

Do the opposite of everyone else

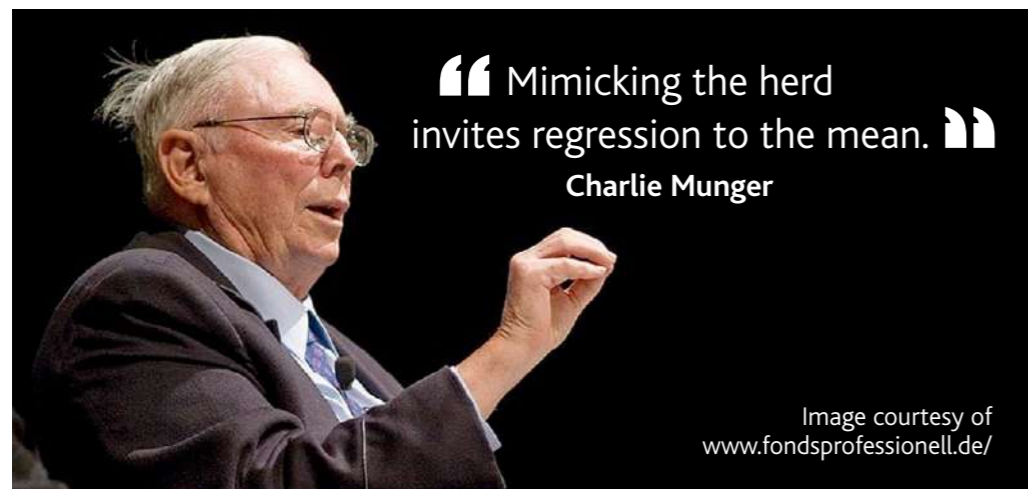
This is the next article in a series on how behavioural economics and 'being human' affects your business.

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Image courtesy of <https://brandthechange.org/>



“Mimicking the herd invites regression to the mean.”

Charlie Munger

Image courtesy of www.fondsprofessionell.de/

Just before Black Friday, they asked customers to do exactly the opposite of what any clothing retailer would want them to do.

They showed a photo of their jacket and said ...

“Don’t buy this jacket.”



“Wear it until it wears out.” The fashion industry has always felt like a perpetual case of the Emperor’s New Clothes – we need it because they tell us we need it.

www.mountainlifemedia.ca/

Picture this ... It’s late October, and you open your daily newspaper, get onto your news feed, or open your emails, and you are bombarded with hundreds of advertisements from thousands of brands desperate to sell you something. Everyone screams out their offer and tries to persuade you to buy from them because you will never get a deal like this again.

And then suddenly you pause with a bewildered look on your face. What caught your eye? One of the craziest – and most successful advertising campaigns was launched in 2011 by responsible clothing brand, Patagonia.

That would certainly grab your attention, right? And it also did for millions of consumers around the world. Most people were intrigued and stopped to actually read the commercial, discovering that – true to their values of reducing the environmental impact on the world – they discouraged customers from the frenzied buying that everyone else was encouraging. Since the first day when founder Yvon Chouinard, an American rock climber, environmentalist,

philanthropist and outdoor industry businessman started the company, it’s been famous for its commitment to protecting the environment and that they understood that fast fashion and consumerism had a huge impact on the natural

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The eye-catching nature of the Polaris ID Series is ideal for retailers to leverage it as a media and advertisement medium to interact with customers.

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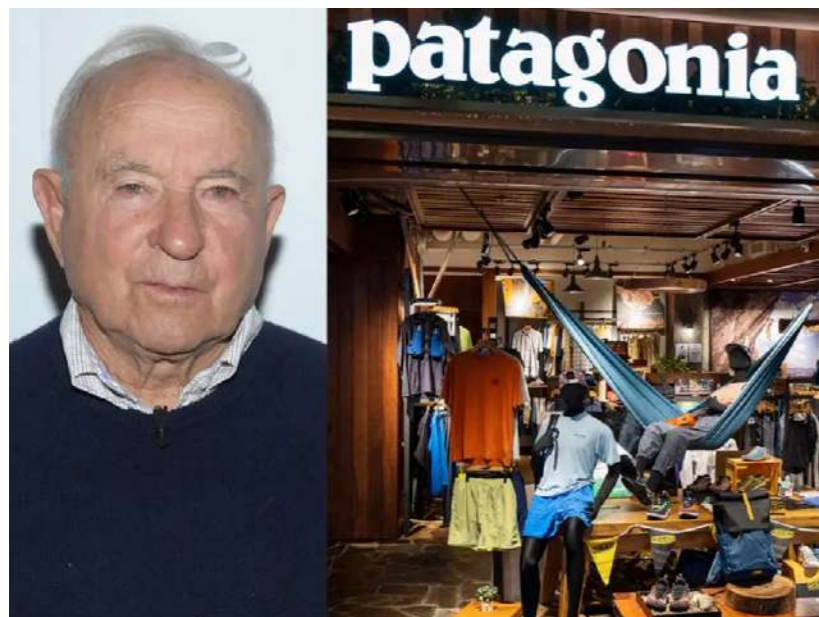
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world. The company encouraged people to recycle, reuse and repair clothes.



Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard has had a frugal lifestyle since his early days as a climber and surfer.

www.businessinsider.com

Although he was extremely wealthy, Chouinard gave up his billionaire status after giving the company to a trust and a nonprofit in September 2022.

The campaign has become an iconic marketing success and it strengthened the positioning of Patagonia as a company that prioritises its value through action, not platitudes. Just about every person who saw that advertisement in October 2011 (and every October since then), has completely forgotten all the ads they saw on that Black Friday, but surprisingly remembered Patagonia's and told it to their all their connections. And ironically, even though the headline said, "Don't buy," Patagonia's sales rocketed by around 30%.



Image courtesy of <https://timebusinessnews.com/>

How can we explain this situation? For a start, one needs to remember that for every trend that we see in the world, there is equally a counter-trend that is supported by other consumers and groups. But in the case of Patagonia, their bold campaign became a real problem for their competitors – because, when our attention is attracted to something that's so conspicuous, be it a product, a quirky characteristic, or an event, we tend to ignore the less prominent but more relevant ones.

Brand Salience

The degree to which your brand is thought of or noticed. Strong brands have high Brand Salience and weak brands have little or none.

In terms of behavioural psychology, the principle that applied is often called "the tyranny of the salient." Salience is when something unusual jumps out at you – and becomes more noticeable – because it's different. It doesn't fit in with the pattern we expect. It's when you see a bowl of green apples with one red one inside. It's when

“ The fast fashion industry has become one of the most wasteful consumer industries in the world. ”

<https://brandthechange.org/>



Image courtesy of www.freepik.com/



you go to a party and everyone is wearing the same colours, except one rebel. It's when a highly unpredictable and unexpected events occur. We all logically know that you are more than 1 200 times safer flying in a 'plane than driving, but people are more afraid of flying than driving because 'plane crashes are more salient.





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In business it's sometimes called the 'black swan event'. Often they are negative (like the market crash of 2008, or Covid), but sometimes they are also very positive for the business. Some famous examples of disruptors who took unconventional and unexpected approaches are Tesla, Airbnb, UBER, Netflix and Warby Parker (which sells spectacles online).

So how can you take advantage of the salience bias? Here are some thoughts ...

- If you take this thinking one step further, can you solve hidden problems and frustrations that customers have? In marketing we like to use the term 'unmet needs and wants', and they are usually obvious. (Indeed, your competitors probably chase these as well as you do, and for customers they are safe and comfortable – but not inspiring.) So, what can you do to reverse this? Can



Black Swan

An unpredictable event that is beyond what is normally expected of a situation and has potentially severe consequences.
[www.investopedia.com/Michela Buttignol](http://www.investopedia.com/MichelaButtignol)

you fulfil 'un-needs' or needs that customers themselves cannot express, or that are hidden? Many of the examples above are exactly that – we didn't know we needed them until they were there and now, like air fryers, we ask, "How did I ever do without this before?" There's no going back.

- But there are also obvious problems that exist in plain sight. One of my favourite adverts ever was for Volkswagen. It showed some really horrible freezing weather and a snowplough in the background. The byline was, "Have you ever wondered how the snowplough driver drives to the snowplough?" Incredibly powerful insight. (Of course, VW really messed this up later in the USA by refusing for decades to include cupholders in their vehicles. If you know anything about Americans, it's that they love to eat and drink in their cars. If you know anything about Germans, it's that their cars are temples of technology, and they would never allow anyone to eat inside theirs. Talk about not being in touch with your customers – and it cost them terribly in terms of market share.)

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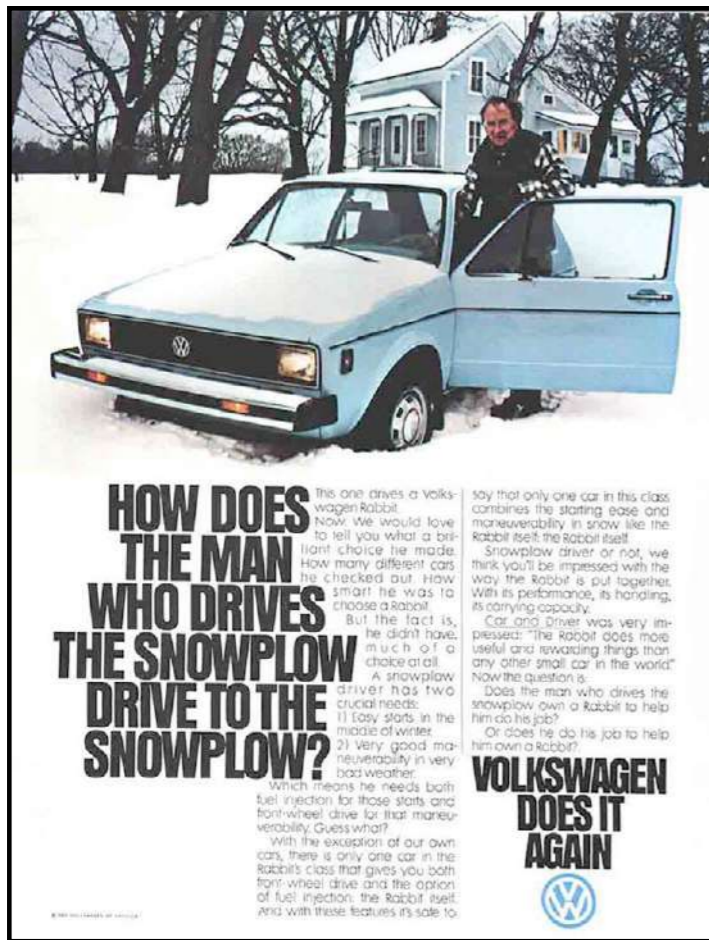


Image courtesy of www.hobbydb.com/_VW

- What can you do to be different, to buck the trends, especially with Black Friday and the Christmas celebrations coming up? But don't look only at your products and pricing. What else impacts on your customers' experiences?

We live in a really noisy and overwhelming world – and seemingly just about every product is a commodity – so the only way to get attention is through differentiating your business from the pack. There are dozens of possibilities, and you can probably think of plenty of innovative ideas that will have an impact, make you unforgettable, and help you to distinguish your business from all of the others.

It doesn't have to cost you anything. If you focus only on the shiny traits and features, you'll definitely go off-track. A Ferrari is impressive ... until you find out that it costs a fortune to store it, to insure it and to maintain it. And, while it may impress some people, it is also looked upon with disdain by others, so the owner loses credibility.

Customer value is created in the human mind, not in the factory and definitely not in spreadsheets. But it does require a bit of courage to try something new. **SR**



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