

Beyond the Discount: *Understanding the Behavioral Science behind Promos*

Our Relationship *With Brands*

In the mid-20th century, **Ernest Dichter**, the psychologist widely considered the father of motivational research, changed the way marketers think about consumer behavior with a simple observation:

“Modern man is eternally ready to fill out his self-image by purchasing products which complement it... Products have the power both to sate inner desires and give people a feeling of common identity.”



A framework designed *To get to the heart of what motivates shoppers*

The same is true of promotions. An incentive is never just a discount; it is an **identity-reinforcing tool**. A cents-off coupon validates a consumer's pride in being a "smart shopper." A cross-category bundle curates a desired lifestyle. A rebate or loyalty offer signals status and belonging. Well-executed promotions resonate because they help consumers navigate and express who they are in the moment.

Yet, when planning promotions, marketers often reduce this psychological dance to a math problem. Teams debate discount depths and retail logistics based on execution ease, forgetting that a promotion's true power lies in how it makes the consumer feel about themselves.

Sure, good promotions do offer a financial discount, but their real job is to connect with a shopper when they are ready to make a choice. To stand out, we have to look past the transaction itself and focus on the specific human behavior we want to trigger.

This is why Amp developed **Nudgenomics™**, a framework designed to get to the heart of what motivates shoppers. By pairing traditional promotional tactics with insights drawn from psychology and behavioral economics, we can employ Nudges that ensure an offer is chosen, not just seen.



Aligning Offers With *The Consumer Mindset*

A promotion only works if it fits the shopper's current state of mind. Here is what that looks like in practice.

01 The *Simplicity Nudge*

The Shopper Mindset:

Drained by choice fatigue or rushing through a weekly routine.

The Goal:

Clear the mental clutter and make the trip entirely friction-free.



The Approach:

Use strategic cross-merchandising bundles. Instead of discounting a single ingredient, the promotion rewards the shopper for buying a total solution. Consider how **Kroger has leaned heavily into flat-rate grab-and-go meal bundles**, like curated main-and-side pairings designed for a quick single-household dinner at a specific low price.

Amp has even run Kroger MyMagazines with a bundled offer on a full meal solution (including rice, salsa, beans, cheese, and tortillas). For a tired shopper after a long workday, an all-in-one price for a complete dinner solves the problem of menu planning on the fly. The value isn't just about the dollar discount; it's the removal of decision stress.

02 The *Play & Curiosity Nudge*

The Shopper Mindset:

Bored by the monotony of the weekly grocery run and looking for a bit of novelty.

The Goal:

Tap into our natural love for surprise and discovery to make shopping feel like an experience.



The Approach:

Mystery rewards and gamification. Look at **ALDI's recent "Blind Box" drops**, which brought the current unboxing trend right into the ever-trendy retailer's aisles. By selling themed surprise boxes filled with mystery snacks, protein, and everyday staples, ALDI turned a standard errand into a delight-centered scavenger hunt.

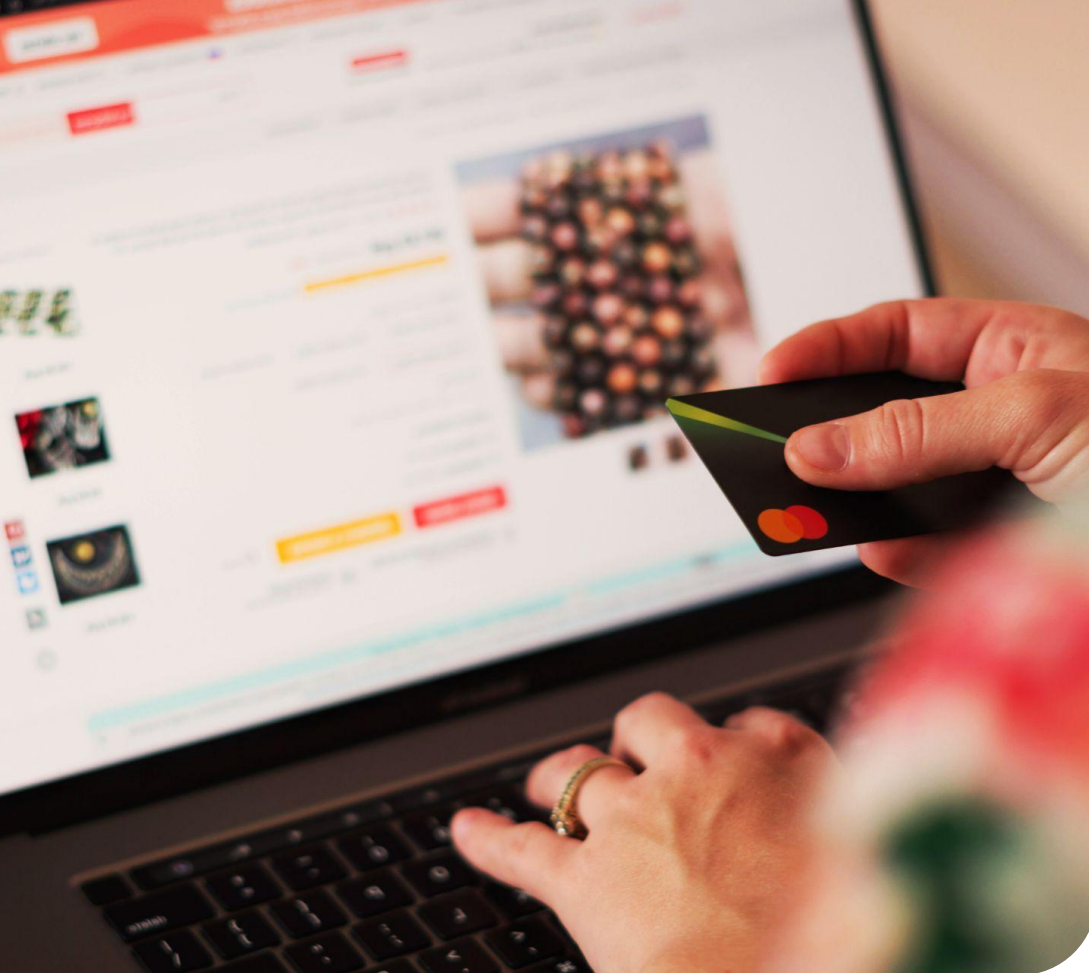
Amp has seen similar success with gamified sweepstakes, where shoppers can play a quick game for a chance to win a larger prize. The approach works because it replaces the routine satisfaction of a coupon with the genuine thrill of the unexpected.

Pairing Behavioral Science *With Business Objectives*

Once you understand the behavioral Nudge that connects with your target shopper, you can layer in your actual business goals to shape the final offer structure.

Say your objective is to drive trial for a premium, unproven product among consumers who are craving simplicity. Forcing a rushed shopper to evaluate an unfamiliar item introduces friction — and a standalone coupon rarely disrupts an autopilot routine focused on a familiar brand.





A smarter approach attaches the trial to a behavior they already do without thinking. For example, a brand can use a retailer's loyalty app to automatically trigger a digital coupon at the exact moment a shopper adds their usual baseline items to their basket.

If a shopper routinely buys the same brand of premium coffee every week, the system recognizes that habit and instantly pops up an automatic "Save \$2 on our new breakfast blend" coupon right on their digital cart screen. The shopper doesn't have to hunt for the deal or actively plan a new purchase; the traditional coupon simply finds them inside a routine they are already running on autopilot.

By embedding the new product as **an effortless, one-click add-on to an established routine**, you hit volume targets by matching the shopper's desire for effortless discovery.



People Don't Shop *in a Vacuum*

They navigate stores guided by the mood they're in, the time they have, and their immediate emotional needs. As Gerald Zaltman, professor emeritus at Harvard Business School, famously established, **95% of our purchasing decisions originate in our emotional subconscious.**

When Nudgenomics™ and traditional promotions work together, they create a highly effective strategy that protects your brand's equity from overuse of discounting while influencing the shopper's choice with decision science-based strategies.

Before you map out your next promotional calendar or sign off on another standard discount, let's connect to look at the underlying psychology of the transaction.



Ready to plan your next promotion *with full-volume impact?*

Connect with the **AMP Promotions Center of Excellence** to identify the best mix of promotions and strategic nudges to grow your brand.

ABOUT AMP

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.

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