



The Science of Decisions

A guide to using implicit testing in market research

How people make decisions



If you ask someone to explain their behaviour, their decisions, or how they'll act in the future, there'll always be an inherent bias in their answers. Why? Because people simply aren't as rational as they think they are.

Much of our decision-making process is based on associations we're completely unaware of. There are (broadly) two types of processes people use to make decisions: **implicit** and **explicit**.

Implicit System 1 / Intuitive

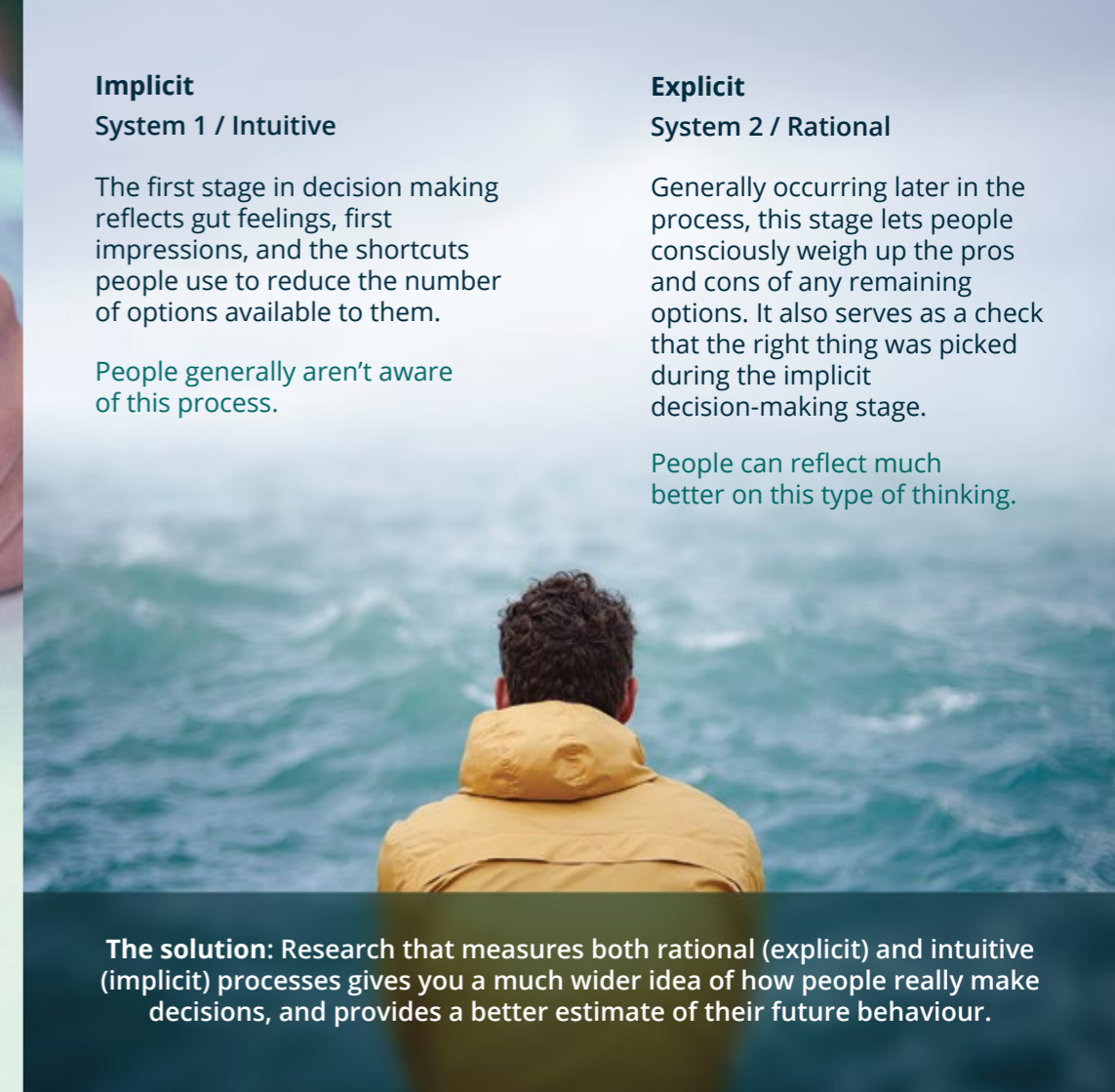
The first stage in decision making reflects gut feelings, first impressions, and the shortcuts people use to reduce the number of options available to them.

People generally aren't aware of this process.

Explicit System 2 / Rational

Generally occurring later in the process, this stage lets people consciously weigh up the pros and cons of any remaining options. It also serves as a check that the right thing was picked during the implicit decision-making stage.

People can reflect much better on this type of thinking.



The solution: Research that measures both rational (explicit) and intuitive (implicit) processes gives you a much wider idea of how people really make decisions, and provides a better estimate of their future behaviour.

How to measure intuitions

There are many different ways of measuring intuitive decision processes, and they can be used to measure anything from how much attention people are paying to how they feel about a brand on an emotional level, and even address purchase intent. What the approaches have in common is that they are based on cognitive psychology and neuroscience research, and rely heavily on measuring reaction times.

Putting people under time pressure while completing various activities gets them to rely on their mental shortcuts, much like they would for many real-world decisions. The data we record doesn't just tell us their explicit/rational views, but gives us a much deeper insight into a range of factors such as:

- how sure they were (e.g. how strongly they preferred a product over another),
- how easy a task was for them (e.g. how easily they could process information in an advert, or how strongly a pack design stood out from its shelf environment) and
- how flexible their opinions are.

Another advantage of this approach is that it can be carried out online, which means that you can reach large and specific groups of people all over the world in a fast and cost effective way. At Mindlab, we apply implicit methods to many different research areas, but most of our work focuses on:

- Packaging concept and execution
- Product concept testing
- Advertising and communications
- Brand perception, mobility and equity



Who we are

When asked what we do, we tend to describe Mindlab as a research company conducting studies with a focus on consumer psychology and neuroscience.

But first and foremost, we are scientists. Our team comes from a wide range of academic backgrounds including neuroscience, psychology, mathematics, theoretical and experimental physics.

In the past three years, we have carried out over 300 online experiments in multiple international markets. We have acquired expertise in various fields, including FMCG (product packaging, product design, messaging), political communications and advertising effectiveness. We work with clients such as Diageo, innocent drinks, Channel 4, Boots, Zurich Insurance and The AA.

Our key research focus is on quantitative online studies. We love to work closely together with other agencies such as Qualitative and Behavioural Economic specialists helping to give you a single comprehensive narrative to your research.

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