

“Beyond the Click: Managing the Unconscious Drivers of Digital Brand Loyalty: A Psychoanalytic Audit of Consumer Decision-Making in Online Retail”

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Abstract

Why do you buy things that you don't need?. Digital Marketing strategy is the most important in business. This paper examines the thought process of consumers with a multidisciplinary approach. First, I look at Sigmund Freud's concept of Id, Ego, and Superego. This can explain the inner war of a consumer. It can tell how the 'urge to buy' can be balanced with price justification. Next, I apply Jacques Lacan's mirror stage. This reveals the reason for buying a product without any utility. A product can be bought for a 'vibe.' Here, the 'Ideal I' looks to be satisfied. Finally, I look at Carl Jung's archetypes. It can tell how some brands feel like family. It can explain why one becomes a fan of a brand. By examining Sigmund Freud's 'Id, Ego, Superego' theory, Jacques Lacan's Mirror Stage, and Carl Jung's Collective Unconscious, the paper reveals three audit matrices to build a strong brand. Overall, the paper offers practical knowledge for digital marketing through psychoanalysis. It tells how a brand can win by managing consumer's psychic identity.

Key Words: Digital Marketing, Psychoanalysis, Consumer Behaviour, Affective Marketing, Sigmund Freud, Lacanian Mirror Stage, Jungian Archetypes, Psychoanalytic Consumer Research, Brand Loyalty, English Literature, Business Management

Introduction

In this paper, we look at behind the scenes of digital marketing. What is driving our shopping habits?. People are not just purchasing products. They are buying them for how they make them feel. Every 'Add to Cart' is a much bigger psychological game. We are trying to feed our egos. We are trying to fill our emptiness and insecurities. The point here is that the brand itself must appeal to the customers. This article explores the hidden psychological reason behind every click to buy. To understand a consumer, we look at three famous thinkers in psychology. The paper analyzes two branches of psychoanalytic thought with a digital twist.

The Tripartite Framework: Sigmund Freud's Id, Ego, and Superego

Sigmund Freud believed a person's mind is always swaying between his impulses (Id) and his responsible senses (Ego & Superego) [4]. The Id is the hook. Modern marketing can make use of psychological triggers like FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) or the scarcity effect to hook consumers. When the Id sees the 'Only 2 left' or 'Sale ends in 1 hour', it panics. It demands action. Here, the rational brain won't catch up. Next, the ego acts up. This raises questions like 'Is it a scam?' or 'Is it worth it?'. Marketing should feed the ego. The consumer's ego should validate purchasing a product. Otherwise, they will abandon the cart. Here, product comparison tables, 'best value' or 'most popular' labels can reinforce. Product reviews are like 'ego-fuel'. They give the social proof needed. At times, the 'Buy now and save XX%' will act as a psychological trigger. It can give the ego a chance to justify a buy. Superego aspect can remove the buyer's guilt, while the ego shows logical proof.

Table 1. The Freudian Audit Matrix: Practical Application

Part of Mind	Questions in consumer's mind	What it does?	Marketing Techniques	Research Audit Questions	Strategic Business Outcome
Id	Do I want it now?	Triggers the urge	Sensory domination, Attractive visuals, Scarcity effect, "one-click" buying.	"Is our brand exciting enough to trigger an immediate want?"	Higher Sales velocity.
Ego	Is this a smart choice?. Why is this better?	Rational justification is needed	Comparison charts, 4 or 5 star reviews, Authority bias, Confirmation bias, Easy returns.	"Do we offer enough logical/ social proof to make a product purchase feel smart?"	Lower cart abandonment. Removes buyer doubt.
Superego	Does this brand represent me?	Representation of values / Identity alignment	Highlighting ethical sourcing, sustainability, B-corp status, cruelty-free products.	"Does our brand have enough 'moral cover' so customer feels proud to own it?"	Long-term Loyalty. Customer Lifetime Value (LTV) increases.

Strategic Insights for Market Dominance

A marketing campaign can fail when these 3 aspects are neglected. The best marketers don't just sell products. They resolve the inner war between Id, Ego and Superego. Eg, in a foundation (makeup) marketing, the psychology is tricky. The customer wants the flawless look (Id). The ego is afraid the shade is wrong or makeup will ruin skin health. The superego would feel like spending money to 'hide' the skin is vain. Solution:

‘A serum foundation’ that has skincare benefits (Ego). It exceeds its functional benefit. Ego will be fulfilled. The Ego gives permission to Id. By marketing it as a “Serum,” we allow the Ego to say: “This is actually an investment to skin health.” Apart from this, technology is an Ego-tool. The Shade Finder Camera on a brand’s website benefits many. It removes the risk of the wrong shade. The foundation can come in refillable bottles (Superego). The brand labels ‘not tested on animals’ or ‘vegan’ will satisfy Superego. It removes the buyer’s guilt. To attract buyers of varied thought processes, a brand can come up with a strategy that will satisfy all three psychic aspects. It is how we build a brand that is impossible to ignore.

The Mirror of Success: Lacan’s Mirror Stage

Brands do not sell objects. They sell reflections. Freud’s Id wants a product. Lacan’s Mirror Stage can reveal why a customer wants the image of owning the product. “If I own that, I’m that”. When we were a baby, we looked in the mirror and realized, “Oh that’s me.” This is Lacan’s mirror stage [9]. As adults, we act the same with brands. A Porsche is not seen as a car (not a mode of transportation) but a mirror of success. Digital media is like this huge mirror.

A consumer aspires to attain a certain lifestyle by at least using a product. A famous influencer will post a picture with a luxury passport cover in a private lounge. A product ad in a perfect life. This can drive more sales as compared to trad. marketing. The reason is, here, our brain thinks “I want that life”. As one cannot buy a private jet, they opt for the luxury passport cover. It is not needed. However, it makes you feel like you ‘belong’ in that life. The Ideal ‘I’ starts to value based on vibe. Subconsciously, they associate with the ‘successful’ self through the product. Luxury automotive brands like Porsche, Range Rover, and luxury fashion brands profit off this psychology. The ‘vibe’ of the product matters. Here, utility is dead. The purchase becomes the final act of catching the ‘Ideal self’.

Product	The Functional Reality	The Lacanian Identity
Expensive Micro-Bag (eg. Jacquemus Le Chiquito)	Cannot even hold a smartphone. No utility.	“I’m elite”, “ I have no baggage.”
Designer Water Bottle / Holder (eg, Stanley Cup)	Expensive, harder to carry	“I’m the peak of health and luxury.”
The ‘Hype’ Plastic Figurine (eg, Labubu)	An overpriced plastic figure with no functional use.	“I’m a part of a global trend.”

Table 2. Brand Power (Psychological) through Identity: Examples

Table 3. The Lacanian Audit Matrix: Application for Marketing

Digital Mirror Stage	What Your Mind Does?	Why You Buy It?	Digital Marketing Execution	Strategic Outcome
The Projection (the Dream)	Seeing one's 'Ideal I' online.	To feel like that person.	High Status Content (with celebrities, influencers, luxury aesthetics)	Creation of 'lack.'
The Identification (the Match)	Identifying with a 'successful' image. "If I buy that, I'm like them."	To close the gap between the real self and the Ideal self.	Lifestyle Integration (the product is a "background detail" of a perfect life)	Customers value a product based on its 'vibe' instead of price or use.
The Capture (the Habit)	The algorithm pushes that "dream" over and over.	Because the brand has become part of identity.	AI Algorithms (AI shows the Ideal 'I' more times that day).	Identity Lock-in with viral symbols.

Archetypal branding: Jungian Archetypes

This can be looked at as 'brand personality.' Jung believed that all humans had characters in their minds [7]. It can be a brave hero, wild explorer, nurturing mother, etc. The brand has to connect the customer to a story. This way customers will feel like they belong. Red Bull is not just a soda company. They have marketed their 'personality' as 'the explorer' archetype. Consistently, they use digital media. They upload videos of extreme stunts, soapbox racing, sky diving, etc. When you see it, you feel a rush. Digital media marketing gives a global reach. The audience see a heroic personality type. Here, it is an adventure story. Not a product. This links back to Lacanian theory. You don't buy the drink for its content. You are joining the 'explorer' gang. Brand strategy can be based on the product archetype and its sub-archetype. Finding the right sub-archetype is important for a brand.

Table 4. Understanding the Sub-Archetype of the Main Archetype

Brand Example	Hero Sub-Archetype	Psychological Trigger
Nike	The Warrior Hero	Validates the customer's hardwork and discipline.
Duracell	The Rescuer Hero	Resolves the need for reliability and strength.
Tesla	The Superhero	Transcends limits, selling the impossible.

Table 5. The Jungian Archetype Audit Matrix: Identity Mapping

Archetype Stage	Psychological Action	What Your Mind Does?	Digital Marketing Execution	Strategic Outcome
The Recognition	Finding a match	The customer recognize the brand as a 'familiar' character.	Consistent storytelling. Stick to one brand color, music, font and vibe.	Consumers bypass logic as they feel they already know the brand
Universal Resonance	Triggering the unconscious	Mind sees a human desire. Mind connects with that.	Content that invites consumers to join subconsciously (eg, Red Bull's 'wings' community)	These 12 archetypes work universally. It can make a brand a global icon.
Archetypal branding	Emotional connection	Be the 'face' of a specific human experience.	Highlight the feeling of experience, not the ingredients of a product.	Consumers buy the identity. Not just the product.

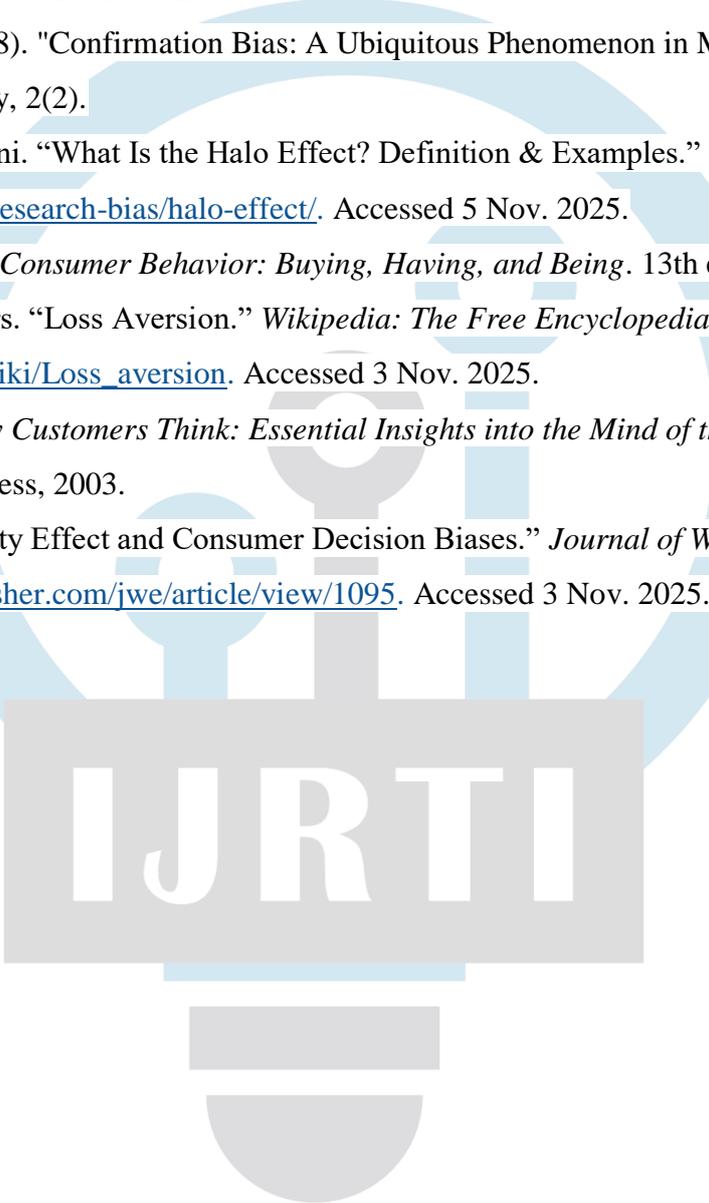
Conclusion

When we combine two psychoanalytic pathways, we create a brand that is impossible to ignore. From a brand standpoint, you are not selling. You are solving a mental conflict. You are fulfilling a dream. Through the 3-matrix audit, we understand how the mind handles a product. Freudian logic handles the inner war. It makes peace. Lacanian logic delivers the aspiration. An elite vibe or a successful life. Next, the Jungian logic handles the common bond. It gives 'personality' to join the brand community. The three audit matrices have revealed hidden aspects of consumer behavior through psychoanalytic theories. It sums up how the digital self is constructed through consumerism and consumption. This combo is the secret to digital marketing in 2026. This is how we build a successful brand.

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