

From Generic to Extraordinary: How Ingredient Companies are Empowering Brands with Tailored Ingredients and Compelling Stories for Unrivaled Business Growth

Co-Authors: C. Pantidos, PhD and M. Velissariou, PhD

This paper is based on a fireside chat conversation at IFT FIRST in July 2023 between the co-authors, with a focus on food ingredients and packaging materials.

Prior to establishing BRAND AVIATORS®, Dr Constantinos Pantidos worked for over a decade in various CPG companies holding several Marketing positions. During this time, he was intrigued by the gap between knowing that consumer decisions are largely based on emotions but not knowing how these emotions are triggered through marketing communications and product designs. Emotions come from neural activity, which we can now understand better through neurobiology. He subsequently spent 10 years studying the triggers of purchase across more than two hundred categories of universal CPG products using a multi-disciplinary approach based on biology, neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, cognitive science, and we found patterns. All disciplines consistently pointed to the same drivers of behavior we call motives.

The research culminated in a book called *Living Brands How Biology and Neuroscience Shape Consumer Behavior and Brand Desirability*, and a proprietary tool that fuses more than five thousand neural-based papers and studies. The tool structures and monitors these motives from their origins in biology, we go to the systems they trigger in the brain, and the panhuman values they infuse into our everyday life.



What is it about?

It is about a tool we call THE WHEEL OF MOTIVES® that gives a strategic edge to companies who want to unlock the motivations of their clients and to acquire instinctive attraction.



THE WHEEL OF MOTIVES®

*** Dr. C. Pantidos, *Living Brands: How Biology and Neuroscience Shape Consumer Behaviour and Brand Desirability*, Lid Publishing, London 2018.**

Any decision, including the purchase of a product or service, is taken at the psychological and neurological interface. For the brain to authenticate the product automatically, all elements of the product and communication must be in “harmony” and work both consciously (rationally) and unconsciously. This is because flavors, textures, concepts etc. all trigger the same systems in the brain. So, we can translate one into another if we know this code, the “language of the brain,” the filters it uses to structure everything around us.

For instance, THE WHEEL OF MOTIVES® can help food ingredient companies become strategic partners with food manufacturers and transform their ingredients from interchangeable raw materials into indispensable components of their client’s strategy. It does so by translating emotions and concepts into ingredients and recipes, and ingredients and recipes into emotions and concepts through their impact on the brain.

For example, working with a baked confections company we discovered an opportunity for a new type of snack that would have an uncompromising, unconventional, and defiant positioning. In the psychographic map of the snack category, we call this “white space” opportunity. To communicate the values of defiance and being uncompromising, the entire bundle design was “out of the box”: the selected ingredients were bitter chocolate and chili peppers; they were added to dry dough with a crunchy and slightly hard texture offering some resistance; the shape was irregular; when biting into it, it made a lot of noise; its color was almost black; its packaging broke the category rules – it was full of defiant symbols not

used in a snack packaging before, its shape was unconventional etc.; and the communication talked about people who do things to change the world.

In this way, we can distinguish common and often commoditized ingredients from their kind. For example, the vanilla sold by the ingredient company using this tool is not comparable anymore with any other vanilla. It is not just vanilla but reassurance, nostalgia or even exoticism in a precise system of structured emotions according to the impact of the ingredient on the brain. On the other hand, ingredients that would never come to one's mind in relation to certain products, can be discovered to provide both unprecedented and at the same time relevant experiences. Thus, the ingredient company does not sell just products but becomes creator of structured experiences.

Where did the inspiration come from in the first place?

While consumer decisions are based on emotions, managers spend disproportionate time rationalizing products and their communication. But what may seem logical and follows what the consumer says is not always the best route for increasing sales and profit. For instance, when it comes to croissants, people ask to have more chocolate filling from the first bite. However, by spreading the chocolate inside the soft dough of the croissant more evenly, the brain loses the arousal that it gets from the alternation of the tastes and textures. Most importantly, it loses the unpredictability of what comes with the next bite. The experience journey of croissant is destroyed.

How does THE WHEEL OF MOTIVES® compare with the current models and practices?

THE WHEEL OF MOTIVES® does not substitute the existing models and processes. It empowers them. For example, we have worked with Owens-Illinois (O-I), the largest glass packaging company in the world, for many years. The company has been using several research resources such as IRI, consumer studies and studies provided by clients like Needscope. The adoption of THE WHEEL OF MOTIVES®, enabled O-I to leverage biology and unlock consumer behavior. With this critical tool they were able to capture the essence of their client brands in glass bottles and jars. In addition to gaining six hundred new projects in just one year, O-I became a strategic innovation partner for many companies.

How does it work in practice?

THE WHEEL OF MOTIVES® helps decode the DNA of the brand and the main motives driving the product or service category. In this way, every consumer touchpoint is both authentic and satisfies the deepest motives driving the category. THE WHEEL OF MOTIVES® goes back to biology. Biological drivers are uncontrolled, based on how we have been conditioned to interpret our environment, to see colors, to feel, to act. By rooting concepts in science and combining functional properties with meaning and emotion, the benefits are many.

What are the benefits?

Taglines, logos, packaging, product ingredients and features, acquire instinctive attraction. Each brand action becomes irresistible because it triggers primal needs. The brand is very consistent throughout. The brain automatically authenticates the offer, as the product, the packaging, the communication all points to the same panhuman emotion.

In the case of the food ingredient companies THE WHEEL OF MOTIVES® can help tell the story of the brand in neural terms using an interdisciplinary approach. Thus, the common ingredient becomes indispensable for the client, a type of versatile part of a language that unlocks emotions and concepts on top of being the normal functional element of food products. This narrative is invincible. The ingredient company becomes an integral part of the client's processes.

The methodology gives a scientific reason as to why the exact ingredients and recipes are proposed to the client, and it works time after time.

All these help the supplier company become a global innovator leader, dramatically differentiate its offer, land some of the most sophisticated clients, cement relationships with existing ones, become strategic innovation partners with clients, increase sales revenues, premiumize, sell proactively etc.

Examples of clients that have used THE WHEEL OF MOTIVES®

Companies such as Mondelez, Coca-Cola, Nestle, Starbucks, Reckitt and Colgate as well as many regional and local brands have leveraged this methodology throughout the world.

How can someone learn more about the tool?

People who would like to find more information can visit our website brandaviators.com or contact me at c.pantidos@brandaviators.com. The methodology is also described in the book *Living Brands, How Biology and Neuroscience Shape Consumer Behavior and Brand Desirability*. Here is also another interesting link to an article published in Food Technology, which talks about liberating the emotional power of food ingredients:

https://www.ift.org/news-and-publications/food-technology-magazine/issues/2020/november/features/using-neuroscience-to-build-brands?gclid=CjwKCAjwoqGnBhAcEiwAwK-OkUFJWVHXIS7v9kkm9_7eBnauTrD4gqC3pZFyeBc-UxumhJFrEJ5vx0CzDMQAvD_BwE