



Activity 3a) Social Validation

Weapon 5: Social Validation

This is one of the most common persuasion techniques used in adverts today. People like to 'follow the crowd' and to do what others are doing. That's why customer testimonials are such a powerful way of getting customers to buy a product. Imagine a mum has three children, who all like to play in the mud. She used to struggle with getting the stains out, but now that she tried the new X washing powder she no longer needs to worry about this! If another mum is watching the advert, and she also has a similar problem, she might trust the lady on the advert and buy washing powder X. If it helped her then it will surely help me too, we're so similar!



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That's why using 'plain Janes' in adverts (especially for household cleaning items), rather than celebrities, works so well. We're not likely to identify with a celebrity (I totally have the same problems as Angelina Jolie...not), but we are likely to identify with someone who's similar to us (a mum? a gadget-addict? a young person who likes to party? Depends on the advert!).

This principle works very well in hotels, where guests are encouraged to conserve energy (e.g. by re-using towels). In one experiment, different types of notices were put up in hotel rooms, to see how this would change people's towel-using behaviour. In some rooms the notice said 'please re-use your towel to help us care for the environment!'. In other rooms, the notice said 'please re-use your towel, as most of our guests do the same!'. Guess which sign led people to re-use their towels more? The one which mentioned what other people were doing, of course. We like to do what others are doing and if this means re-using your towel...

Task

1. How could the social validation principle be used to persuade young people to reduce the amount of alcohol they are drinking?
2. Next time you are watching TV, focus on the adverts and try to work out which persuasion techniques they are using. A beautiful model in a shampoo advert? A person 'just like you' advertising a product which might appeal to you? See if you can spot all 6 techniques!

Activity 3b) Reciprocity

Weapon 6: Reciprocity

This next persuasion 'weapon' exploits your natural instinct to repay others if they give you something. Reciprocity can be summarised with the phrase 'I scratch your back and you scratch mine'. If a friend helps you out with something, don't you *just* feel compelled to help them out in the future too? Or to buy them a small gift? This is the magic of reciprocity. This feeling has an evolutionary basis – we were able to develop as a society, because our ancestors were able to work together. This means that people had to take a risk and to invest time or resources into another person, in hopes that they will also receive help from them. So, a sense of 'guilt' over owing someone is a very good thing, evolutionarily speaking. However, it's not so good when this guilt is being used to make you buy things you don't need.



Free gifts, samples or trials work on this principle – we gave you something, now repay us by buying our products or by donating to our charity, or by joining our group or something entirely different. You don't even have to *want* the favour in order to experience a strong psychological pressure to repay it.

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In one study, participants were sent a survey, which they were asked to complete and return. Some people received the survey and a hand-written note thanking them for their time, whereas others did not receive the sticky note. Those who received the note were twice as likely to return the survey! They probably felt that since someone has taken the time to include a hand-written note in the survey, they should repay this little act of kindness by completing and returning the survey.

Task

1. What do psychologists mean by the word 'reciprocity'?
2. Which businesses might particularly benefit from using the reciprocity principle?
3. Watch this clip on reciprocity <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1zNwA61Y7g>
Do you have any negotiations coming up? Maybe you're planning to ask your parents whether you can host a party at their house, or maybe you need your friends to help you on a big project? Write down a short description of how you might use reciprocity the next time you need to persuade someone to agree with your request.

Explore More...

This is a great overview of everything that was discussed in this resource

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXhLmkrN0-I>

Read this article – it gives some extra info on the persuasion techniques discussed in this resource (with extra studies and examples!) <https://blog.enhancv.com/8-persuasion-techniques-to-change-anyones-mind/>

Robert Cialdini's book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, as well as *Pre-suasion* are both great reads and they are not hard to follow. A great place to start if you want to find out more about persuasion techniques!

Still looking for more? Explore the differences between the 'central' and 'peripheral' routes of persuasion (examples below)

<http://www.psychologyandsociety.com/routestopersuasion.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wx75eQRfWx8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6oyCeYQWPE>