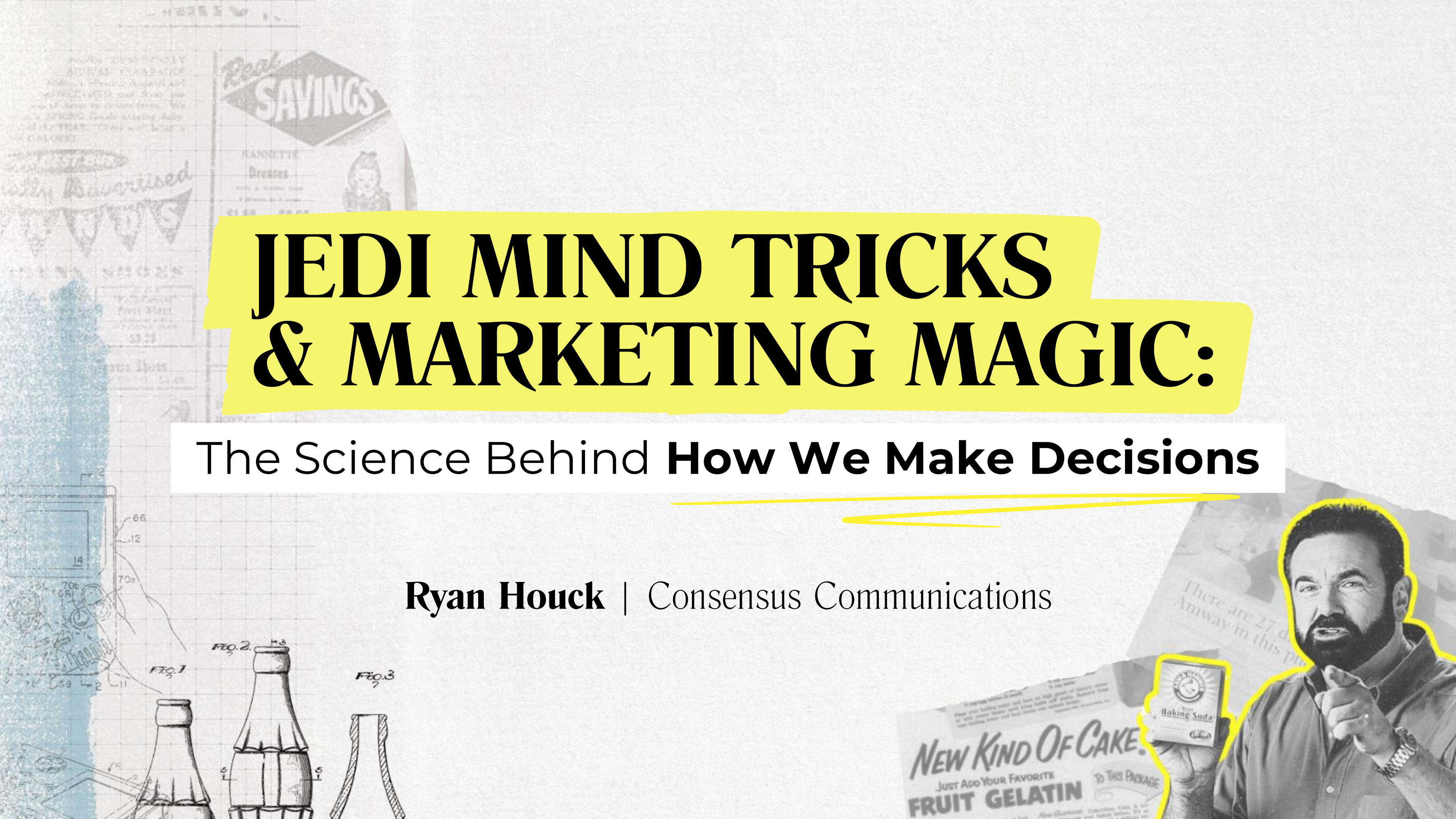


# JEDI MIND TRICKS & MARKETING MAGIC:

The Science Behind **How We Make Decisions**

**Ryan Houck** | Consensus Communications





# Febreze

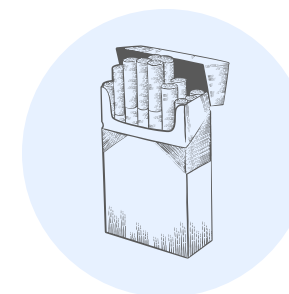
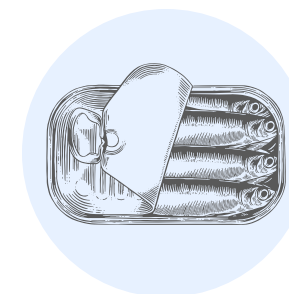
## TURNING SCENT INTO A HABIT

### Product: Febreze

An odor-eliminating spray by Procter & Gamble, initially launched with **no fragrance**.

### Context:

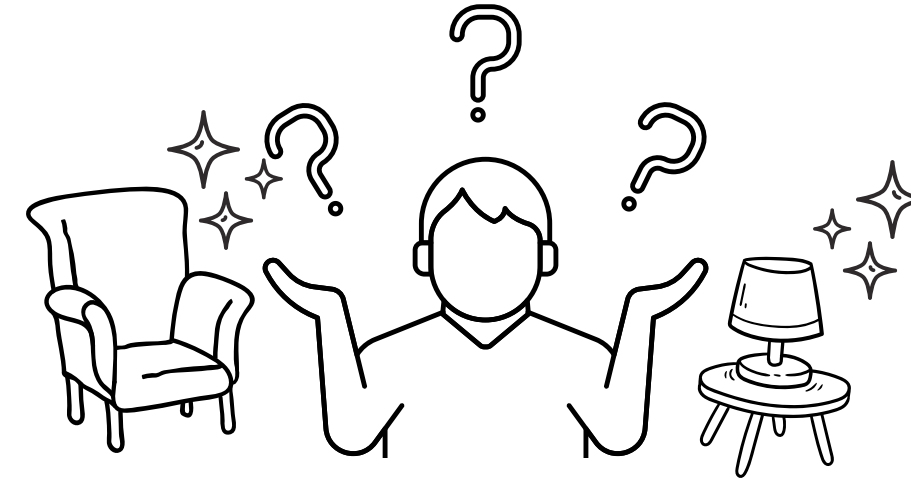
In the late 1990s, P&G introduced Febreze as a revolutionary spray to remove bad odors.



# Problem:



**A.)** Consumers who needed it most didn't use it.



**B.)** Those who did use it (after cleaning) felt something was missing.

**The product worked too well, leaving no scent behind. Without a pleasing fragrance or obvious cue, consumers had no routine or craving to keep using it.**



## Solution:



**Febreze's  
Original  
Formula**



**Light,  
Fresh  
Scent**



**New Marketing**

## HABIT LOOP:

The **cue** was finishing cleaning, the **routine** was spraying Febreze, and the **reward** was a pleasant fresh scent (plus the subconscious “clean home” cue from that scent)





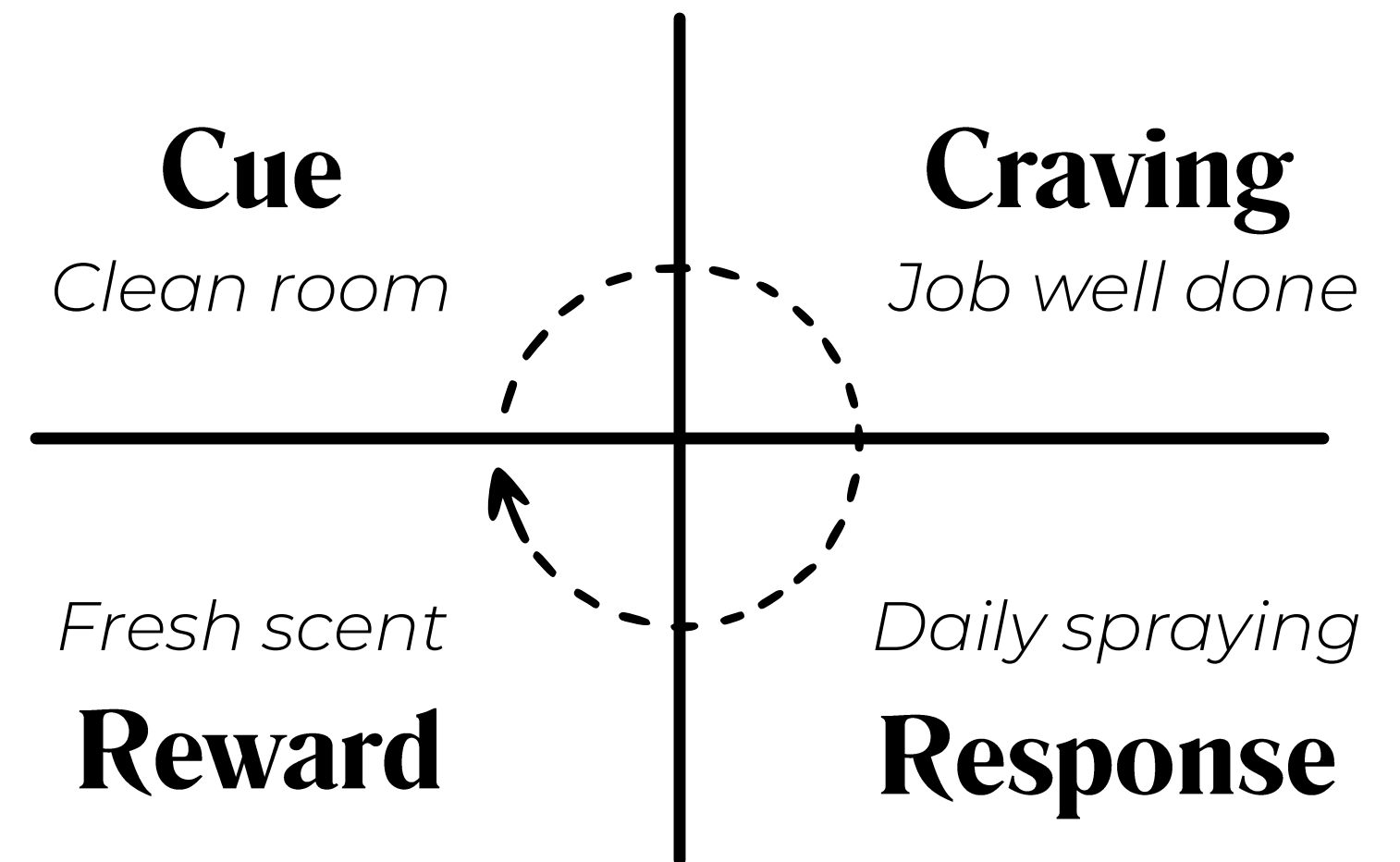
**Result:**

**A billion-dollar brand**



By creating a craving for the fresh scent, P&G had turned Febreze into a daily-use product

**Psychology:**  
**Habit Loop & Craving**







**“But only once they created a sense of craving—the desire to make everything smell as nice as it looked—did Febreze become a hit. That craving is an essential part of the formula for creating new habits...”**

From ***The Power of Habit***

– **Charles Duhigg**, *Pulitzer prize-winning journalist and author*



# Amazon's Free Shipping

THE POWER OF “FREE!”



## Product:

### Amazon.com's Free Super Saver Shipping

A promotion offering free shipping on orders over a certain dollar amount (initially \$25).

## Context:

Around 2001-2002, Amazon began experimenting with offering **free shipping** in various international markets to encourage larger orders.





## Problem:

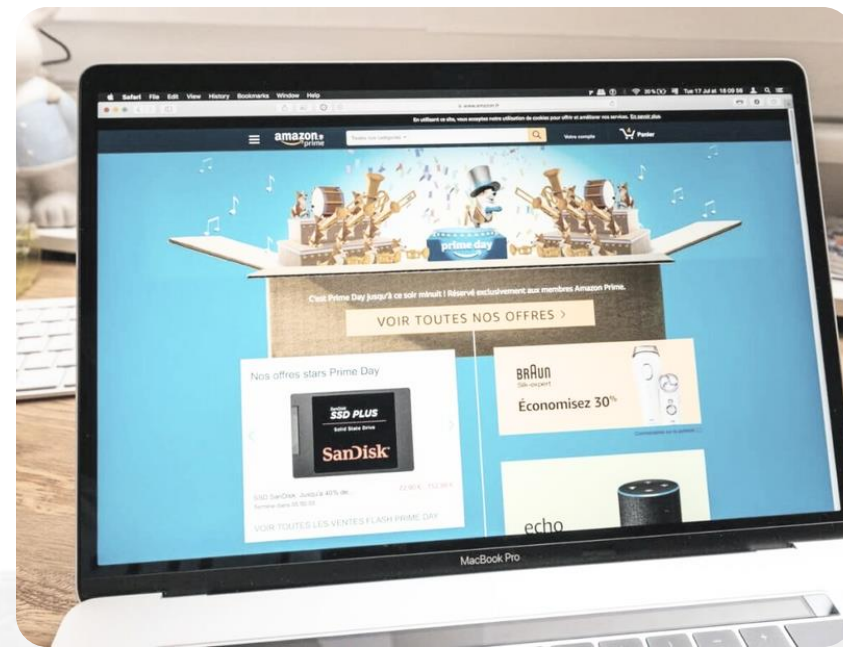
In a European promotion test, Amazon found that free shipping led to increased orders in all countries **except France**, where a **1 franc fee** significantly reduced the impact.



**Solution:**



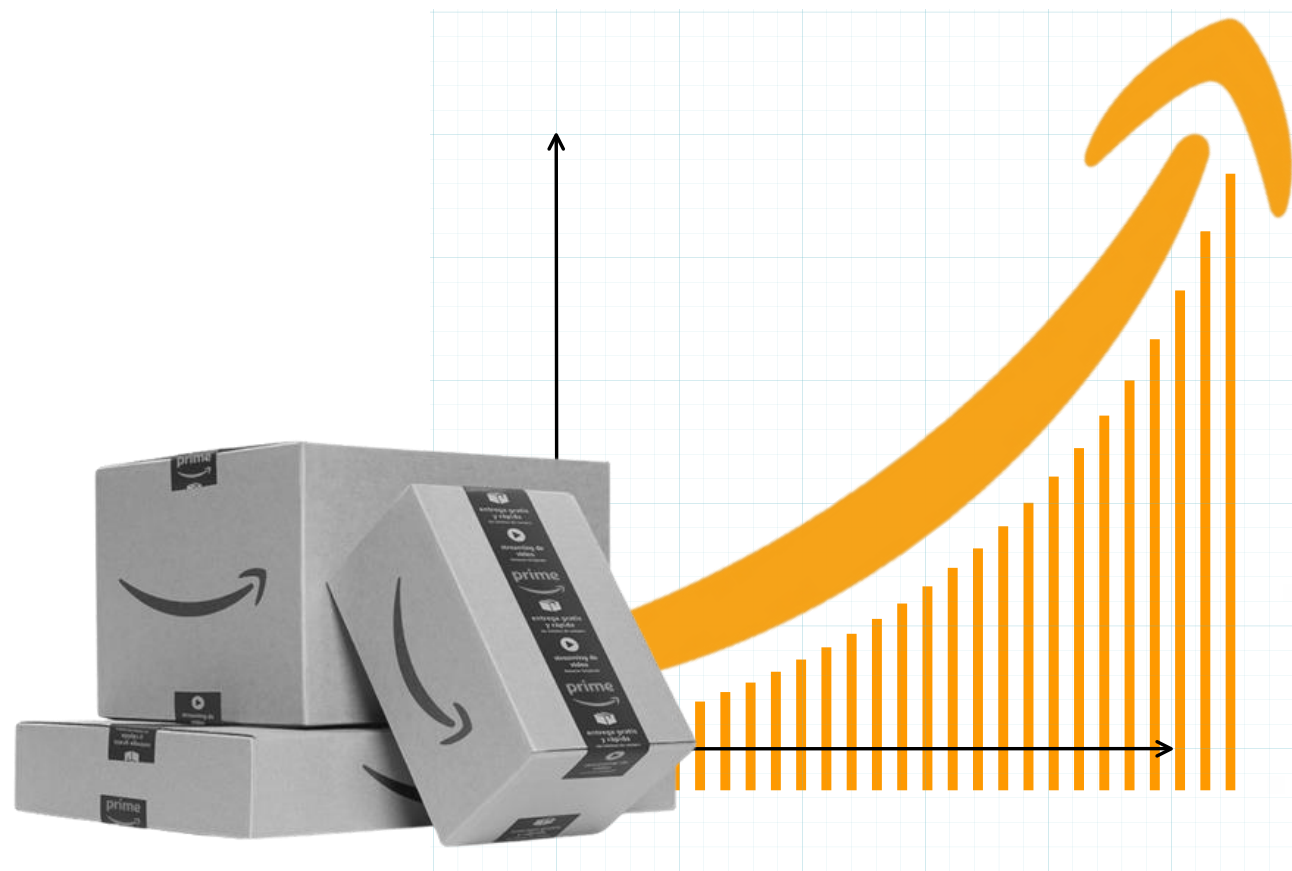
**amazon.fr<sup>®</sup>**  
**Made Shipping  
Completely Free...**  
**...for qualifying orders**



The psychological draw of a **zero price** is disproportionately powerful. By eliminating the last cent of cost, **Amazon triggered an emotional impulse in customers to take advantage of the offer.**



## Result: Orders surged worldwide



With shipping costs removed, customers added extra items to their carts and Amazon's average order value climbed.

## Psychology: Zero-Price Effect



Free triggers a **positive emotional response** that can heavily sway behavior.





**“FREE! gives us such an emotional charge that we perceive what is being offered as immensely more valuable than it really is.”**

**– Dan Ariely**

Behavioral economist and  
author of *Predictably Irrational*



# Hotel Towel Reuse

## SOCIAL PROOF IN THE BATHROOM



### WE'RE DOING OUR BIT FOR THE PLANET

Every day around the world millions of towels are washed unnecessarily. To do our bit for the planet, if you would like to reuse your towel then please hang up on the rail. If you would like your towel washed today then please leave in the bath or shower.  
Thank you

### Product: Hotel Towel Reuse Program

Encourages guests staying multiple nights to use their towels more than once instead of having them laundered daily.

### Context:

Most hotel guests reused towels at least once with traditional eco-focused messages.



# Problem:

Could a **social norms message**—highlighting that most guests reuse towels—outperform traditional environmental messages?



VS.





# Solution:

## Environmental Message



**VS.**

## Social Norms Messages



Housekeeping tracked whether towels were reused by each room.



**Result:**

**Social norms  
message outperformed**

**25%**

**Increase in  
participation**

**+50%**

**Percentage Specific  
message**

**Over the Environmental Appeal**

The hotel enjoyed higher compliance, reducing laundry loads and costs accordingly.

**Psychology:  
Social Proof & Normative  
Influence**







**“...we’re definitely more likely to follow the herd when we’re uncertain about how to behave. And it turns out that we’re also more likely to follow the herd to the extent that we perceive the herd as sharing our circumstances.”**

**– Dr. Noah Goldstein**

Lead author of the hotel towel reuse study



# Car Wash Loyalty Card

## THE ENDOWED PROGRESS EFFECT

### Product: Loyalty Punch Card

Customers received a card toward a free car wash.

### Context:

Rewarding the customers to potentially increase repeat business, two different punch cards were tested.







## Problem:

Would customers be more likely to complete a loyalty card if they felt they already had a **head start**?



## Solution:



### Card A.)

Required 8 stamps

### Card B.)

10-stamp card with a  
**2-stamp head start**

**Both required the same  
number of purchases.**



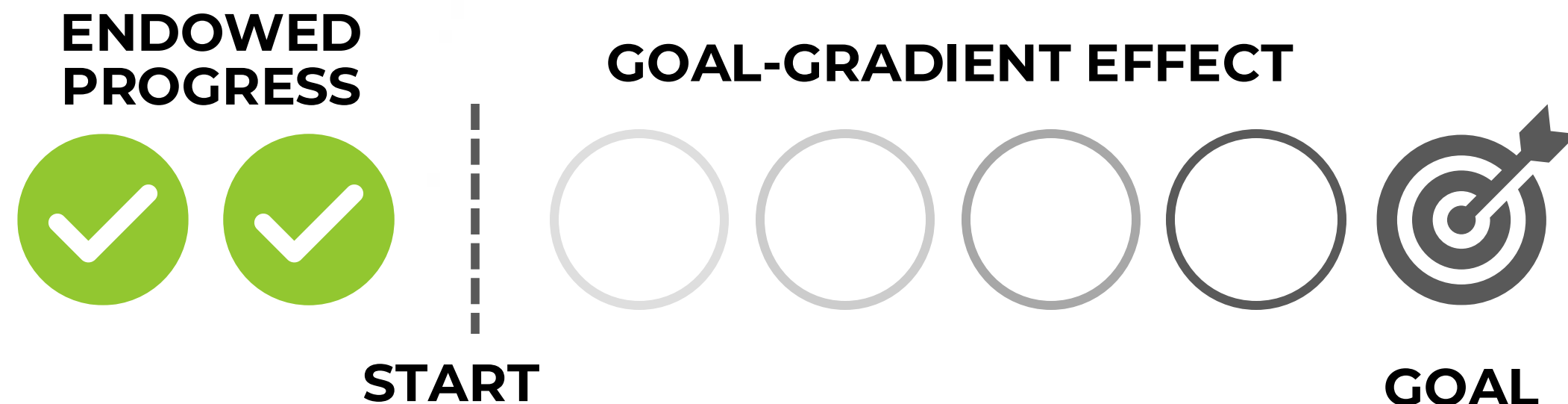
**Result:**

**82% more customers finished the card and claimed the free wash in the head-start condition**

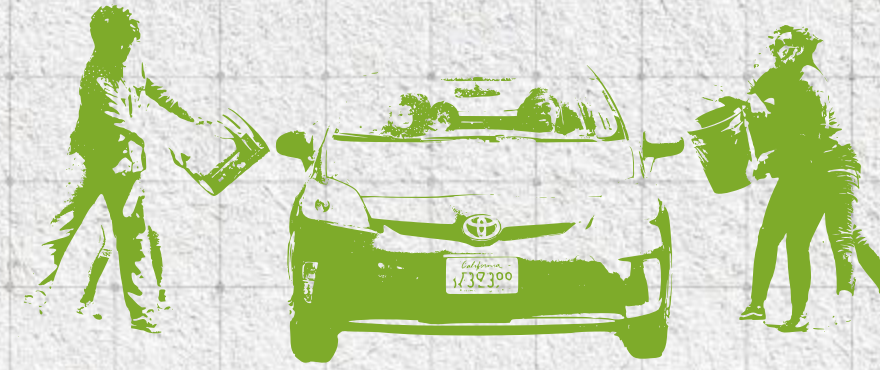


**Psychology:**

**Endowed Progress Effect & Goal Gradient**







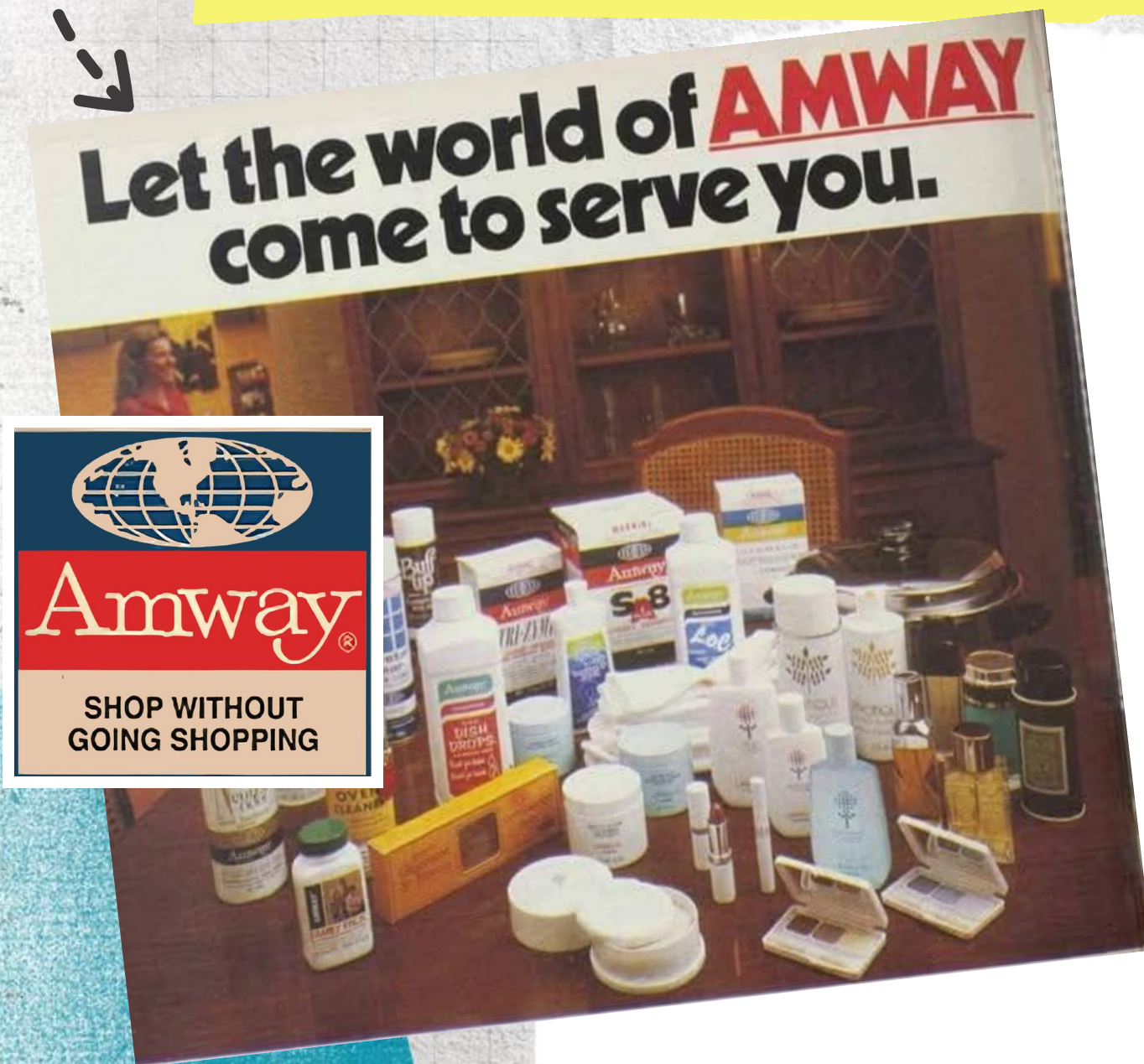
**“By converting a task requiring eight steps into a task requiring 10 steps but with two steps already complete, the task is reframed as one that has been undertaken and incomplete rather than not yet begun. This increases the likelihood of task completion and decreases completion time.”**

**– Researchers Nunes and Drèze**  
Discovered the *Endowed Progress Effect*



# Amway's Free Samples

## RECIPROCITY AT WORK



### Product: Amway's "BUG"

A sample kit of Amway home-care products.

### Context:

Left with prospective customers, Amway wanted an alternative to on the spot sales.



# Problem:

By offering free product trials without pressure, Amway aimed to reduce resistance and increase sales through a subtle sense of obligation.



**Would people feel compelled to reciprocate the free gift of product use by purchasing something?**





**Solution:**

**Reciprocity**

**Trial**



**Time**



“No Obligation”  
product sample

24–72 hours  
with the product

**“An Offer No One Can Refuse.”**

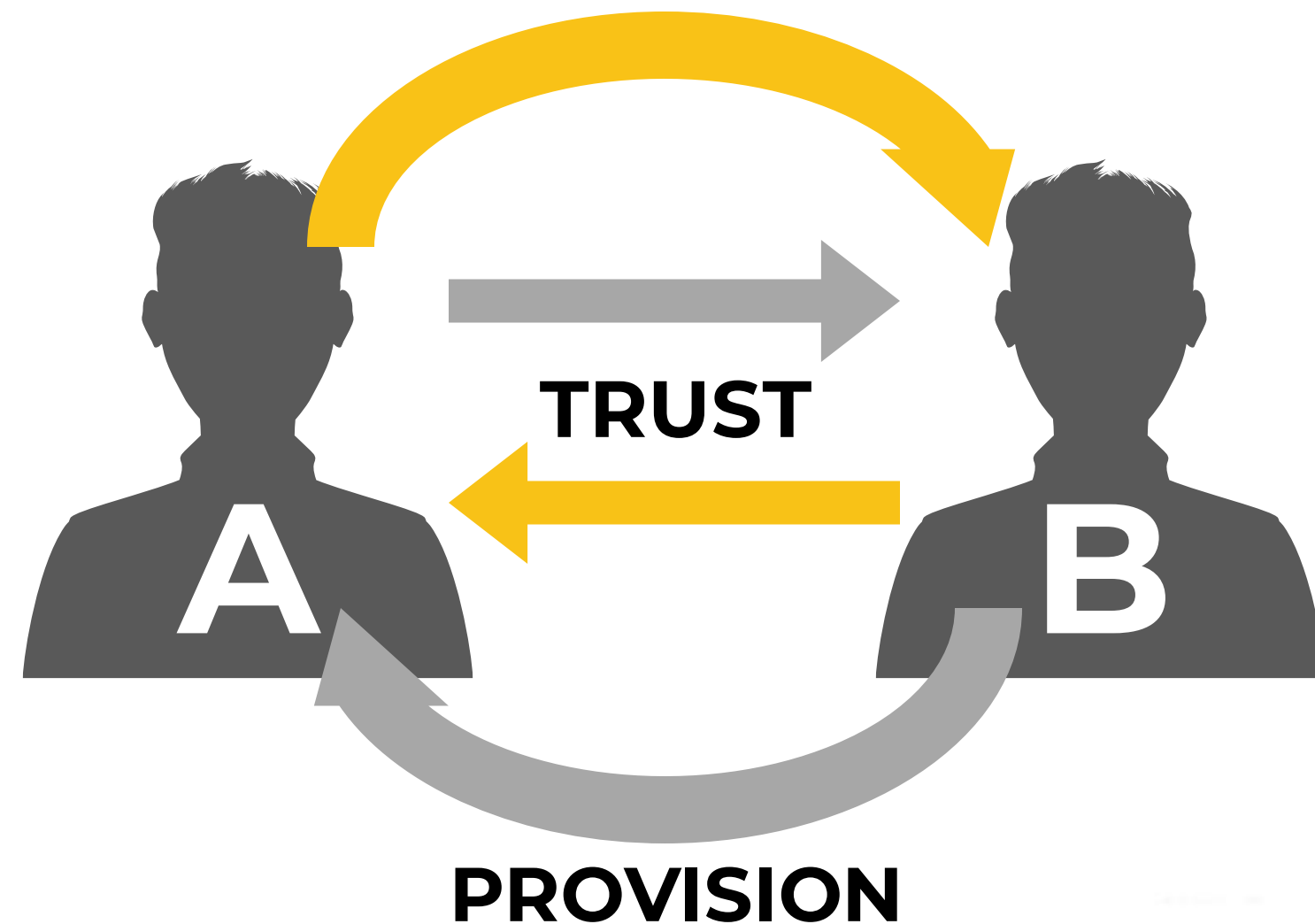


**Result:**  
**Extremely effective**

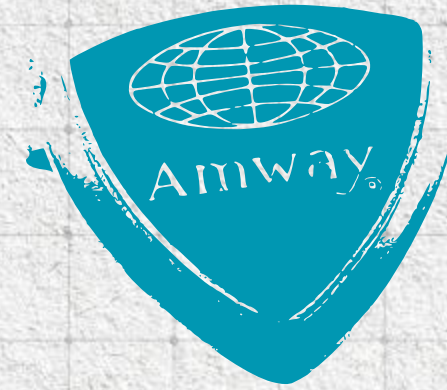


The strategy became a core part of Amway's approach and inspired other industries.

**Psychology:**  
**Reciprocity (and Foot-in-the-Door)**







**“Another person can trigger a feeling of indebtedness by doing us an uninvited favor. ... The rule only states that we should provide to others the kind of actions they have provided us; it does not require us to have asked for what we have received in order to feel obligated to repay.”**

**– Dr. Robert Cialdini,**

*Author of *Influence: The Science of Persuasion**



# Gourmet Jam vs. Too Much Choice

## THE PARADOX OF CHOICE



### Product: Wilkin & Sons Jams

Part of a famous 2000 field study on **choice overload**

### Context:

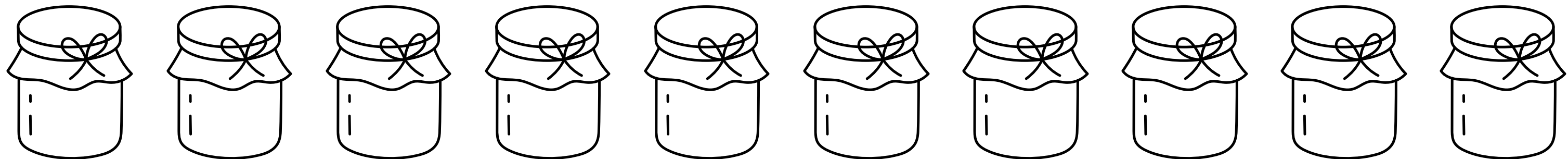
The study took place in a grocery store where shoppers were invited to try samples of Wilkin & Sons jams.



**Problem:**



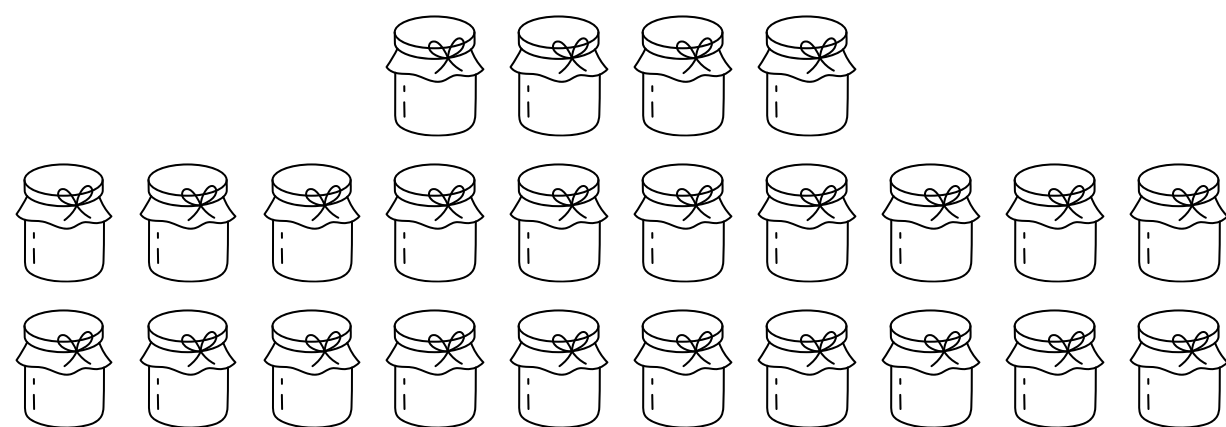
**Does offering too much choice actually reduce purchases?**





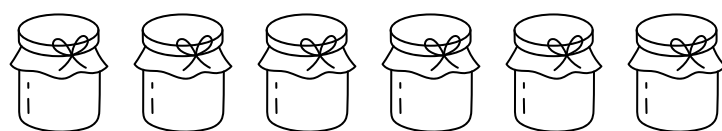
# Solution:

24 jams



60% of traffic stopped  
at the large display  
Only 3% purchased

6 jams



40% of traffic stopped  
at the small display  
30% purchased



More options had  
enticed people to  
look, but fewer  
options enticed  
them to buy.



## Result: Paradox of Choice



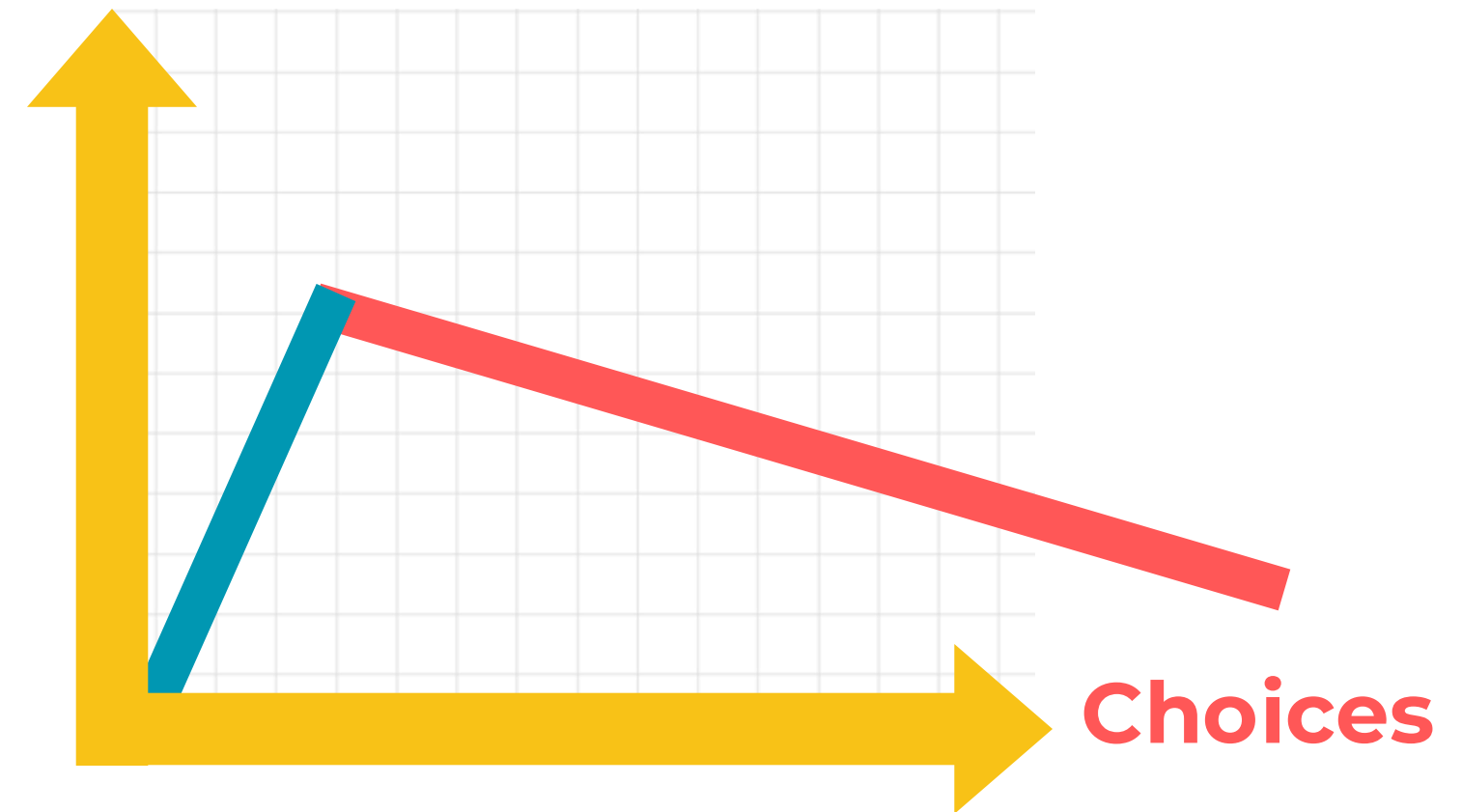
Too many choices overwhelmed shoppers, resulting in fewer purchases



**limited selection was manageable, leading to more purchases.**

## Psychology: Choice Overload & Decision Paralysis

Happiness







**“Too many choices can overwhelm us and cause us to not choose at all. For businesses, this means that if they offer us too many choices, we may not buy anything.”**

**– Dr. Sheena Iyengar,**  
Professor and author of *The Art of Choosing*



# Betty Crocker Cake Mix

JUST ADD AN EGG



## Product: Betty Crocker Instant Cake Mix

Developed by General Mills in the 1950s, the original mix was **“just add water.”**

## Context:

Post-WWII, Betty Crocker launched instant cake mixes that only needed water. Despite the convenience, sales lagged.







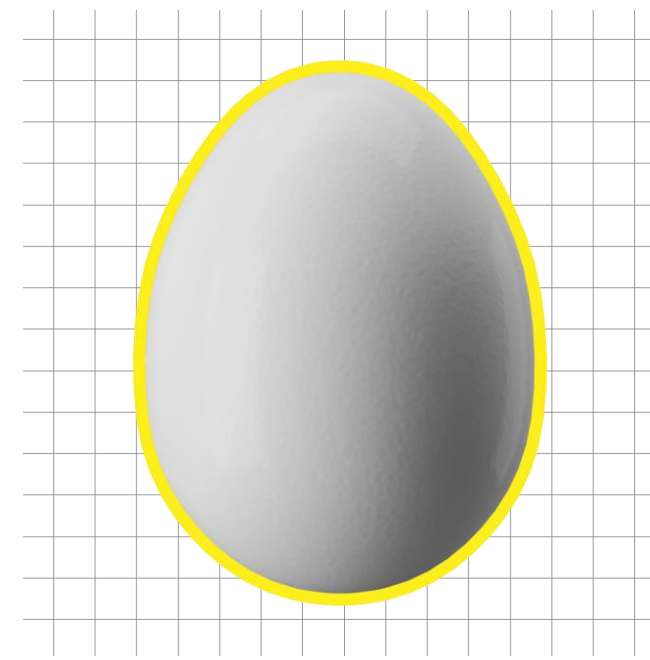
## Problem:

The cake mixes were so easy, they made homemakers feel like they were “cheating.”

**How can convenience be made appealing without causing psychological reluctance or guilt?**



**Solution:**



*Fig.1 "Egg"*

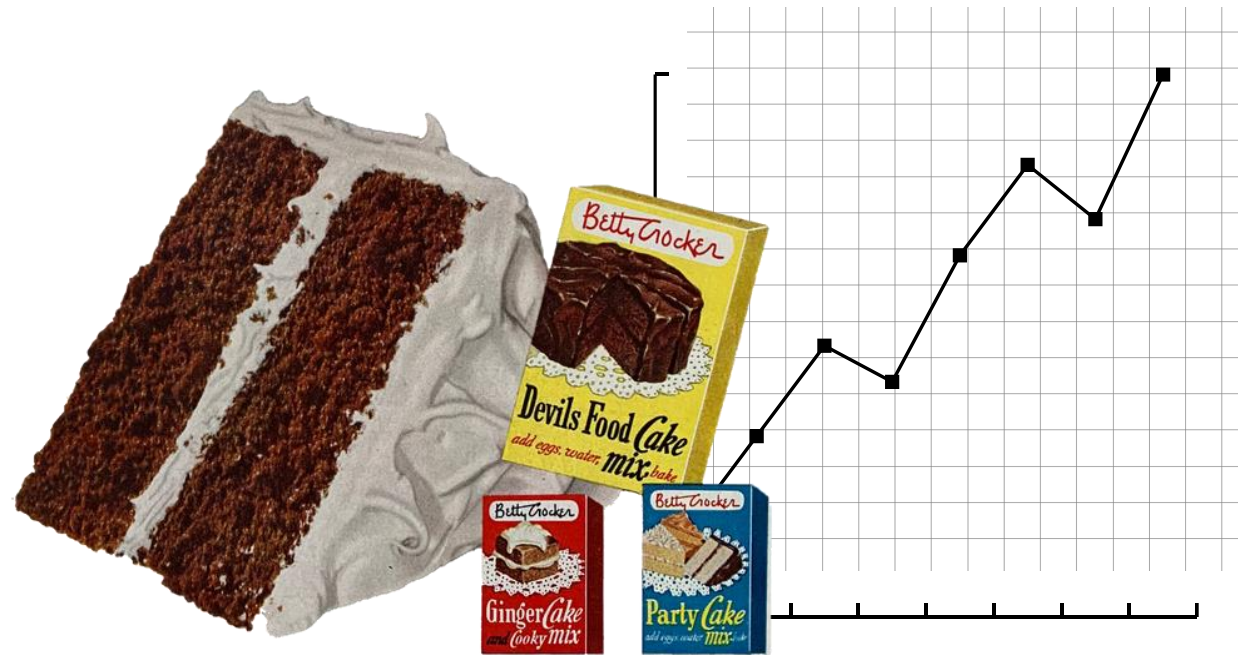
# Baker participation

Personalizing the effort  
& alleviating the guilt



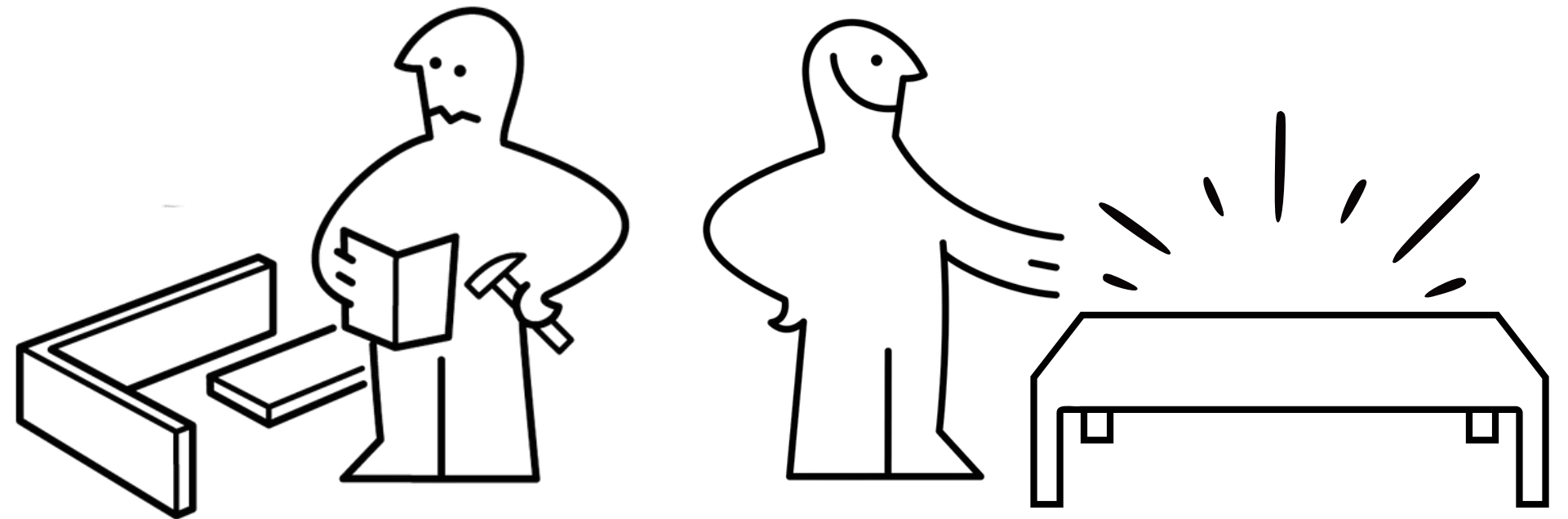


**Result:**  
**Sales soared**



Sales surged, competitors followed, and cake mixes became a booming industry.

**Psychology:**  
**Effort Justification & The IKEA Effect**







**“People derive great satisfaction from products that they build or shape themselves, even when the quality is relatively low.”**

From ***“What Ikea understands about human behavior”***

**– Dan Ariely,**

Professor of Psychology and Behavioral Economics, Duke University



# The Economist's Decoy

## THE ART OF THE UNATTRACTIVE OPTION

**Product:**  
**The Economist magazine's subscription offers**

In the 2000's *The Economist* offered several subscription options.

**Context:**

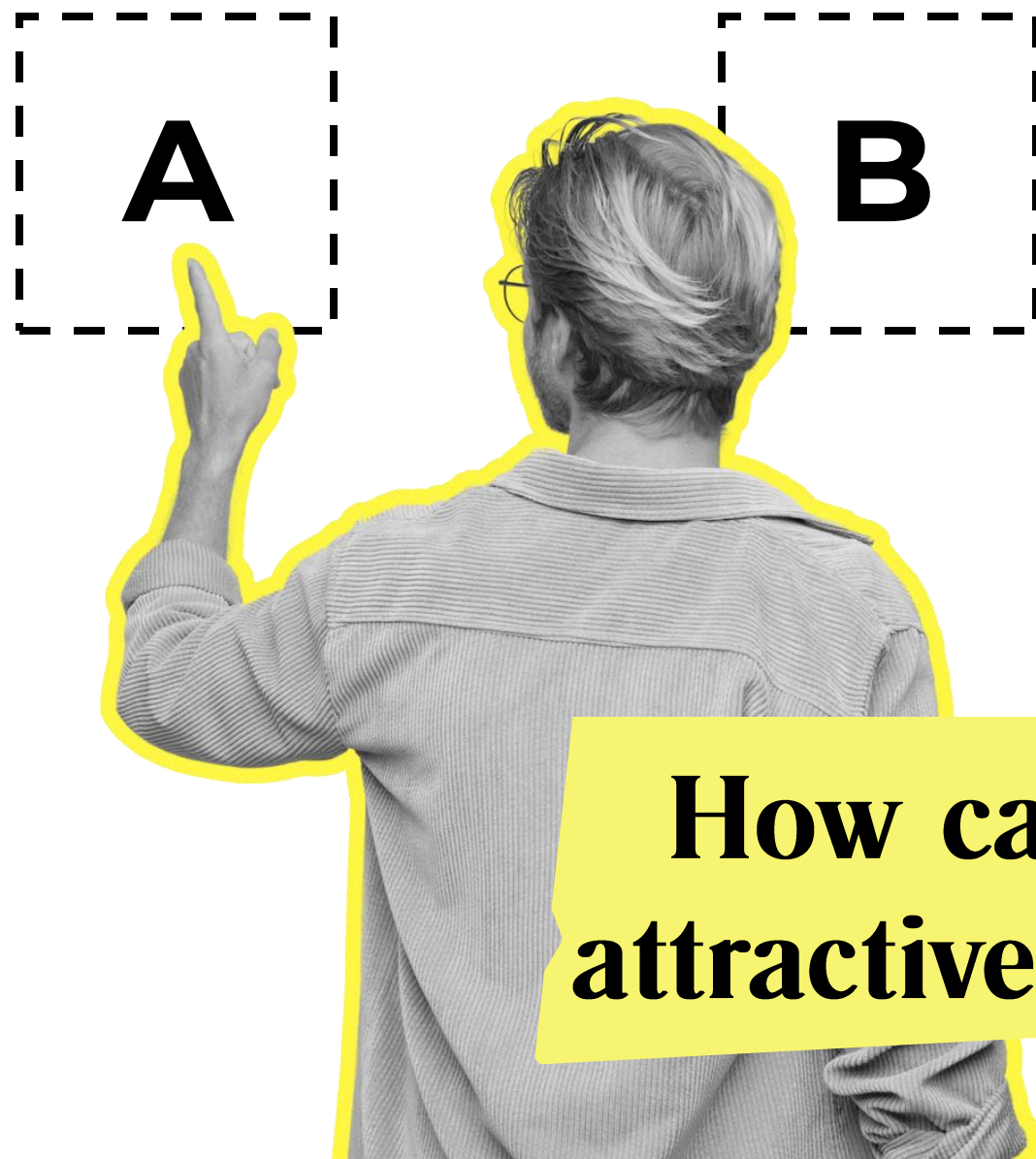
**Option A:** Online-only subscription **\$59/year**

**Option B:** Print-only subscription **\$125/year**

**Option C:** Print + Online bundle **\$125/year**







## Problem:

Presenting two options might result in many picking the cheaper.

**How can a higher-priced option appear more attractive than a cheaper standalone alternative?**



Solution:



A deliberately inferior option that makes the premium subscription appear to be a bargain.



**Result:**

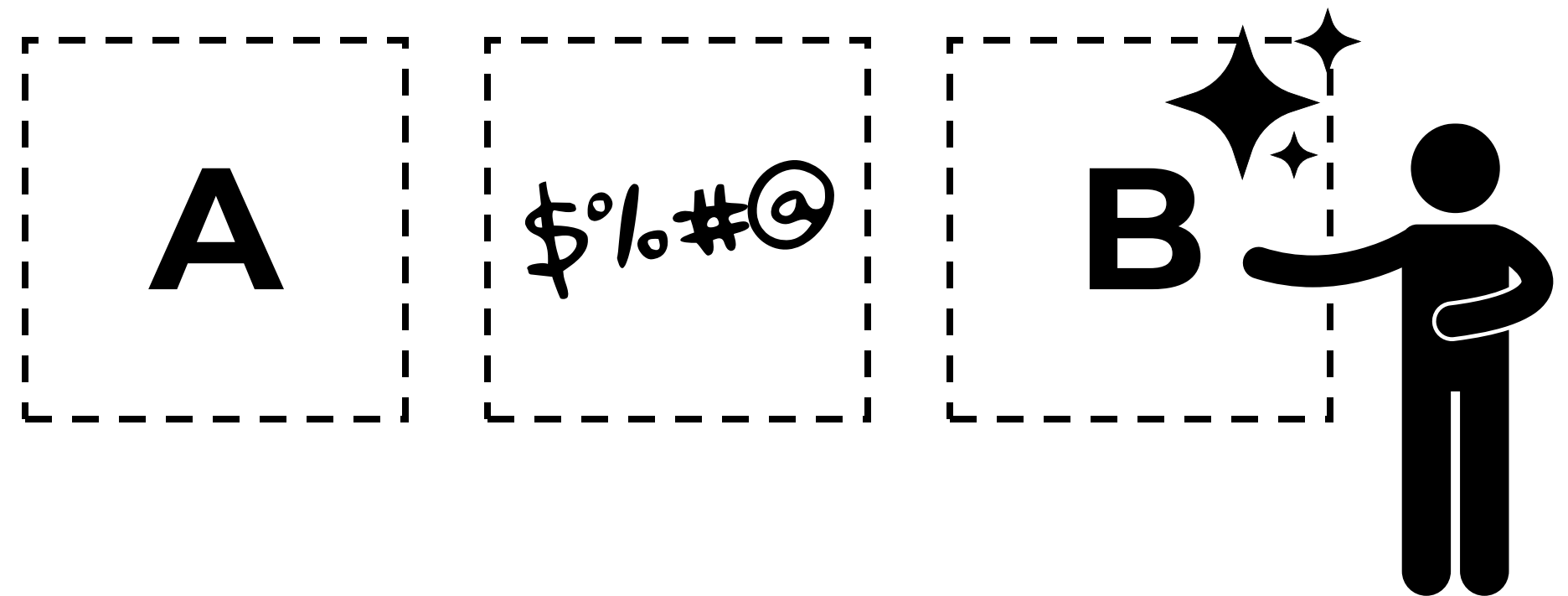


**~30%  
increase on  
Print+digital sales**

Boosted average  
revenue per subscriber

**How options are framed  
shapes decisions more  
than price alone.**

**Psychology:  
Decoy Effect (Asymmetric Dominance)**







**Even if no one chose the decoy, it  
changed the frame of reference, making  
the combo seem like a steal.”**

From ***The Decoy Effect*** “***We are all predictably irrational***”

**– Dan Ariely,**  
Professor of Psychology and Behavioral Economics, Duke University



# Public Examples?

**Craving** | “Countdowns” to Election Day, Press Events, Fundraisers

**Zero Price Effect** | “Free” Energy Audits, Project Tours, Community Events

**Social Proof** | Polling Results to Create a “Bandwagon” Effect

**Endowed Progress** | Half-Full “Progress Meters” or Voter Checklists

**Reciprocity** | SWAG, Free Project “Previews,” Workshops

**Paradox of Choice** | Limited Action Items, Small Platforms, Create A/B Choices

**Effort Justification** | Show Public’s “Customization” of Key Projects

**Decoy Effect** | Add a “Gold” Level Project to Sell a Mid-Tier Project



# Jedi Mind Tricks & Marketing Magic: The Science Behind How We Make Decisions

● **SCAN** ●  
FOR EDUCATION CREDITS



FLORIDA  
ASSOCIATION OF  
COUNTIES  
*All About Florida*



# QUESTIONS?

**Ryan Houck** | Consensus Communications

