

amp™

A close-up photograph of hands playing with action figures. One hand holds a green figure, while another hand holds a Spider-Man figure. An Iron Man figure stands in the background. The scene is set on a light-colored surface, possibly a table, with a blurred background. The text 'Getting Father's Day Right' is overlaid in white, with 'Getting' in a sans-serif font and 'Father's Day Right' in a script font.

Getting
Father's Day Right

New Research in Gift-Giving Psychology *and Implications for Brands*

Every Mother's Day and Father's Day, millions of people face the same challenge: finding a gift that accurately communicates what these fundamentally meaningful relationships represent.



Implications for Gift-Giving Psychology

Far Beyond Father's Day

People use gifts to express appreciation, gratitude, love, and recognition. The object itself matters, but its social meaning often matters more. It demonstrates understanding. As much as some folks will deride these occasions as “Hallmark holidays,” the gifts exchanged become tangible evidence of our feelings.

Anthropologists have long observed that gift exchange helps strengthen social bonds and reinforce social connections. Holidays create a shared ritual for doing exactly that, concentrating those expectations into a single moment that will fuel an estimated **\$27.9 billion** in Father's Day spending, per the National Retail Federation.

That is part of what makes both Mother's Day and Father's Day so commercially important.

The challenge for shoppers isn't simply choosing a product or service. It's finding something that feels appropriate, meaningful, and reflective of the relationship itself.

THIS RAISES AN INTERESTING QUESTION:

What actually helps people feel certain about a gifting decision?

At AMP, we use these insights to help inform our recommendations for clients as they prepared their Mother's Day and Father's Day campaigns. While most seasonal programs are planned months in advance, the research offered an opportunity to test assumptions about what actually drives gifting decisions.

Some findings confirmed conventional wisdom. Others challenged it. Cumulatively, they provide a useful lens for understanding and marketing around gifting occasions well beyond Father's Day.



How We *Measure It*

Instead of asking consumers what they liked, we measured real-time emotional response to messaging territories informed by **Nudgenomics™**, AMP's proprietary behavioral science framework.

Understanding *Nudgenomics*™



Nudgenomics™ identifies repeatable behavioral “nudges” — patterns in how people process information and make decisions. These include Narrative Transportation, Elevation, Simplicity, Scarcity, Novelty, and Play & Curiosity.

Each nudge reflects a different way that messaging can influence attention, emotion, and choice in a gifting context.

01

What *We Tested*

02



We designed messaging territories to activate each of these nudges and measured how people responded in real time.

Responses were evaluated using the Nudge Impact Score™, which evaluates attention, emotional appeal, purchase intent, and response speed into a single measure of effectiveness.

AS A BENCHMARK:

60 = Average

65+ = Strong

70+ = Exceptional

The Big *Takeaway*

At first glance, Mother's Day and Father's Day appear emotionally distinct.

Mother's Day messaging tends to center on warmth, closeness, and care. Father's Day often emphasizes appreciation, pride, and recognition.

Yet despite those differences, the same behavioral pattern emerged across both studies.

The strongest-performing messages consistently came from Narrative Transportation, Elevation, and Simplicity. Scarcity, Novelty, and urgency-driven messaging lagged behind.

The findings suggest that **reducing doubt matters more than generating excitement.**

People are looking for signals that the gift will land the way they intend.

Narrative Transportation *Makes It Visual*

The highest-performing headlines helped people picture the experience surrounding the gift.

Mother's Day

"Picture her joy on this special morning."

73.29

"Imagine the smile when she opens this."

71.93

Father's Day

"Imagine the smile when he opens this."

74.79

"Picture his joy on this special morning."

74.03

When shoppers can mentally experience the outcome, uncertainty begins to fade.

Behavioral scientists call this Narrative Transportation. The consumer imagines the future moment and, in doing so, gains confidence in the decision.

The strongest messages focused attention on the recipient's reaction rather than the product itself. Shoppers were evaluating more than an item — they were evaluating the likelihood of a successful interaction.

The Emotional *Nuance*

Messaging for *Moms vs. Dads*

While the behavioral pattern remained consistent, the language shifted.

Mother's Day performed best when messaging emphasized:

care • closeness • gratitude

Father's Day resonated most strongly through themes of:

acknowledgment • respect • recognition



ONE OF THE STRONGEST FATHER'S DAY PERFORMERS:

*“Honor his
legacy with a
timeless gift.”*



The line reflects a form of appreciation that feels particularly relevant to Father's Day. **Recognition and pride carry significant emotional weight**, even when expressed differently than the warmth often associated with Mother's Day.

Many brands treat Mother's Day and Father's Day as interchangeable campaigns with different labels. **The research suggests otherwise.** The emotional framing should reflect the distinct role each holiday plays while serving the same underlying need for confidence.

Simplicity-Based Messaging *Increases Confidence*

One of the more interesting findings was the strength of simplicity-based messaging.

Mother's Day

"Simply the best gifts for every mom."

72.11

Father's Day

"Simply the best gifts for every dad."

71.95

These lines may seem straightforward, yet they perform an important behavioral function.

Gift-giving often involves uncertainty. People worry about making the wrong choice, overlooking a better option, or sending the wrong message.

Simplicity reduces that burden.

The strongest simplicity messages gave shoppers **permission to stop searching and feel comfortable with their decision.**

Clarity Outperforms *Pressure*

This finding runs counter to much of the conventional holiday marketing playbook.

*“Limited
Time”*

*“Last
Chance”*

*“New
Arrivals”*

These tactics are common during gifting seasons, but **they consistently underperformed** relative to emotionally reassuring messaging.

Urgency still has a role to play, particularly as shipping deadlines approach. However, **the strongest performers focused on helping shoppers feel certain about their choice** rather than accelerating a decision through pressure.

When relationships are at stake, **clarity tends to outperform pressure.**



Our Research Uncovered *Surprising Findings*

Conventional wisdom often positions Mother's Day as the more emotional holiday.

THE DATA SUGGESTS A MORE NUANCED REALITY.



When emotional appeal was isolated, Father's Day scores were equally strong and occasionally stronger.



Recognition, pride, gratitude, and respect generated emotional responses comparable to warmth and closeness.



For brands, this represents an opportunity. Father's Day may carry more emotional significance than many marketers assume.

The Takeaway *for Brands*

Several themes emerged consistently across both studies — insights that shaped our recommendations for clients this season and have implications for virtually any gifting occasion, from Valentine's Day to the winter holidays:

More choice does not necessarily increase confidence.

Signals that reduce uncertainty matter more than expanding options.

The strongest messaging helps shoppers picture a successful outcome.

Simplicity works best when it reinforces confidence.

Reassurance consistently outperforms pressure-based tactics.

The highest-performing messages **focused less on promotion** and more on **helping people feel comfortable with their decision.**

Closing Thoughts

As we worked with clients on this year's Mother's Day and Father's Day programs, one theme surfaced repeatedly: **shoppers are trying to reduce uncertainty in gift-giving.**

The challenge is rarely *finding* a gift, but rather choosing one that feels *right for the relationship* being celebrated.

This helps explain why messages centered on reassurance, recognition, and anticipated emotional response consistently outperformed urgency and novelty in our testing.

Father's Day may be just around the corner, but the broader lesson extends far beyond a single holiday. Whenever gifts become a vehicle for expressing appreciation, gratitude, or connection, **the brands that help reduce doubt in the decision-making process are often the brands that earn the strongest response.**



GET IN TOUCH

ABOUT AMP

Curious about how Nudgenomics™ can unlock growth for your brand? *Let's talk.*

Contact AMP to explore how we can collaborate to put these insights into action. Reach out to nudge@ampagency.com and say hi.

AMP is a full-service agency built to connect brand love with buyer behavior across every stage of the customer journey. With expertise spanning Strategy & Intelligence, Creative & Content, Retail & Commerce, Media & Measurement, Digital & Social, and Activation & Amplification, AMP delivers solutions that blend creativity, commerce, and data into one seamless experience. By unifying brand storytelling with shopper conversion, AMP helps clients resonate emotionally and drive measurable business growth. Follow along at ampagency.com