concept can be practically applied.



## The Care/Harm Foundation

The first foundation described by Haidt is the care/ harm moral foundation, henceforth referred to as the *care* foundation. The care foundation is what causes us to be innately sensitive to signs of suffering, distress, or neediness. This is necessary for the protection of our children. Imagine not feeling the need to provide for or care for your child. A common expression is that there is nothing stronger than a mother's love. A mother's love may seem like an obvious and, for the most part, assured thing, but what makes that so? We are innately wired to care about our young. If that were not so, we would not have the instincts to protect them and provide them with food, shelter, and comfort. Even if one were isolated from the practices of motherhood their entire life, they would still know instinctively how to comfort and feed their child. Not feeling the need to do this would be extremely unusual. The person it applied to would be defunct on their care foundation; in other words, they would be a moral monster. These instincts are a part of the adaptive unconscious and are innate in almost all mothers, and fathers for that matter. This is what "primes us to care, nurture, protect, and interact" (Haidt 133).

The first marketing implication of the care foundation can be found by considering products that directly provide for children. Even just seeing a child triggers "an instant emotional response because the care foundation can be triggered by any child" (Haidt 133). This foundation encompasses more than our instincts to care for our own children, however. It applies to the feelings we have for any infant child or animal, or their inanimate imitations. Our brains automatically

connect the intuitive feelings of care for our children with infantile features, thus extending this moral foundation to cover all infants. Consider how you feel when you see a television advertisement for non-profit fundraising which shows destitute but otherwise attractive children. Humankind is prewired to want to care for all children in need. This is why these advertisements are effective for raising money for food, education, or other needs of needy children.

The care foundation even extends to cover the representation of children. The connection of infantile features and feelings of care extends to dolls or pictures of infants. This trigger of our care foundation is already widely in play in the toy industry. As Haidt notes, Toys were “designed by a Toy company to trigger your care foundation” (Haidt 122). Hence, little girls like to take care of baby dolls. They are prewired to intuitively want to do so because of the doll’s infantile features. The care foundation is also used by baby food and clothing companies. Just picture one of the Gerber babies. What do you think sells more? Baby food with a label with no picture, or baby food with a picture of a smiling Gerber baby on the jar? The same logic is employed with baby animals. We find stuffed animals and puppies cute because they trigger care. Are any dog food commercials with Yellow Lab puppies coming to mind?

Avoiding harm to innocence is a common theme in the care foundation, and it also encompasses feelings towards victims of violence. Another dimension of the care foundation focuses on this desire to prevent or eliminate harm. If you were to hear about or see a child in danger you would probably feel a wave of intuitive

panic, anger, and disgust. This is not limited to infants. It is innate in human nature to have feelings of compassion for all victims of harm. These feelings of compassion are what make us want to help, even though it does not make any sense to do so from a utilitarian point of view. The fact that we desire to protect others from harm makes sense from an evolutionary point of view because human beings historically lived in small groups of genetically related persons. To protect a child or another person in the group was to protect one's own genetic legacy.

The applications of the care foundation vary vastly across cultures, but in the US, it varies perhaps the most by political affiliation. People who tend to identify themselves as liberal will care more about the care or harm done to animals or people in other countries. This is where you will see a lot of interest in organizations such as PETA (People for Ethical Treatment of Animals) or factory free farming techniques. Another example of triggers of the liberal care foundation can be seen in support for the "Save Darfur" movement. People who identify themselves as conservative have care that is aimed "at those who have sacrificed for the group. It's not universalistic; it's more local, and blended with loyalty" (Haidt 134). An example of this can also be seen in the support of the Wounded Warriors. This is not to say that liberals do not care about wounded warriors, or that conservatives do not care about animal abuse. However, the extremity of loyalty to various applications of the care foundation do seem to vary rather reliably with political affiliation. When a business considers the target market for their product, knowing these tendencies can prove very valuable to their marketing efforts.

## The Fairness/Cheating Foundation

The Fairness/Cheating foundation is the next moral foundation that Haidt goes into, and it has vast implications for marketing. The fairness foundation is limited largely to fairness in the sense of proportionality. Absolute equality is not on the agenda of the fairness foundation in our intuitive minds, reciprocity is. The fairness foundation represents the urge to form and reap the benefits of a two-way partnership. Equality is dealt with later, in the liberty foundation.

To better understand this dimension, consider this scenario. Your friend won a free cruise from a radio show, and she gave the ticket to you because she knows you have been having a rough time and thought you deserved a break. Would you be unabashedly overjoyed and take the present without a second thought? Or would you feel guilty and inquire, why did she not use the ticket herself? And if you did take the ticket, would you feel obligated to repay her in the future in some commensurate way? You probably would, because we are not *Homo economicus*. We may be selfish by nature, but Haidt explains that “selfish’ genes can give rise to generous creatures, as long as those creatures are selective in their generosity” (Haidt 136). This is reflected in Robert Triver’s theory of reciprocal altruism:

“Triver’s proposed that we evolved a set of moral emotions that make us play ‘tit for tat.’ We’re usually nice to people when we first meet them, but after that we get selective: we cooperate with those who have been nice to us, and we shun those who took advantage of us... We feel pleasure, liking, and friendship when people show signs that they can be trusted to reciprocate. We feel anger, contempt, and even sometimes disgust when people try to cheat or take advantage of us” (Haidt 136).

So fairness, largely, is about maintaining mutually beneficial relationships. Those who were willing to be fair and enforce fairness are able to reap more benefits from their relationships. People want to be treated fairly, and are loyal to those who treat them as they hope they will be treated. It is extremely important for a business to play on this moral intuition through customer relationship management. In business, this screams, “treat your customers right!” If a business employs good customer relationship management techniques, its customers will have intuitive positive associations with the product, service, or brand. If they do not, just the opposite can happen and negative effects could quickly spiral out of control.

Expectations are the framework on which fairness will be judged. How a company portrays itself is the basis on which a customer’s expectations are formed. This is why how a company portrays itself is so important, because customers want to get what they expected to get from a business. A company must have accurate marketing. If it oversells itself, it violates the fairness foundation, and this can be very difficult to rectify. If a company undersells itself, it risks losing value in the eyes of potential customers. Accurate portrayal of the company through marketing can lead to accurate customer expectations. Customers want reality to at least live up to their expectations. Expected equals fair to the customer. Anything less violates the idea of reciprocity because they are not getting what they paid for. Anything more is an added bonus to the customer, and may be seen as a sign of goodwill to keep the relationship more than fair for them. If we find a relationship

with a company who we think is also devoted to reciprocity, we can stop searching for the best alternative and trust them to provide it.

Expectations are worthless if a company cannot be relied upon to meet them. Expectations are the essence of the brand. The business text *Services Marketing: Integrated Customer Focus Across the Firm* lists reliability as one of the six most important attributes of service quality, and I do not think that this can be overstated (Zeithaml, 113). Customers want to be able to count on a business to provide the same service, at reasonable times, to standard, with the promised results. This is what is fair in the mind of the consumer. Reliability is a very common expectation. A business has to deliver what they promised, or they can never be expected to be a part of a mutually beneficial relationship with a customer.

On the cheating side of the fairness/cheating foundation, the biggest business implication is the importance of recovery practices. If a customer feels cheated, a business cannot attempt to have a mutually beneficial relationship with them until this situation is rectified. Do not underestimate the lengths to which a customer will go to get payback. Customers will spend money to hurt a business which has treated them unfairly. Jeremy Dorosin is an example. After purchasing two broken coffee makers from Starbucks, he assembled a list of demands for Starbucks to rectify the situation. When Starbucks did not meet these demands, he spent \$10,000 on four full-page ads in the Wall Street Journal telling the story of the company's failure and asking for an official apology. He took it upon himself to collect complaints from other customers, incorporate them, and slam the company

with negative word of mouth through these very expensive newspaper ads, week after week. As time went on, the demands increased. By the end, Starbucks was scrambling to catch up and make things right, but they waited too long and the demands kept increasing. In the end, Dorosin demanded that Starbucks take out a full-page ad in the Wall Street Journal apologizing to him and other customers. He also wanted his \$299 espresso machine replaced with a \$2,495 model (Flinn). Starbucks would not meet these demands, and thus a problem that could have been solved quickly and easily became unsolvable and reputation damaging. Bottom line, customers will spend money to hurt a business if they deem that they have been treated unfairly. Letting this distrust grow can have extremely negative effects; instead of going away the situation will usually snowball. That is how powerful the fairness foundation is.

Today, it is not sufficient to meet the focused expectations of customers on the functional properties of goods and services. “A great many things have gotten linked, culturally and politically, to the dynamics of reciprocity and cheating” (Haidt 137). This creates a whole other set of marketing and public relations implications on the fairness foundation, mostly pertaining to acquiring customers via their leanings on the fairness foundation. These are the positive or negative associations which come from a company’s stance on mistreatment on a larger scale. It looks beyond fairness in their product and service offerings to situations such as civil rights. Empathy for groups of individuals or animals that are treated unfairly arises from the fairness foundation. A company who boasts fair labor practices, cage free

farming, no animal testing, diversity in employment, or a slew of other things which are now linked to the fairness foundation will more likely be the ultimate choice of the consumer due to positive intuitive perceptions of fairness.

In the US, there is a big divide between the way the fairness foundation works for liberals and conservatives. Liberals are more focused on equality and social justice. Take for example the Occupy Wall Street Movement. They want to tax the wealthy at higher amounts because they have more to give, and to not do so is cheating and unfair. Conservatives are more focused on proportionality. They do not want to take money from hard workers and give it to the people they deem “lazy.” This includes the unemployed, those on welfare, and illegal immigrants who avoid taxes and get free health care and education. An example of this is the Tea Party Movement in which a common slogan was “share my work ethic, not my wealth.” These types of considerations should be important to an organization for either of two reasons; either political leanings are highly important in their customer segment, or they are in political marketing.



## **The Loyalty/Betrayal Foundation**

The Loyalty/Betrayal Foundation is the third moral foundation discussed by Haidt. Just like in the Fairness Foundation, the Loyalty foundation was originally based on the need to form cohesive coalitions. The difference is that people looked for people who would not only be fair (practice reciprocity), but also stick with them based on their loyalty (unwavering continuation of reciprocity). In this way, loyalty is seen as a sort of extension of fairness. In a way, it is the continuation of fairness which leads to a feeling of a deeper connection. However, it is more than this. It is the general desire to act in a way which supports the group you are a part of, even if it would be logical to betray them and support the opposition. The Loyalty Foundation is the reason that familiarity leads to fondness. We tend to dislike the unknown, and the things which are common in our lives grow on us. This is what loyalty is. It is sticking with the people and things which were historically good to you. It is surpassing other, maybe more appealing opportunities in order to be loyal to your current connections. Being a recipient of loyalty means having safety in the relationship. It allows you to maintain a relationship instead of constantly competing for the relationship.

Any good business focuses on creating and maintaining relationships with customers, which is why loyalty is so important in a business sense. The Loyalty Foundation is triggered by “anything that tells you who is a team player and who is a traitor” (Haidt 140). Looking at this from an operations standpoint, we can see why loyalty programs are so brilliant. They directly provide purchase incentives,

while linking benefits to the relationship with the company in the mind of the consumer. A business should consider making their company the object of loyalty. If a business does a loyalty or frequency program correctly they can retain customers because they are constantly proving to them how this relationship is good for them. Why would a customer leave a company which rewards their continued business for one who might not appreciate it? This is the logical explanation for loyalty, but there is also more to it. There is an intuitive side that stems from the bond that is created. If a customer has been with a certain company for 20 years, they may feel reluctant to leave for a new company, even if that company has better offers. This is the same loyalty which is in play in every significant relationship in a person's life. A company's goal should be to extend this loyalty to reach the relationship between their business and the customer. The intuitive urge to stay with a company comes from the loyalty foundation of your moral mind.

The Loyalty Foundation is so powerful in part because of how strongly we as humans respond to the other side of this foundation, betrayal. In *The Inferno*, Dante's innermost circle of hell is reserved for treachery. Sure, humans want those in relationships with them to be loyal, but it is arguable that nothing causes more mental anguish than betrayal, making this the stronger side of the Loyalty/Betrayal Foundation. Where does this come into play in a business sense? Recovery practices. If a customer feels that we have betrayed them, it invokes very strong intuitive responses that must be dealt with. This is similar to how recovery practices are important for the Fairness Foundation, but this focuses more on

recovery for mishaps which betrayed a relationship with a customer. Once a customer feels connected to a company, if that company does them wrong the Betrayal Foundation can be triggered. Solid recovery practices must be in place in order to win back the trust of loyalty in the relationship.

Another way to approach the Loyalty Foundation from a business standpoint is to trigger already existing loyalties. These can be the customer's loyalties to other relationships or groups in their lives. The strength in which loyalties are evoked seems to vary across genders. "The virtue of loyalty matters a great deal to both sexes, though the objects of loyalty tend to be teams and coalitions for boys, in contrast to two person relationships for girls" (Haidt 139). This means that for males, loyalty is commonly triggered by things such as sports teams or nations. You can use this in your business by playing on the associations that your target market already has. Sponsor or be sponsored by a particular sports team. Celebrity endorsements work under the same logic. A celebrity will stand for a group which men feel connected to, such as Tony Romo and the Dallas Cowboys. A Cowboys fan sees Tony Romo, feels the loyalty he has for the Cowboys, and some of that is extended to the product being endorsed by Romo even without the consumer being aware of it. These concepts can also be very useful in packaging and marketing concepts as far as using patriotic colors, supporting veterans, or really anything that draws an association between a business and its target market's object of loyalty. They can make their target market loyal to them by extension.

Loyalty works most strongly in another way with women. Because women are more relationship focused when it comes to the Loyalty Foundation, the foundation is best triggered by drawing connections between the business or product and preformed human relationships. For example, picture an advertisement for a bottle of wine, which shows a couple having a romantic dinner. This will automatically make a woman think of her significant other and the possibility of their romantic dinner. The Loyalty Foundation has begun to be triggered. Now if that woman chooses to buy the wine and later engages in a romantic dinner with her significant other, the Loyalty Foundation will be in full swing. The woman first connects the wine to the romantic dinner, which by extension connects the wine to the loyalty she feels to her partner. The product becomes a part of her relationship and she may become loyal to the product by extension. When she thinks of the product, she will think of her partner, which will trigger the Loyalty Foundation. Celebrity endorsements can also trigger the Loyalty Foundation in women. The celebrity will stand for a connection that they feel to that particular person. Many women like Drew Barrymore because of her easygoing, down to earth, adorable humor. They may feel connected to her because she is so relatable. The qualities of Barrymore, and the connection women feel to her can be transferred to products or brands, which is exactly why she is a CoverGirl.

The Loyalty Foundation does not vary as much as other foundations with political affiliation, except that it can be harder to connect to people on the left with

the loyalty foundation because they are more autonomous and independent minded. This means that they put less importance in affiliations with groups. This can be seen cross culturally as well. Eastern countries and societies which are more relationship focused, such as China, may feel the Loyalty Foundation more strongly when the connection comes to certain relationships, such as family. The WEIRDer a culture is, the less connections will be able to trigger the Loyalty Foundation. Still, the foundation should not be ignored in America. As shown in the previous examples, it is still very commonly and unavoidably triggered.

## **The Authority/Subversion Foundation**

The fourth moral foundation discussed by Haidt is the Authority/Subversion Foundation. Originally, this foundation was necessary to forge beneficial relationships within hierarchies. It is triggered by anything that is construed as an act of obedience, disobedience, respect, disrespect, submission, or rebellion with regards to an authority that is perceived as legitimate. As humans, we have a natural urge to fall into rank. It is even embedded in the English language in the way we say Mr., Mrs., Sir, and Mam. Allowing rank allows things to be simplified and less chaotic. It is important to distinguish, however, that this “authority should not be confused with power” (Haidt 143). Authority is more about the propensity for humankind to allot respect to certain people. This is what children do with their parents, and this is also what democracy is formed around. Power deals more with force and forcing people to obey while authority is more of a mutual agreement. As Haidt puts it, “human authority is not just raw power backed by the threat of force. Human authorities take on responsibility for maintaining order and justice” (Haidt 143). For this reason, humans tend to respect the process and objects of authority. It is necessary for the functioning of any good society. As primatologist Frans de Waal says, “Without agreement on rank and a certain respect for authority, there can be no great sensitivity to social rules, as anyone who has tried to teach simple house rules to a cat will agree” (Haidt 143).

Thus far I have been highlighting why the Authority Foundation is so important to societal structure, but how does this tie into business and marketing?

On the surface, it is obvious that this dimension comes into play all the time in management. The Authority Foundation is triggered by any worthy authority figure, such as a good boss. If a boss operates on power instead of authority, he or she is working against your natural instincts to fall into line. People tend to resist power. It makes us uncomfortable and our first instinct is often to fight it. People naturally respect authority because again, it is more of a mutual agreement. Instead of forcing employees to obey and ruling with an iron fist, a good boss will give employees the option of adhering to his authority. We have an urge to respect hierarchical relationships, and simply acting the part will make others want to respect his or her authority.

The Authority Foundation is triggered through marketing mostly through strategic endorsements and company branding. Because signs of respect trigger the authority foundation, certain product endorsers can be very beneficial. The number one rule to follow with this is that the people endorsing your product should have authority. If a business sells a new kind of headache medicine, for example, having an expert endorsement from a healthcare professional can prove very beneficial. This is true for the obvious reasons that customers will have more logical reason to trust the business, but it also has intuitive reasons. The triggering of the authority foundation is a totally innate thing. People do not decide to respect the opinions of others, they simply know their qualifications and then feel respect for their opinions. The human urge to abide by rank makes us inclined to respect and agree

with any designated authority figure. The Authority Foundation was triggered and you are then inclined to agree. It is the natural tendency to fall into line.

Endorsements from elderly individuals can also prove beneficial for much the same reason that people feel inclined to care for all infants. Our elders remind us of our family and the respect we have for the older members. Parents and grandparents are natural triggers of the Authority Foundation. If they tell you to do something, such as purchase a product, you will feel more obligated to do so. This is centered on perception and it works the same way for brand endorsers. Anything which resembles a mother, father, or grandparent figure is a natural trigger of the Authority Foundation. Under the same logic, public relations and marketing efforts become very important in order to build the brand as an authority figure. If this is done successfully, customers will develop an innate trust in and respect for the brand and they will be more inclined to listen to their marketing efforts.

“Cultures vary enormously in the degree to which they demand respect be shown to parents, teachers, and others in positions of authority” (Haidt 145). In many Asian countries this moral foundation is more strongly in play than in America. In China, for example, respect for authority is huge. This is because, as mentioned before, instead of focusing on who each person is as an individual, the emphasis is who they are in relation to the others in their life. Many western societies are focused on relationships over independent status, which makes the Authority Foundation so much more important. The natural urge to form rank is there, and because individuals are defined by their relationships, the Authority



Foundation which helps them realize their right place is triggered much more frequently and to a stronger degree. The same differences that can be seen cross culturally in this foundation are seen to a lesser extent in political affiliation. The Authority Foundation is more applicable to the political right, because they are less focused on autonomy.

## **The Liberty/Oppression Foundation**

The Liberty/Oppression Foundation is about equality. As such it “operates in tension with the authority foundation” (Haidt 173). This foundation has less immediate marketing applications, and I will discuss it primarily in relation to the balance that must be struck between it and the Authority Foundation. The Liberty Foundation was originally necessary because of the challenge of living in a small group with individuals who would dominate. It is the intuitive resistance to power being exerted which was discussed earlier. It can be triggered by aggressive controlling behavior and can spur righteous anger such as when you want to do something more because you were told not to. Things such as family dynamics could lead to this foundation affecting purchase decisions. For example, a teenager might intuitively want the hair gel in the graffiti-design box more than the hair gel in the white box because the graffiti is a symbol of an intuitive desire to rebel against his parents authority. Like in a good family, authority without oppression should be found within businesses. This hatred of oppression is found on the political left as well as the political right. Liberals focus more on social justice which concerns underdogs and victims, while conservatives have a hatred of tyranny with a ‘don’t tread on me’ kind of mentality.

## **The Sanctity/Degradation Foundation**

The final moral foundation discussed by Johnathan Haidt was the Sanctity/Degradation Foundation. The ‘original trigger’ was the need to avoid contaminants, but it has stretched into something much larger. This is the foundation that was in play during the Mewes example, as well as the other two short stories in which you were asked to decide if something was morally wrong. As previously stated, in most autonomous societies we believe that “just because something is disgusting doesn’t make it wrong” (Haidt 147). But disgusting things do trigger the Sanctity Moral Foundation. People have adverse reactions to such events, not because it directly harms them, but because it is degrading. We can find something disgusting through “feelings of stain, pollution, and purification (that) are irrational from a utilitarian point of view” (Haidt 147). As human beings, we expect a level of sanctity similar to the way we all maintain pride. We recognize some things as simply beneath us.

The Sanctity Foundation finds its importance in the business world because customers could attach one of the sides of this foundation to a brand or product. “People feel that some things, actions, and people are noble, pure, and elevated; others are base polluted, and degraded” (Haidt 150). It is easy to guess what side a business would rather be on. This is especially prevalent in the Food Industry, and the Health Foods Industry particularly. A business does not want their product to be affiliated with any unclean or disturbing ideas. This could mean advertising factory free farming techniques which produce a business’ ground beef, or the ‘pristine glacier-pool waterfalls’ from which a business bottles their water to sell. It is all in

the imagery. It is unlikely that any business, except ones selling religious items, will be able to reach the sanctity side of this where their products are literally seen as sanctified, but it is possible to be associated with the less dramatic association of *pure*. The idea of anything pure and clean sits better with humans because we were prewired for it to. Especially in the Health Foods Industry, people want to know what they are putting in their bodies. It is the job of marketers to ensure these people, hopefully truthfully, that they are avoiding contaminants. This is important in the markets for organic non-food items as well, and getting on the wrong side of this can be devastating. A business with abusive farming methods could feel the sting once the word gets out. Think about BP's reputation since the oil spill. Disgust is a very powerful emotion. This is clearly exemplified in a quote from philosopher Leon Kass' essay titled "The Wisdom of Repugnance":

"Repugnance, here as elsewhere, revolts against the excesses of human willfulness, warning us not to transgress what is unspeakably profound. Indeed, in this age in which everything is held to be permissible so long as it is freely done, in which our given human nature no longer commands respect, in which our bodies are regarded as mere instruments of our autonomous rational wills, repugnance may be the only voice left that speaks up to defend the central core of our humanity. Shallow are the souls that have forgotten how to shudder" (Haidt 177)

## Conclusion

Each of the moral foundations plays into intuitive thought in very real ways. Thus, understanding this dimension of the intuitive mind has great potential to improve marketing efforts. The intuitive mind is alive and active in everyone, just waiting to be spoken to. The key point for marketers is that they should not be too focused on marketing to the rational mind. Know the mind, know the audience, find out how strongly intuition is in play in any particular purchase situation, and then speak to that intuition.

There are many different ways to view the intuitive mind. Whether it is termed intuition, System 1, the elephant, the adaptive unconscious, or gut feelings, it is undeniable that automatic subconscious thought is responsible for much of the consumer decision making process. How much, and in what ways, is still being discovered. “Eventually, if the scientific community works as it is supposed to, the truth will emerge as a large number of flawed and limited minds battle it out” (Haidt 107).

In the meantime, to help achieve an understanding of intuition, marketers can also strive to appreciate its role in their personal lives. Experience is the best path to learning, and thus by indulging in intuitive thought, the process and implications can be understood more thoroughly. If a person knows what to look for, they can easily tell when intuition is influencing them. Learn to not worship reason so much in everyday life. “As the eighth-century Chinese Zen master Sen-ts’an wrote:

“The Perfect Way is only difficult  
for those who pick and choose;  
Do not like, do not dislike;  
all will then be clear.  
Make a hairbreadth difference,  
and Heaven and Earth are set apart;  
If you want the truth to stand clear before you,  
never be for or against.  
The struggle between ‘for’ and ‘against’  
Is the mind’s worst disease” (Haidt xxiv).

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