



# Creating a desire to purchase, looking at consumer behavior and manipulation tactics

Bachelor thesis – Marketing

## ABSTRACT

Companies are investing more and more into cookies and other data retrieving methods. This data is used to target consumers specifically to their interests. With as a main goal: creating a desire to purchase their good/service. How do companies create this desire? How can they maximize such a desire? Looking at consumer behavior and the usage of manipulation tactics might give the solutions.

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# 1. Introduction

The new year of college is starting, and you want to start great with a new laptop. After visiting several websites and quickly accepting the cookies, you see a lot of laptops that fall into your liking. Since the choice is hard, you extend the decision time. You do not need the laptop right away after all. Suddenly, laptop deals start to arise on every website you visit. Coincidence? Not at all. You have accepted follow-cookies, which give information to advertisement networks that you have visited such a website (NOS, 2019). This is a very recently upcoming way to influence your decisions on buying goods, like laptops. Are this really the best laptops or are you getting manipulated by seeing the same laptop over and over on different websites? Companies know, that if you see a brand or product over and over again, you will form attachment to this product and choose it over considered substitution goods. A great example is Coca Cola, which uses a lot of marketing strategies to keep its products in the picture. (Oldford, 2018)

The usage of cookies is one of many manipulative tactics to stimulate buying behavior. Tricks to manipulate the consumers of goods exist a long time. In the medieval times, Market Towns started to rise up through Europe. In these Market Towns shops were put together. This way concurrence between different sellers were based on a price/quality and marketing base, rather than an accessibility and monopolistic concurrence base. Comparison of products started to arise, due to a decrease in transaction costs, and marketeers needed to think of ways to deal with this rising concurrence. (Hilton, 1985). This has developed into tactics like price Anchoring, pump and dump, market cornering and advertisements. These examples are either manipulative tactics to control market prices or manipulate consumers to buy at set prices.

## 1.1 Problem

As discussed, all over time marksman have tried to manipulate the consumer into buying their goods. Manipulation tactics differ a lot, and different tactics should be used on different persons. The main focus, however, is to create a desire for their product, that consumers

cannot withstand. A complete understanding of consumer behavior and how to play in on them is necessary. There are a lot of studies on consumer behavior, and we see that consumer behavior differ within groups. Behavior is the dependent variable, with a lot of independent variables, like time, level of freedom within a choice, price, personal taste etc. influencing it. Independent variables can be influenced or manipulated. However, there is little on how to manipulate choice behavior in the best way. In practice, we see that to much manipulation might lead to the exact opposite of what is wished for (boomerang-effect). (Clee & Wicklund, 1980)

## **1.2 Research question & sub-questions**

To define the problems and set a base to tackle these problems, the following questions will be answered. The main research question:

***In what way can the desire of a consumer to purchase a good/service be optimized?***

With the sub-questions that will grand the foundation to answer this research question:

1. What is desire and how is a consumer's desire created?
2. What are commonly used manipulation tactics and the effects of them?
3. How do we prevent the boomerang-effect?

## **1.3 Relevance**

As mentioned, there is a lot of information on consumers behavior available. With the new technological era, a lot of new ways to manipulate and track a consumer's choice behavior is available. Within this thesis, the tactics used in marketing to manipulate/influence consumers are looked into and questioned. Do they really create an optimal level of desire and work better than other tactics? It is of interest by companies trying to manipulate the consumer as a main focus of marketing. Finding an optimal strategy or more than one strategy is always relevant to marketers. Learning about these tactics might also be interesting for consumers. They can learn whether or not they have chosen the best product or are being manipulated into buying that product.

## 1.4 Structure

The sub-questions will be discussed one by one by reviewing existing literature. This literature comes from different papers, journal and other scientific sources, to create a widely spread and diverse image. When the sub-questions are cleared out, the research-question can be answered and later be discussed. For extensive tables, there will be referred to the appendices.

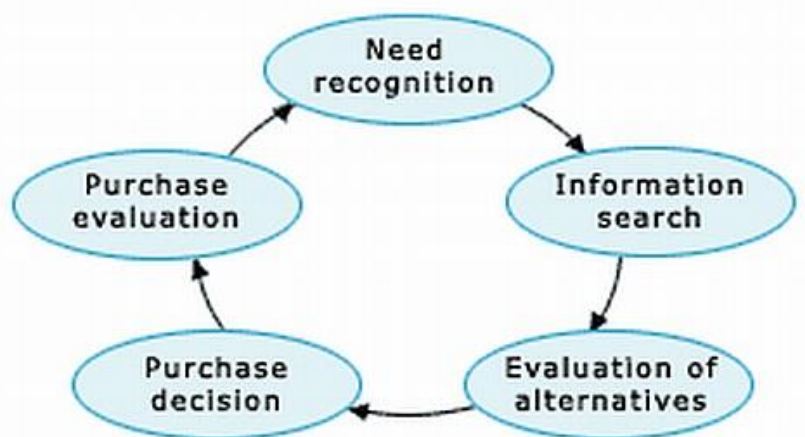
## 2. Review of literature

### 2.1 Desire

In this paper, the main interest lies on gaining desire of your product. In other words: making the consumer want your product/service. To do this, a full understanding of consumers is needed. A firm only exists because it has a product that the consumer wants. When comparative products, like substitutional product, come to the market, it is time to implement everything you have learned about your consumers into a marketing strategy. Collecting data about your consumers, thus is very important. (Solomon, 2012) Consumers buying behavior can be approached from different views and theories. Let's look at some.

#### 2.1.1 Purchase decision process

Understanding the decision process of a consumer, might give perspective on where to manipulate within this process. As Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1995) stated, this can be deduced from the **five stages** of a customer purchase decision process.



### **1) Need recognition**

*'The consumer will recognize a difference between his or her actual state and what the ideal state should be.'* (Jisana, 2014, p. 39).

From this moment forward the consumer has a stimulus to purchase and the buying process has started.

### **2) Information search**

After the stimuli to a purchase exists and the recognition of a need has taken place, the consumer needs to find enough information to fulfill this need. Everyone does this process in its own way, and there are a lot of ways to find information. In this phase it is important to the consumer to clarify what a he/she exactly wants and where he/she can get this.

### **3) Evaluation of alternatives**

Markets of goods or services usually exist out of more than one supplier. Alternatives are so common, that when a consumer has a clear image of what he/she wants, he/she can choose out of many. These products or services might differ in brand image, price, accessibility or little details. The amount of time and effort a consumer takes for this step is diverse, accounting to the people and importance of choice.

### **4) Purchase decision**

After carefully evaluating alternatives, consumers come to a decision. A decision can be manipulated by good reviews or recommendations of friends or family members. This is a form of normative compliance. (Jisana, 2014)

### **5) Purchase evaluation**

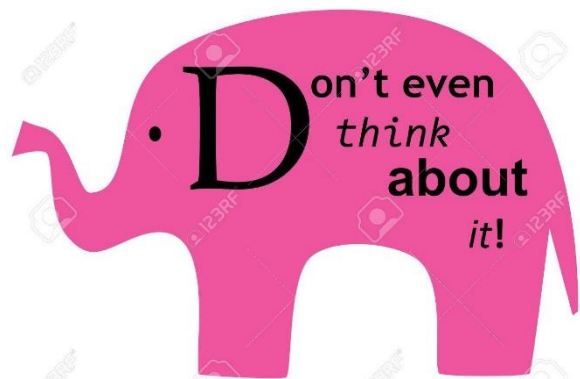
This is the face companies want to score high in, and where brand loyalty can be formed, and the desire can be created. The consumer will try to fulfill his need, that originates from step 1. If he succeeds, this will be good for the consumer and good marketing for the company. If he doesn't succeed, the five-step process will start over.

Marketeers seek interest in where to inflict in these stages. It is very hard to make a product, which takes away all the need recognition. So, companies need to implement a learn as you go tactic, where you observe data of evaluations and needs often and intensive. A study (Chae,

Black, & Heitmeyer, 2006) on pre-purchase and post-purchase satisfaction, regarding fashion of female tennis wear consumers show that pre-purchase satisfaction of a product occurs within the stage of another products evaluation stage. So, learning from other products lifecycles and their pros and cons stated by the consumers is important. These pros and cons from an evaluation (stage 5) turn into a need recognition (stage 1) and might just convince a consumer to switch to your alternative (stage 3.) Also, customers satisfaction can be increased if the consumers believed they are listened to. This way, people stay desired to your brand.

### 2.1.2 Freedom of choice

The five stages mentioned above are not all that influences a consumer's choice. Also, the freedom of choice plays a big part. Threats to these freedoms may influence choice behavior of consumers and these threats can be split up into impersonal threats, barriers like distance, or interpersonal threats, which are threats that deliberately influence a consumer's freedom of choice. These effects are explained in the reactance theory, by Brehm in 1966 in his work 'A theory of psychological reactance'. (Clee & Wicklund, 1980a) This theory describes how a consumer, whose freedom is threatened, acts. While using this theory, results are found that are discrepant to the same results you would achieve in micro-economics. For example, a consumer who buys the same product for years suddenly faces a price increase. As micro-economics teaches.  $P$  increases,  $Q$  decreases. Micro-economist would predict that this product will now be less attractive compared to alternatives, but in the reactance theory these products can get more attractive.

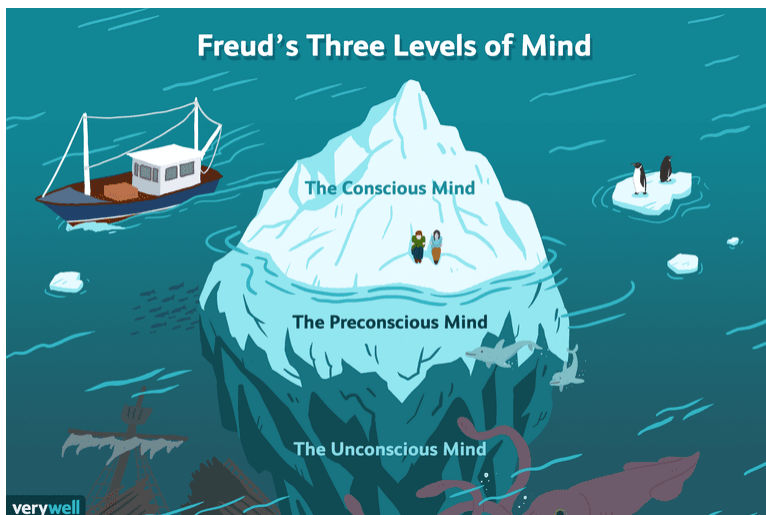


*However, independent of these various forces toward derogation, the central point here is the following: when a price increase constitutes a barrier to free choice and reactance is aroused, the threatened choice alternative (the product) tends to increase in attractiveness. (Clee & Wicklund, 1980b, p. 394)*

Brehm (Brehm & Brehm, 2013) creates a difference in freedoms. Absolute freedoms, that are allocated to the internal processes and cannot (easily) be taken away of someone, like thinking. Conditional freedoms are those freedoms that can be taken away, that thereby create a greater desire to this product. Brehm mentioned that every person has personal conditional freedoms, that he attaches an own value to, the perceived value of the freedom. The greater this value is to a person, the more arousal it brings after taking this away. This can be used to create desire. Like the desire to belong to an exclusive group of people that can afford a certain brand.

Other examples of freedom threatening events are: promotional influences, manipulative influences, product unavailability and government regulations. These events might cause a boomerang-effect. A boomerang-effect occurs when a manipulation tactic that, in this case, reduces the freedom of choice, causes the opposite effect of what is are trying to be accomplished. And a boomerang-effect is what every marketer is trying to avert. (Clee & Wicklund, 1980). However, this effect will be discussed later in this paper.

### 2.1.3 Three layered ice-berg theory



Ernest Dichter (2002) also wrote an exciting book on desire. The strategy of Desire is all about understanding consumers and how to transform needs into desires. In this book, he explains that simply lighting a cigarette can be deducted to the desire to a symbol of the flame that must

be lit by having sexual intercourse. At first, this sounds strange, but Dichter works with the three-layered ice-berg theory about consciousness, by Sigmund Freud. Just like Freud, he believes that primitive needs are the main drivers of motivation by consumer choice behavior. The three-layered ice-berg theory he describes how choices are not always exactly what you think but can come from a deeper desire inside. Looking at the thee layered ice-berg theory,



the outer layer is the consciousness. This layer is in control of all aware actions within the human mind. For example, reacting to feelings by getting some nutrition when you feel you get hungry. However, this is subject to the preconscious and unconscious mind when it comes to decision making. The preconscious mind also reacts to feelings, but these feelings are not yet currently aware, but can be made aware with ease. (Freud, 1920). Every memory you can recall, and so bring back to the conscious mind, falls within. The unconscious mind, on the other hand, shapes the behavior. These are feelings that rise up on instinct, shaped by past experience. A feeling that arises but cannot be explained.

*'It not only translates our thoughts into a primitive form of expression, but it reawakens the peculiarities of our primitive psychic life, the ancient predominance of the ego...'* (Freud, 1920, p. 63)

When it comes to decision making Freud intends to say that the deepest layer of consciousness often have another desire than the consciousness mind thinks a need does. Creating desire is not done by making people think of your product but making them internally crave for it as if it were a primitive instinct.

#### 2.1.4 Nicosia model

Within the Nicosia model (Jisana, 2014), desire or the consumers motivation to purchase is created by a close corporation between the firm and the customer. This model works with different fields. In the first field, a firm gives out a certain message to the consumers. This message is a determinant of how the consumer will look towards the product, the predisposition. The beginning of desire is created if the consumer falls into field two, search and evaluation of the products happens here, the pre-action field. This is for companies the most important step. If desire is created, the act of purchase happens in field three. Which will only lead to learning behavior. After the consumption, the consumer learns from the experience, which he will consider in field two at the next purchase. The firm learns from the feedback he receives in field four. With this new information, the firm adapts and changes the message he exposes to (new) potential consumers.

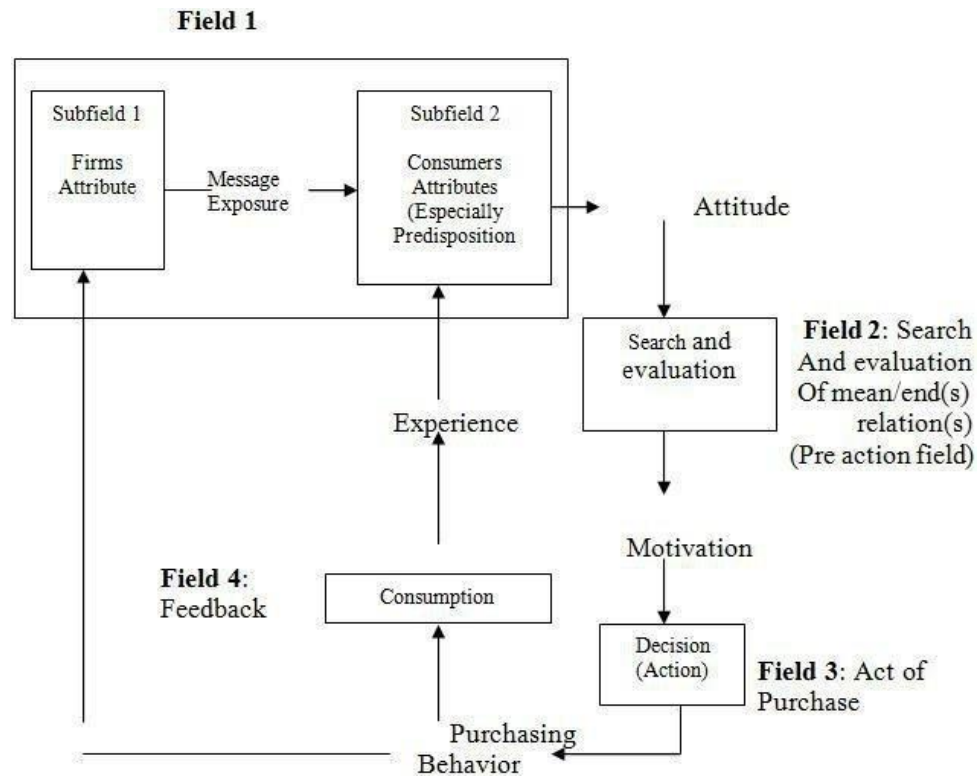


Figure 1- Nicosia model

### 2.1.5 conclusion

We learn a lot about choice behavior of consumers in these scientific papers and books. Different views on desire and how it can be created, cause different approaches. We learned that collecting data about your target audience is important. That the purchase decision model consists of five stages, where it is important that the need of a consumer is created. To keep the desire high throughout this process and learn from the purchase evaluation is key. The reactance theory thought us, that economic models that we use in micro-economics do not always work. Sometimes taking away a freedom or lowering this freedom by making the prices higher results into a higher demand. The ice-berg theory teaches that the desire can come from way beyond the conscious mind. Sometimes a desire cannot be rationally explained and comes from past experiences that exist within the unconscious mind. Lastly, we took a look at the Nicosia model, which examines the purchase behavior in a more dynamic way. The firms and consumers do affect one another in creating desire. So, desire is created in many different ways, which allows more than one manipulating tactic to exist. In the next section we will see how the manipulation tactics apply to the theories on desire.

## 2.2 Manipulation tactics

Manipulating consumers has a lot to do with how to promote your product. Publicity/advertising are main tools to show your product to the public. Below there will be tactics discussed on how they are manipulative. From bad publicity, to unconscious mind influencers, to brand and personal skills. All these subjects will be covered.

### 2.2.1 Negative publicity

A phrase that you will probably know. Bad publicity is publicity too. It is true that bad publicity can do harm to a firm, but can it increase its sales too? Throughout history, there are a lot of examples of bad publicity decreasing sales, or even destroying a company's brand image. Volkswagen had to deal with the diesel dupe in 2014. In this scandal 11 million cars worldwide had a wrong device, causing the measurement of pollution to be better than the reality. This scandal made frontpages all over the world. The penalty they received was a fine close to 18 billion dollars. (Hotten, 2015). This was not the only resulting fact. Other than big men losing their position within the organization of Volkswagen, they also got a negative brand image. For a company that relies on shareholders as main investors this is really troubling. The negative results have been the only theory about bad publicity for a long time.

*'Currently there exist examples that contradict this theory. A badly described wine in a prominent paper had seen its sales increase by around 5%. Also, the movie Borat, which made fun of Kazakhstan, caused an increase of around 300% in Kazakhstanis hotels after its release.'*  
(Berger, Sorensen, & Rasmussen, 2010).

How does this work? As the product is in the news more often, product awareness is freely created. Also, the accessibility of the product gets better. Since consumers attention is finite, they cannot evaluate all possible products in the market. They choose what is on there mind. Repeatedly being on the news will leave a big stain on the consumers brain. A study (Berger, Sorensen, & Rasmussen, 2010) shows how publicity reacts to book sales. Positive publicity increases the book sales of all authors, established or not. Negative publicity on the other hand, gives a different result. Established authors actually hurt by this kind of publicity and lose sales, while the unknown authors gain up to 45% in sales. The reviews were given in the New York Times. Based on this result, you could say that as an unknown author, negative

publicity is also publicity and all publicity will manipulate the consumers in a way that sales will increase.

### 2.2.2 Subliminal suggestions

Advertisements can be used as a form of manipulating. But why and what does advertisement do to the brain? As stated in the Journal of Business Ethics :

*'The obvious objection to persuasive advertising is that it somehow violates the autonomy of consumers.'* (Crisp, 1987, p. 13)

Here the autonomy of consumers is described as the possibility of making a decision. Desire is created without the consumers knowledge. Subliminal suggestions are a form of doing so. A subliminal suggestion is a message, hidden in background, under voices or background noises, or presented as a flashing image that flashes so fast, you do not recall you have consciously seen it. The same article as mentioned earlier (Crisp, 1987), describes a trial in a New-Jersey movie theater. The flashing method, here flashing of ice cream was tested, caused an increase in sales of ice cream directly after the sales. The people did not buy ice-cream because they consciously wanted ice-cream, but they unconsciously desired it after the movie and bought it without any autonomy.

### 2.2.3 Puffery

Another form of advertisement that is believed to manipulate a consumer's choice is repetition of the message and linking this message to certain images. This, so called puffery, works as follows:

*'By associating a product, for which we may have little or no direct need or desire, with symbols reflecting the fulfillment of these other, often subterranean interests, the advertisement can quickly generate large numbers of consumers eager to purchase the product advertised.'* (Arrington, 1982, p. 3)

For this reason, car commercials often characterize a lifestyle. The Rovers are adventure based and sportscars are with beautiful women. People desire the lifestyle often more than the car and link the car with the seen images. By repetition of these images with these

products, it becomes more plausible to the customer and they will buy the product due to a deeper desire than the product.

Arrington (Arrington, 1982) talks about first-order and second-order desire. Autonomous desire would be the first-order desire that would lay more on the surface. The desire to buy a product. The second-order desire is where puffery will work. This is the deeper layer of desire, not for the product but for key-elements like power and sex. These are not autonomous desires. If you ask somebody why they buy a product, they will most likely never give second-order desires as an explanation.

#### 2.2.4 Classic Conditioning

The classic conditioning comes from the biology but can be used in economic markets as well. The main concept of this theory is that you can teach people reflexes by connecting the stimuli of one thing, like a sound, image, or smell, to a stimulus of a second thing, like buying behavior or creating desire. The response a person would normally have to stimuli one, will now also happen by seeing stimuli two.

The most famous example of classic conditioning is Pavlov's experiment with dogs. Dogs drool when they are presented food, but after time passes and experiments were done, he created drooling dogs by simply setting of a sound. This sound was always produced before they got their food, so the stimuli of getting food was drooling, and this was now paired with the new stimuli of hearing the sound. PAVLOV CITAAT

In marketing this can be used too. If companies succeed in linking warmth or going to the beach with drinking their brand beer, every time the weather gets nice, consumers want a beer. The stimuli most people get by going to the beach is happiness. If you link these two separate things in the right way, the same happiness of going to the beach can be achieved by drinking a beer at home on a rainy day. If companies do this, this is very manipulating.

### 2.2.5 Branding – Mere exposure method

Branding is a form of a mere exposure, where you can form preference by consumers without them granting any awareness why they prefer it. This is the most common form of manipulating the preference of a consumer. A big modern example of people that have a huge brand loyalty are Apple consumers. Apple created their own atmosphere that is not easy for consumers to leave or replace by another brand. This is done unconsciously and the main reason for staying with Apple is that they are used to it and satisfied. (Haselton, 2017) But how does this work?

When people become exposed more often to things, like logo's, slogans, combination of words or even pictures with the same faces over and over again, they become familiar with these things. This familiarity causes an unconscious preference towards that brand for example. This form of repetition is increasing the availability of attentive resources, thus granting a memory trace towards the stimulus. This results in familiarity can arouse positive feelings, resulting into a preference of the product. Not only the amount of exposures is important, also the length of exposure plays a part. A longer duration is not always better. People can get annoyed by long exposure to the stimulus and dislike the brand due to this. So, to get the right time of exposure is important, but this is different in every situation. (Janiszewski, 1993).

Branding is an example of this mere exposure method. Branding is explained using the example of Adidas. The first type of branding used is product/retail branding. Adidas differentiates with their name and logo. The logo and stripes on the clothing are representative of Adidas, thereby a stimulus to consumers seeing this. The second and third branding types are respectively personal and corporate branding. Adidas has sponsorships within their target audience. They sell sport clothing and have sponsorships with prominent sport-players and teams like Arjan Robben, Lionel Messi, Bayern Munich and the Argentinian national team. Corporate branding concerns the activities the brand is connecting their name to. Adidas does a lot of this at sporting events like FIFA world cup, creating exposure to their target audience. This, however can



hurt a company as well. FIFA has been in the papers more than once, accused of corruption. It is important to think about the events you connect your brand name to as an organization. Lastly, Adidas did co-branding. Here, two (or more) brands work together and get associated together. The famous Adidas Beckenbauer shoes are an example, creating an audience and awareness for the Beckenbauer brand. (Okonkwo, 2007)

#### 2.2.6 Pricing

Within pricing, you can do a lot of different things. From keeping prices high at all time, to having sales and all kinds of tricks can be used to set a price range in the consumers head, to which they always think they obtained a good deal. An example of this is anchoring. What is anchoring?

##### **Anchoring**

The anchoring effect is an effect where people set a base principle, like average value of products in a store, based on the first stimulus they encounter. This is a form of cognitive bias. This base principle is then used to make ratings of the other things in the room. These are either better or less than the placed anchor. (Wilson, Houston, Etling, & Brekke, 1996)

This effect can be used in a lot of situations. As anchoring is something the brain always does, shops can use this to their benefit. Placing a more expensive item at the beginning of the shop, puts the prices of the other items in the store in a better perspective, a more attractive perspective. Places where negotiation of prices take place, are places where anchoring is important as well. The first bid depends if the negotiated price is going to be high or lower, since it sets the anchor. An article in the Journal of Consumer Research (Simonson & Drolet, 2004) describes these effects regarding the willingness-to-pay (WTP) and willingness-to-accept (WTA) of consumers. They describe how anchoring does influence our consumer behavior. Simonson and Drolet investigated if there were any difference to if you were the negotiator or the one negotiated with. They found there was hardly any difference between WTP for a buyer and WTA for a seller. Concluding that consumers can make use of this manipulating tactic as well.

## Urgency

As a company, you like consumers to see and react immediately to your products. Seeing a product and impulsively buying this product can be realized if somehow this impulsive behavior can be stimulated. Urgency to purchase is something that creates this. Short time high sales, limited edition products and products with a finite stock like tickets to a concert are all examples of urgency that stimulates impulsive behavior. These tactics often work, as there is a risk factor in it of not being able to purchase. Urgency can be divided into positive urgency and negative urgency, referring to the emotions and actions it evokes. These intense emotions, whether positive or negative, destabilize the mind's ability to think rational, thus creating a greater accessibility and vulnerability to impulsive behavior. Impulsive behavior causes the person to experience an ecstasy, an immediate fierce response of dopamine to the brain. (Simonson & Drolet, 2004) Later, when rationality has returned, these impulsive choices can be regretted as the joy you would experience from an impulsive buy in a normal mood would be way lower than in an extreme mood.

As the word may predict, positive urgency happens in a people are extremely good state of mind and negative urgency happens when people are in an extremely negative mood, due to stress, insecurity or other down bringing factors. (Cyders & Smith, 2007). Behavior that fits this positivity are the usage of drugs and risky sexual behavior. This is seen more often with students, as examples contains impulsive drinking behavior as a celebration, while still needing to drive or other sensation seeking events. Negative urgency on the other hand has got to do with a lack of planning or lack of perseverance. (Zapolski, Cyders, & Smith, 2009)

People can be manipulated according to their state of mind, but also to the stereotype that their group falls into. This way, bungee jumping is an impulse activity that teenagers do on vacation and the salesmen use the urgency of the one time-experience here. And sales are an example of urgency, since they offer limited time deals, that do bring an ecstasy to the mind. In an extreme state deals seem to be too good to be true and are impulsively bought. When the rational mind has returned, you suddenly regain the ability to search and compare and notice that urgency got the best of you.



## High price setting

As micro-economist will predict. The higher the price, the lower the quantity of products sold. But is this true and how do brands like Burberry and Louis Vuitton stay on the market? We spoke of branding and the effects it brings with it. It is hard to switch brands once familiarity with the brand has begun. Something else seems to be decisive.

People care about how they are seen. Lifestyle advertisement, as also discussed, plays a big part. Consumers of these luxury brands to show off to what lifestyle they belong or admire to belong to. A luxury lifestyle, that some brands are committed to, should increase a consumer's willingness-to-pay for the products. The amount to which a brand can upper there prices has got to do with what audience they want to sell to and if they want to be the most luxe brand or a mediocre one. (Massara, Porcheddu, & Melara, 2018). Advertising with world leaders in sports, artist or fashion can increase the prices of your brand even more. This is called co-branding or using the power/authority of the famous person to position your brand in a better way.

### 2.2.7 Personal skills

Salesman that go door by door or phone calls by companies that want you to switch. In general, this is perceived to be annoying, but why does it still exist? Because it works. The NOS recently posted an article, proving this. Last year, there has been a record of people switching from energy supplier companies. (NOS, n.d.) The data comes from ACM, which is a reliable and prominent data collector of the consumer and market sector. The article mentions that 71% does this regarding price deals, but this has everything to do with sales techniques.

Some characteristics are just good to have to improve sales, but also being a leader. These characteristics improve your believability. Talking in a deep voice, for example, creates a natural response of more respect and admiration. This is instinct and comes from the idea of following the alpha male in the group. Unconsciously, consumers listen with more reverence and are more likely to comprehend. Secondly, appealing to sexuality can be great too. The instinct to reproduce is buried deep inside every animal, including a human. These natural motivations are purely instincts and can be used to the benefits of sales. (Jolhke, 2006)

Other than characteristics, skills can be learned and applied as well.

*“the altering of sales behaviors during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation”*  
(Weitz, Sujan, & Sujan, 1986, p.175)

Teaching yourself how to speak in the right way helps. Sounding clearly and speaking in simple words create a greater bond than using expensive/smart words. Create tension in the story you are selling, use the extremes like ‘best savings’ and ‘largest company’ and use important sounding sources to your benefits. People tend to appeal to authority. These should be used in the right way and is called the adaptability in sales. These skills apply to building a bond between the salesperson and the consumer of the good, and this is proofed to be improving sales in the Journal of Buisness & Industrial Marketing. (Keillor, Parker, & Pettijohn, 2000) For a company it is thus proofed to be attractive to invest in salesmen and sales technique behavior.

#### 2.2.8 conclusion

There are a lot of manipulation tactics and every tactic is used in a different occasion. The perfect manipulation tactic does not exist, but every manipulation tactic can be better than the other one in the right place and time. Later we will use the tactics and link them to the theories on desire, to find out where this tactic fits best. Sometimes a tactic can do just the opposite of what someone intended to do. This is called the boomerang effect.

### **2.3 The boomerang effect**

The boomerang effect is the phenomenon when a policy designed to prevent an occasion stimulates the happening of this occasion. People get strongly suggested to do something or must do something, and this is where the psychological events happen that cause the opposite to take place. But what psychological events cause people to act as contrary as they do?

As discussed in the literature on desire, freedom of choice is important to consumers. Buying behavior is influenceable by freedom, and when freedom is violated, different behavior starts

to arise. People can become stubborn and do the opposite. This, often biased and irrational behaviour can be explained by the reactance theory of Brehm (Clee & Wicklund, 1980). The shrinkage of freedom turns into a natural process of retaking this freedom.

### 2.3.1 Cognitive dissonance

The boomerang effect happens when a new idea, application, punishment or monetary policy is introduced. The new application changes the way consumers feel and bring them in a state of unease. The boomerang effect behaviour can be explained by the cognitive dissonance theory, which tells us how people react in a state of unease.

*'Cognitive dissonance can be seen as an antecedent condition which leads to activity orientated toward dissonance reduction just as hunger leads to activity oriented toward hunger reduction'* (Festinger, 1957, p. 3)

Due to physical unease of the activity and the results it brings with it, people change behaviour. The two examined cognition conflict, for example: people start eating when they are hungry, because the feeling of being hungry makes them feel uncomfortable. The hunger conflicts with how a person wants to feel. These cognitions that a person experienced, can be anything from values to beliefs, ideas or just emotions. The human mind is made to keep itself in harmony and with this protective mechanism it prevents to feels discomfort due to an inconsistency. It alters its behaviour. What can people do to prevent contradiction/cognitive dissonance? Festinger (Festinger, 1957) found that people find ways to talk things right in their head. When doing this, the unease of the contradicting cognitives were getting This will be explained based on an example of a smoker. A smoker that knows (s)he can get cancer from smoking has a contradiction that causes an unease. This is an example of cognitive dissonance.

#### 1) Modify the cognitions in their head

People change the message in their head. This way, the cognitive dissonance that causes the unease is lowered as one of the two cognitions is talked away. A smoker would say that (s)he does not smoke that much. The unease is thereby lowered.

## 2) Trivialize the cognition

People change the importance of the cognition. A smoker would say that the evidence of getting cancer is not that good. They know the threat exists but trivialize it in such a way that it is no longer important enough to make them feel unease about it.

## 3) Adding more cognitions

The contradiction is made less dismountable, by adding more cognitions. Exercising could be an added cognition, which is good for the health. However, this does not make smoking less bad.

## 4) Denying the cognitions

This is the last thing a person can do to overcome the unease of the cognitive dissonance. The relatedness of the cognitions is denied, so a smoker would tell himself that smoking does not have anything to do with the risk of getting cancer.

### 2.3.2 Conclusion

The boomerang effect is a strong effect, that policy makers have to keep in mind. As discussed, it strongly depends on the limitation to a person's freedom. These limitations are overcome by the consumers, as they try to regain the freedom level they admired. Although the actions it takes to regain this freedom are not always best for a person, they change the way of thinking in a way that cognitive dissonance occurs. When trying to manipulate people in their buying behaviour, this effect is something that should always be taken into account.

## 3. Field research

### 3.1 Survey on buying behavior

The purpose of this quantitative research is to prove that manipulation tactics work, when used in the right way. Within this short survey, the audience is asked a few questions about cell phones. There are two versions of the survey, but the groups do not know that. The first

group will get a normal survey, with no manipulating tactics hidden within it. This group functions as the control group. The second group is the manipulated group. Here, the effects of anchoring and subliminal suggestion are put to the test.

Survey group two will see higher prices for the phones than survey group one. The open question in the end will ask the consumers maximum willingness to pay for their ideal cell phone. If anchoring is proved, the total amount a consumer of group two is willing to pay is higher. Subliminal suggestion is added throughout the survey to try manipulating the color of the cell phone. Where group one will have a steady background, group two will have influencing images with a blue color. This will, if subliminal suggestion is done right, make the color blue more popular in group two. The anchoring questions are question 4 and 5. These questions have an A and B form. The subliminal suggestion is based on the cellphones on the front page of the survey.

There have been implemented some segmentations within the questionnaire. Sex might influence the color. Age group might influence the maximum price of a phone or the favorite feature a person needs on a phone. Brand, this might explain results indicating brand loyalty. The questions can be found in Appendix 1. Surveymonkey.com was used, so everyone could only fill in the questions once. This was done trying to avoid manipulation of the results.

The results found in the survey were not shocking. Based on the learned theory, it was expected that survey group one had different results than survey group two. In fact, the theory was such accurate that the willingness to pay between the two groups differed by 163 euro. The subliminal suggestion, however, was not easy to implement. The blue color was only implemented in the cover. This was not really seen back into the results. In total survey group one was filled in 60 times and survey group two was filled in 56 times.

Some surprising results:

- 20% of the control group 'one' felt they were being manipulated. In group two only 10% thought they were being manipulated.
- 72% of people in control group 'one' chose the color black, while only 6% chose blue. In group 2 8% chose blue.

- Group two consist of a higher percentage people in the age group 18 to 25. This result is only around 9%, with 50% in group one and 59% in group two.
- 66% op the people in group two found the anchoring question insanely high.
- The amount of males and females was close to 50% in both surveys.

The most surprising result, however was that anchoring does have an effect. Group two felt less manipulated but were willing to pay an average of 697 euro for a new phone, while group one was only willing to pay a amount of 534 euro for the ideal smart phone. The results can be seen on the figure below.

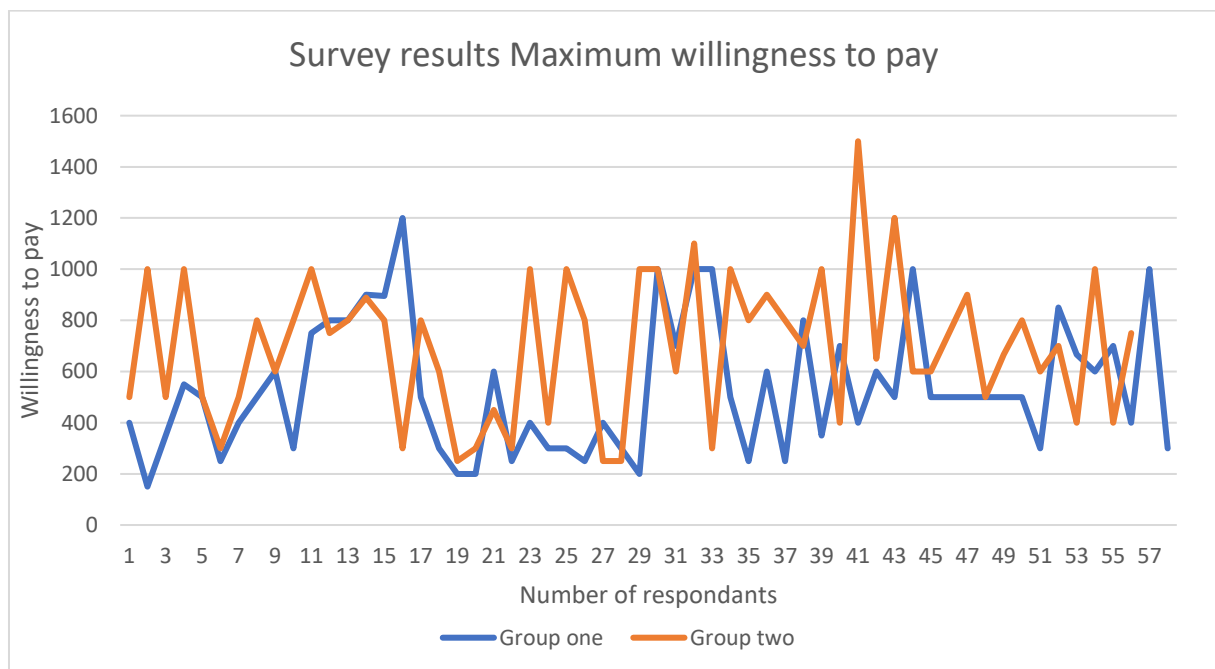


Figure 2- Survey results Anchoring

## 4. Conclusion

Within this thesis, the main goal was to define the main research question:

***In what way can the desire of a consumer to purchase a good/service be optimized?***

On the road to this answer, three sub-questions have been answered. After this, manipulation tactics have been tested in a short survey. All this together lead to the following conclusions.

The first thing that needs to happen before a consumer starts the purchase process is the creation of desire. Desire can be created in different ways and under different views. The views can be different from one another but can also be a complement to each other. We see that freedom of choice acts on desire a lot different than the ice-berg theory would act on desire, but both can be taken into account with the purchase decision process.

A lot of manipulation tactics came along. Unfortunately, or fortunately, there is no optimal manipulation tactic that works under all circumstances. All discussed manipulation tactics can work and work optimal in the right place. Often, we see that more than one manipulation tactic is used by a company. This is possible since they all inquire a different form of desire. Branding can easily be combined with pricing strategies or subliminal suggestions. These manipulation tactics are differentiated by the fact that they can work on the conscious or unconscious mind.

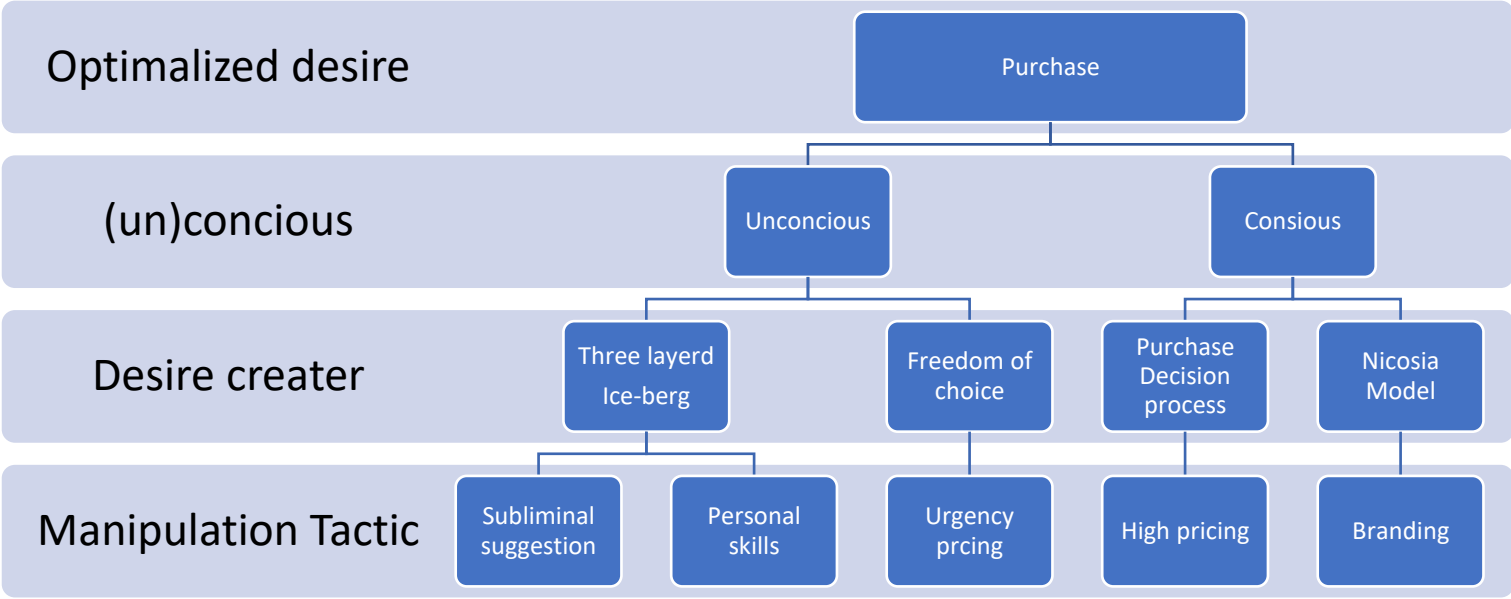


Figure 3- Scheme purchase to manipulation tactic

Although the manipulation tactics all work in the right place, they should never be overdone or be used in the wrong place. The boomerang effect teaches us how the consumer will react, which results into the opposite of the requested results.

From the survey we learned that manipulation tactics do work. Although, the results are based on only around 60 each of surveys completed, it showed how easily people are tricked. People

did not actually pay money so had low incentives to withdraw them from setting a higher willingness to pay, which might also have changed the results.

Concluding, there is no optimized manipulation tactic, but the right manipulation tactic used in the right way does increase desire and willingness to pay. Manipulation tactics do work, and salesmen do benefit from them.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Remarks on survey

These surveys were intended to prove the effect of anchoring. Based on the results, anchoring does affect the willingness to pay and would be a great mechanism to influence selling prices. On the other hand, these surveys did not get a lot of reviews. The quality of the results can really be taken into doubt. The people mostly had popular brands as phones, which are more expensive already. This can influence the willingness to pay a lot, due to brand loyalty. This is not taken into account. More than half of the people that filled in these surveys were between age 18 and 25. This might also influence the results. Also, there were no real incentives. The people that filled in these surveys were not actually paying for a phone, which might influence the results a lot.

### 5.2 Previous literature

The results found in these surveys embrace the results found in previous literature about anchoring. When you use the manipulation strategies in the right way, they work and give you better results concerning sales, willingness to pay and negotiations. This thesis failed to identify an ideal manipulating tactic but emphasizes the importance of correct understanding of these tactics, looking at desire creation in the conscious and unconscious mind. This thesis took desire to a deeper level, looking at desire from different angles and comparing these visions. A disadvantage of this approach is contradicting visions.



### 5.3 Future research

The important thing about manipulation tactics is how to acquire desire. This thesis only took a look at a few ways to obtain desire and are purely based on existing literature. Future research can implement more ways of creating desire and bringing them to the test. With regards to the manipulation tactics, a more extensive research on the effects of them should be researched. This is not done substantially enough in this thesis.

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## 7. Appendix

### Appendix 1: Survey questions

- 1) **Sex?**
  - a) Male
  - b) Female
- 2) **In what age group do you fall?**
  - a) <18 years
  - b) 18 to 25 years
  - c) >25 years old
- 3) **What brand is your current Cell phone**
  - a) Apple
  - b) Samsung
  - c) Huawei
  - d) Oneplus
  - e) Oppo or Xiaomi
  - f) Other
- 4a) **I find it important to have the newest cell phone, even if it costs me 800 euro or more**
  - a) True
  - b) False
- 4b) **I find it important to have the newest cell phone, even if it costs me 500 euro or more**
  - a) True
  - b) false
- 5a) **Apple recently came out with the Iphone Xs. This 64GB phone costs around 1.100 euro. How do you feel about this?**
  - a) This price is insane for a cellphone, I would never pay this.
  - b) It is not that expensive for a phone this quality.
  - c) The most expensive phones of other brand are not that much lower. I would buy it.
  - d) I have no thoughts about this.
- 5b) **Huawei and Oppo are fairly new brands in Europe. These brands bring the best phones to the market, like the Huawei P20 pro ( around 350 euro) and the Oppo Reno (around 400 euro). How do you feel about these brands?**
  - a) Great price/quality phones, I would consider this
  - b) I do not trust these brands enough to buy my phone from them
  - c) They cannot compete with Apple or Samsung, because the phones will always be worse
  - d) Seems like good phones, but I am loyal to my brand

**6) A new cellphone usually costs me**

- a) 800-1000 euro
- b) 600-800 euro
- c) 400-800 euro
- d) less than 300 euro

**7) The most important feature of a cellphone is:**

- a) Camera quality
- b) Processor (how fast my phone works)
- c) Color, size and the way it looks
- d) The quality of the screen (pixels/resolution)

**8) If I bought a new phone, this would be the color:**

- a) Black
- b) dark blue
- c) White
- d) Metallic Silver

**9) If you could buy your ideal cell phone, what would be the maximum you are willing to pay?**

.....

**10) Do you feel like you have been manipulated in any way?**

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) I don't know

**Survey group one**

<https://nl.surveymonkey.com/r/CK2JN57>

**Survey group two**

<https://nl.surveymonkey.com/r/2RN2MHW>