Consumers Are Unconsciously Lying to Us

Let's Swipe

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"Why did you choose this investment platform over others?"

"Because it had lower fees and better returns."

But here's the fascinating part: consumers genuinely don't have conscious access to most of their decision-making process.

And that's perfectly normal as that's how any person responds.

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The Rationalization Reality

When we ask consumers directly WHY they made complex choices:

They create a logical explanation AFTER the decision was made.

This is "post-hoc rationalization". and it's just how human mind works.

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Two Systems of Thinking

EXPLICIT (System 2): Slow, deliberate, conscious
- *"I compared features and fees"*
- *Can be verbalized easily*
- *What consumers THINK drives decisions*

IMPLICIT (System 1): Fast, automatic, unconscious
- *Trust signals, emotional comfort, social cues*
- *Cannot be easily explained*
- *What ACTUALLY drives most decisions*

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Why Direct Questions Fall Short

Direct question: "Why did you choose this financial advisor over others?"

The challenge: We are asking System 2 to explain a System 1 decision about trust, security, and complex emotions.

Result = Sincere but incomplete explanations that miss the real drivers.

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Enter Perception Association Research

Instead of asking "What influenced your choice?"

We show image pairs and ask: "Which Preceptions best represents how Platform A ? Platform B? Platform C?"

Then we map these perceptual associations across all platforms being evaluated.

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How Expert Researchers Apply This

Researchers use systematic imagery techniques:

- Visual metaphor selection across competitors
- Emotional imagery mapping (colors, textures, shapes)
- Archetypal association testing
- Sensory perception profiling

Then run statistical driver analysis to identify which perceptions predict actual choice

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What Driver Analysis Reveals

Illustration: Testing three investment platforms

Perception associations collected:
- Platform A: "Stable, trustworthy, traditional, secure"
- Platform B: "Innovative, fast, modern, risky"
- Platform C: "Confusing, uncertain, complex, overwhelming"
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Driver analysis shows: "Stable/trustworthy" perceptions predict 67% of actual platform selection

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The Rigor Required

Measuring perceptual drivers
demands:
✓ Behavioral researchers
✓ Validated association protocols
✓ Statistical driver analysis
✓ Validation with actual choice
✓ Systematic coding of
metaphors

**This isn't casual surveying - it's
specialized research
methodology.**

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The Question That Changes Everything

Next time a consumers tells you exactly why they chose you over a competitor, ask yourself:

Are they telling you what really drove their decision...

...or just the story their brain created afterward?

The difference might be worth millions in better positioning.

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