Language patterns that influence behavior

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Abstract

Consumer behavior has always been influenced by many internal and external factors regarding purchase decisions. However, when the dialogue with another person was considered the specific external factor which in the context of communication was named as an influencing element, information often got understood differently based on context and chosen words. In the world of Neurolinguistic Programming, it is considered that people repeat specific actions when processing information and if one's language pattern is identified, then the chances for that person to understand correctly the information is higher. This research sets up its objectives for understanding the existing language patterns people have and how it influences their purchase behavior. For this to be concluded, there has been created a set of specific objectives which will guide the research: identifying the language patterns which have the power of influencing consumer behavior (OS1); measuring the impact one language pattern can have when applied to a pattern aligned person (OS2). The analysis will be conducted on a group of people of age 23-31 years old, all being students of the Marketing Faculty. Upon these specific objectives, a set of hypotheses have been established: it is assumed that people possess all language patterns, some being more dominant (H1); identifying the language pattern can be done within a survey (H2). Analyzing the results and interpreting them gives a clear understanding of the fact that language patterns are one of the main influencing elements of consumer behavior and purchase decisions.

1. Introduction

Consumer behavior, at its root a definition, is represented by the analysis of a person or group of people who decide on what to buy and how to do it. Because there are three types of needs for every human: basic like food and water, psychological like a loving relationship, and self-fulfillment when it all comes down to reaching one's potential in a specific action. (Appier, 2022)

Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) is a thought-provoking approach to personal development that helps individuals to gain a deeper understanding of the human potential and how to communicate effectively. (Kain, 2021).

Neurolinguistics Programming is, however, the result of the expansion of neuroscience research which appeared for the first time in the mid-1960 to mark the beginning of a new era. The purpose was to combine various research majors that would form a new science. In current times, neuroscience is one of the fastest-growing disciplines in the entire world. For example, in 1971 1100 scientists participated in the first meeting of the Neuroscience Society, nowadays there are about 31,500 scientists who actively participate in such events. (Squire, et al., 2013)

From a behavioral point of view, the research of neuronal systems opens a door to understanding integrated behaviors. For example, multiple theories express the existence of the different types of memories which led to the possibility of altering the behavior or personality. Cognitive neuroscience represents with certainty the

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biggest challenge to understanding the neuronal mechanisms which are responsible for higher levels of mental activities like self-knowledge, imagination, and communication. (Bear, Connors, & Paradiso, 2016)

Most of the time, in cognitive research, the learning processes through observation in cognitive neuroscience have concentrated on the role of understanding the role of a set of neuronal systems, like the mirror neuronal mechanism. This method has contributed with certainty to the concept of understanding and memorizing different types of actions, but it has also affected the level of appreciation of the role of human interactions and their importance in the human mind. (Ramsey, Kaplan, & Cross, 2021)

During all neuroscience and neuromarketing research, there were various tools used to decode the human mind. For sure, as technology evolved, the more it got its spot in behavior analysis. One of the most popular instruments to be used in the cognitive analysis is electroencephalogram[1] (EEG) which is still used as the main tool. The EEG research combined with cognitive actions has formed cognitive neuroscience and has always been closely correlated with the understanding of the decision-making process. With great certainty, these are challenges for quantitative research using the EEG technique, because if it is not invasive, it is inconclusive. However, if it gets to be invasive, then it will not be applicable for studies on big groups of people. (Holler, 2021)

In current times, the interest in neuroscience and its components of cognition and emotion has been on the full rise. Even though the importance of emotional research in international partnerships is rising, establishing a common ground for research is declining. Theorizing emotions leads automatically to creating a concept of emotions and, having the complexity of this step, reconceptualizing human experiences must be made. Therefore, classical concepts of defining emotions are against the modern approach, which is making them incompatible. (Gammon, 2019)

In recent years, neuroscience researchers have started to offer great attention to the factors which trigger negative emotions through the perceptions people have regarding the external environment and surrounding elements. Very similar to cognitive neuroscience, understanding the emotional concepts, as experiments and case studies are being made by using the EEG tools. (Chang, Te Lo, & Huang, 2019)

The importance of emotional and social processes in developing the human mind is a very important factor and is of great interest for all researchers of psychology or neuroscience. This development of processes has examined which types of emotional and social processes have a great role in one's development throughout his lifetime. Various studies have concluded that the social nature of a person can be tracked by using EEG or Eye Tracking tools, but these are not the only ways of conducting such research. (Ferdinand, Paulus, Schuwerk, & Kuhn-Popp, 2018)

With the help of neuroscience, there is one field that helps to unite like a bridge the science and psychology part. Neuromarketing is a field that studies intensively the consumer behavior and benefits nowadays of 500 billion dollars from Marketing companies. (Morin, 2011)

Neuromarketing is putting its resources into researching the neuronal correlations of the buying behavior mechanism when it comes to brand familiarity and product preferences. It is very important to understand that researchers can find that correlation, but they can't specifically induce stimuli that can guarantee the success of a specific influence factor. All external factors have different reactions in the human mind based on the context in which that person finds himself at that moment. Therefore, it is mandatory to consider that a neuromarketing analysis is limited by the tools that are used and the context of the group of people at that moment in time. (Madan, 2010)

2. The role of Neurolinguistic programming in neuroscience

Neurolinguistic programming (NLP) follows the way people communicate and answer to different external factors. While classic research methods analyze what people answer, the contextuality of a situation presents a more important aspect, how people answer a specific question or idea.

Therefore, NLP is proposing that interior personal sensorial representations of people be analyzed as self-influencing factors of decision-makers. This is how NLP is coming with the idea that a system of sensorial representation, which is applied correctly, can translate how a person reacts to specific elements and decides to purchase or processes information better and faster. (Sturt, et al., 2012) Consumer behavior is often identified with the concept of understanding consumerism's needs and finding a way of fulfilling them.

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[1] Electroencephalography is a specific method that can record the electrogram of electrical activity on the human scalp.

With this concept in mind, Neurolinguistic Programming[2] (NLP) is one of the sciences which constructed a system that can analyze the human system of interaction and decode it into language patterns. When it comes to understanding the human mind, it is considered that people react to either motivational or language patterns. While for the first case Shelle Rose Charvet[3] has explained in the Lab Profile[4] research that people can understand the information in different ways when is expressed differently.

However, this case study has the objective of decoding the language patterns by using an NLP concept, the VAK System, also known as the representation system. This concept proposes the idea that all people in the world are part of specific groups when it comes to language patterns. This means not only humans are not unique in informational processing, but also that there is a method of decoding how people understand better any type of information.

The VAK acronym is formed by the three biggest elements of the representation system: Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic. These characteristics separate people by the verbs they mostly use in an open conversation and explain the rationale walkthrough people have when processing information. However, the VAK system has suffered a modification, researcher Richard Bandler[5] and John Grinder[6] have added one more element, the Digital representation system. They believed that with the digital characteristic, the VAK system is now complete and can be applied to groups of people. What is very important to have in consideration, in the context of a situation because a person might change his point of view based on the specific situation, he is dealing with at a given time.

The purpose of identifying the representation system of a person is to discover how he processes information. This will help with finding the best presentation method by using the most appropriate words for the respective person. The visual system is more dominant for people who often remember more visual elements from a situation they have experienced in one way or another. When it comes to describing a memory, the visual people will start describing the elements which form that specific event and they will even use a lot of hand gestures, trying to draw the actions from the story they are telling.

When dealing with the possibility of purchasing a product, a visual person will always be more influenced by the outside characteristics and the palpable features. When it comes to auditory people, the situation changes dramatically. If these people are asked to describe an event or memory, they will often remember the sounds which were created in that given context. From what words someone used, to what noises were easy to hear, an auditory person is constantly influenced by the sounds around. Even more, these people consider that the best way of delivering information is by having an open conversation about the subject of the matter.

People who are facing a dominant kinesthetic pattern are often influenced by the emotional element of a situation. When having to remember a situation, they will present the emotional implication they had or was present in that given context. If a kinesthetic person wants to purchase a product, he will choose it only after he can touch it and have a real-life experience before being able to make the buying decision. The problem Richard Bandler and John Grinder addressed regarding the representation system are the lack of a group of people, the overthinker and highly dominated by logical individuals. Considering that there are people who prefer to analyze the details behind an event or product, the VAK system was missing a link. Therefore, they added the digital element into the equation to describe the people who, first, need more time to think before purchasing a product and who always analyze in detail all advantages and disadvantages of a given situation.

3. Identifying a person's representation system

To identify a person's representation system, this research proposes a specific test in the image of a survey which will have the mission to track the way people reply to the question. Because the objective is to discover the VAK system, each question will display a list of answers from which the respondents will have to choose the one that fits perfectly with their perspective.

The first step, however, is to determine the context of the research. As presented above, people might change their VAK system, based on the given context. Therefore, a clear and easy context needs to be provided before to every respondent, so that everyone has the same mindset.

The second stage is represented by determining the five questions which will respect the given context. Each question will have four answers and every one of them will represent one VAK-D pattern from the representation system.

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[2] Neurolinguistic programming (NLP) is a psychological approach to the human mind with the mission of understanding behavior and informational processing system.
[3] Founder, Brilliant Minds (Training & Development) Ltd. The UK
[4] Psychological construct of human motivational patterns which influence decisions
[5] American Author and trainer
[6] Author and linguist

The respondents are asked to read the questions and to give value grades to the answers from 1 to 4, where 1 represents the lowest value of importance and 4 is the highest. This research has established a very clear structure of the questions and answers for the representation system to be as clear as possible. Therefore, the answers to the five questions of the survey will need to respect the following scheme:

- First question's answer's: kinesthetic – auditory – visual – digital
- Second question's answers: auditory-visual – digital – kinesthetic
- Third question's answers: visual – kinesthetic – digital – auditory
- Fourth and fifth question's answers: auditory – digital – kinesthetic - visual

4. Context of analysis – Case study

The research has invited a group of students of the Marketing Faculty to answer a short survey. The purpose is to determine how well they appreciate how the course of Strategic Marketing is being conducted by the teacher and how well they understand the information. They were shown the following set of questions and answers, to which they had to offer grades of value from 1 to 4 (1 – the lowest and 4 – the highest).

1. What I appreciate the most about my teacher is that:
   a. He explains to us how strategic marketing is applied in real-life events
   b. He tells us many stories about how strategic marketing is important
   c. He shows us many pictures and videos on how the content we study is applied
   d. He always gives us many documents which we can take home and study regarding the subject he presented

2. In a contradictory conversation, what influences me the most is:
   a. My teacher's tone of voice
   b. If I can see it or not the arguments he is offering
   c. The logic of the given arguments
   d. If I feel connected with the arguments

3. I can express my opinions best when:
   a. I can present the information I have
   b. I feel that what I am saying is correct
   c. The words I choose are identical to the ones other authors are using when talking about the same subject
   d. I can speak freely

4. I find it the easiest to retain information when:
   a. I hear a detailed story about a certain event
   b. I can read about different perspectives of people who have lived the same event
   c. I can place myself in that event as if I was there
   d. I can see pictures from that event, and I can read about what happened.

5. How do you work best when studying at home?
   a. The fact that I can rehearse the information with a loud voice without being interrupted by anyone is the biggest advantage
   b. I can read without interruption different materials to understand the subject
   c. When I can dream about that specific event and place myself in it to understand better the information
   d. When I can read and write the parts I consider to be most important

The answers given by the first respondent are extracted and placed inside a table to observe the value grades he has offered to the survey. To establish the representation system of the student who offered the first set of answers, it is needed only to be made a sum of all his answers, categorized on the researched patterns. The first two biggest patterns with the highest values are the dominant VAK-D patterns which show how that person can both be influenced easily in a conversation and can also understand information better. All five questions are gathered and the results from visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and digital patterns are put together to form the totals. (Table 1).

Table 1. First respondent value grade results

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
K - 1	A -2	V - 2	A - 3	A - 2
A - 2	V - 4	K - 1	D - 2	D - 4
V - 4	D - 3	D - 4	K - 1	K - 1
D - 3	K - 1	A - 3	V - 4	V - 3

Source: Author

As it can be observed from the results table, based on the representation system research, the first student has the first dominant characteristic represented by the visual element with 17 points, followed by the digital one with 16 points. This means that the student can process and understand information better when he can read the information by himself, without having someone telling him about it. The only way for the student to retain information in the class is if the teacher will constantly show pictures and videos while presenting the information. To conclude the research on the group of students, the grades will be analyzed as averages for every representation pattern so that it will be clear which is the dominant system of the entire group overall. The process will be the same as for the first student, therefore the table will have the same calculation method. (Table 2).

Table 2. The dominant representation system of the first respondent

Results	V	K	A	D
Question 1	4	1	2	3
Question 2	4	1	2	3
Question 3	2	1	3	4
Question 4	4	1	3	2
Question 5	3	1	2	4
Total	17	5	12	16

Source: Author

It is interesting to observe how the average responses of the group are quite different from the first respondent. This means that most of the people in the group have a dominant and different representation pattern, meaning that they understand and process information differently. The following results are explaining the distance of the group from the first respondent. (Table 3).

Table 3. Overall average or group responses

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
K - 3	A - 4	V - 2	A - 4	A - 4
A - 4	V - 1	K - 1	D - 2	D - 2
V - 2	D - 3	D - 4	K - 1	K - 3
D - 1	K - 2	A - 3	V - 3	V - 1

Source: Author

Not only that the general and average response different from the first respondent, but it also shows how teaching a class would be most efficient considering this specific context and group of people. The research concludes that by defining a very clear context it is possible to identify the representation system of one or more people. It is to be considered that the language patterns are respecting the specific objective launched by this research and they all respect the concept of language segregation. Not only that but also the hypothesis is confirmed within this study that no student has offered a lower grade than 1 to any of the answers. This means that every single person has considered that all language patterns displayed are true for them, just with different values. (Table 4).

Table 4. Group average results

Results	V	K	A	D
Question 1	2	3	4	1
Question 2	1	2	4	3
Question 3	2	1	3	4
Question 4	3	1	4	2
Question 5	1	3	4	2
Total	9	10	19	11

Source: Author

5. Conclusions

Consumer behavior is often influenced by many factors, internal and external. There are many reasons why a person takes a decision on how to act upon information and how he will process it afterward. When it comes down to the representation system in the VAK-D structure, neurolinguistic programming has solved a big issue when it comes to separating people not by what they think, but by the way they make decisions. These emotional patterns are the main key features that influence human behavior in any context.

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