

VISUALART

What drives us?

Behavioural science in retail communication

How cognitive biases shape choices—and how retailers can design better journeys, online and in-store

Executive Summary

In today's fragmented, fast-moving retail world, understanding what drives human decision-making has never been more vital. Most consumer choices are not rational—they are emotional, habitual, and heavily influenced by cognitive biases. This white paper explores how principles from behavioural science can be applied to improve in-store and online experiences, increase conversion, and deepen brand loyalty.

Through the lens of six behavioural levers and supported by real-world examples, we outline how digital signage can evolve from static display to strategic decision architecture.

The result? Communication that doesn't just inform, but influences.

Visual Art is leading this shift, helping brands move from message-pushing to experience-shaping with design, data, and behaviourally intelligent content.

Behaviour, not logic, drives choices

Customers don't decide like spreadsheets. They decide like humans—imperfect, emotional, and context-driven. Behavioural economics, popularised by Daniel Kahneman's "**System 1**" vs. "**System 2**" thinking, explains this well.

System 1 is fast, intuitive, and bias-prone;

System 2 is slow, analytical, and rarely activated in everyday shopping.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial for retailers. Because when you align your digital signage, messaging, and environment with how people actually decide, you remove friction and increase effectiveness.



The **6** behavioural levers in the retail journey

1. Anchoring & framing

Anchoring sets a reference point. Framing changes how value is perceived.

Show high-price items first to make others seem more affordable.

Frame offers as gains ("Save 5 euro") or losses ("Don't miss 5 euro") based on goal.

2. Social proof & pratfall effect

People follow others, and trust imperfection.

Highlight bestsellers, staff picks, or customer favourites.

Use small flaws or behind-the-scenes stories to humanise your brand.

3. Context, priming & timing

What surrounds a message matters as much as the message itself.

Adapt content by time of day, weather, or location.

Use priming cues (colours, images, music) to trigger desired behaviour.

The **6** behavioural levers in the retail journey

4. Choice simplicity & decision confidence

Less friction = more action.

Group products logically, reduce options visually.

Use bold CTAs, clear benefits, and intuitive layouts.

5. Emotion, memory & mental availability

Emotional moments are remembered. Memory drives future choices.

Use consistent branding and emotionally resonant stories.

Focus on creating memorable peaks and strong endings.

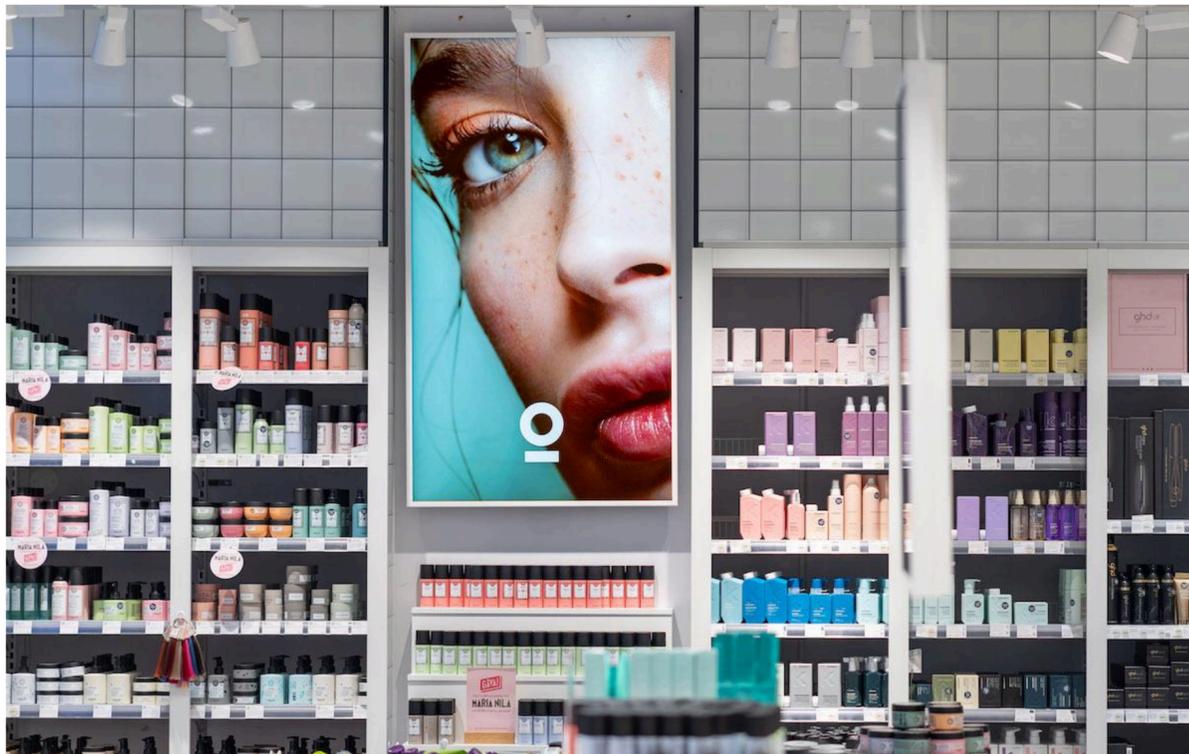
6. Defaults & easy options

We stick with what's easy or pre-selected.

Use defaults in interactive digital signage to guide upsell behaviour.

Highlight "most popular" or "recommended" by default.

Designing Digital Signage for behaviour



Great digital signage isn't about being loud— it's about being smart.

Behavioural design means:

- Aligning message with moment working with day parts (e.g. dinner menus at 6 PM)
- Curating content for clarity and contrast (e.g. anchor pricing)
- Triggering memory with repetition, design consistency, and emotional tone

Platforms like Visual Art IXM platform makes this scalable, integrating context triggers like time, location, and sales data to deliver dynamic, relevant content in real time.



Case-based insights

QSR

Upsell Anchoring: Increase sales by making its highest-margin meal the first item shown on digital menu boards—framing others as better value.

Grocery

Shelf Displays: Use "staff pick" tags and real-time bestseller data on aisle screens to boost specific product sales by 22%.

Health club

Check-In Experience: Reduced wait-time stress with animated "you're almost there" visuals, triggering the peak-end rule and increasing satisfaction.



05 → Glossary

Anchoring

Relying on the first piece of information as a reference point

Framing effect

Decisions influenced by how information is presented

Default effect

Tendency to go with pre-selected options

Social proof

Copying the behaviour of others, especially under uncertainty

Pratfall effect

Trust increases when brands show relatable imperfections

Scarcity

Perceived value increases when something is limited

Priming

Subconscious cues influence later behaviour

Salience

What stands out captures attention and memory

Paradox of choice

Too many options can lead to indecision or dissatisfaction

Cognitive ease

We prefer things that are easy to understand or process

Peak-end rule

We remember the emotional peak and the end of an experience

— 05 → Glossary

Mere exposure effect

Repetition increases liking and familiarity

Loss aversion

Losses are felt more strongly than gains of equal value

Availability heuristic

We judge likelihood based on what comes to mind easily

Confirmation bias

We seek out information that supports what we already believe

Status quo bias

Preference for things to stay the same (resistance to change)

Decoy effect

Presence of a third, less attractive option changes preferences

Endowment effect

People value things more simply because they own them

Temporal discounting

We prefer immediate rewards over future gains

Bandwagon effect

Tendency to do something because others are doing it

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