

Interview with Constantinos Pantidos

By Phil McGee

*Constantinos Pantidos leads BRAND AVIATORS™, a brand strategy consultancy whose client list includes some of the world's top CPG companies, such as Coca-Cola, Unilever, Johnson & Johnson, Heineken, L'Oréal, and PMI. Constantinos travels around the world to work with clients who want to deeper understand their categories and brands and sharpen their propositions. In this segment, Constantinos will discuss his latest book, *Living Brands, How Biology and Neuroscience Shape Consumer Behaviour and Brand Desirability*, which represents an 11-year journey, leveraging over five thousand academic and professional research studies from multiple scientific disciplines to uncover the motives for buying 200 universal categories of goods and services.*

1. What was the inspiration behind your book, *Living Brands*?

Rather than a result of an inspiration, *Living Brands* is the result of the need to help clients rise above the fog of communication. It is a highly original piece of work that helps marketers and consumer insight managers elevate product values that are insufficient in today's competitive environment to a higher order of emotions that makes brands distinctive and sharpens creative executions. Emotions associated with the brand should not be arbitrary. They should have material anchoring in the products and services we sell. Leveraging the advances of modern sciences such as affective neuroscience, we can now scientifically link, for the first time, function and emotion, reality with imagination, conscious and unconscious.

2. What makes this book different than other books on branding and positioning?

Living Brands helps unlock the black box of consumer behavior by using neuroscience strategically, for the first time, to understand categories and position brands. It puts forward a highly applicable methodology that advances existing models for shaping brand strategy such as System 1 - System 2, The Laws of Growth or Archetypes. It actually links System 1 with System 2, the mental availability with physical availability, and helps trigger archetypes in their biological roots. Because of its highly original conception to use our knowledge of the systems in the brain, it helps marketers and Consumer Insight Managers create positioning strategies, that are unclaimed and scientifically measurable.

3. You speak of brands as living objects (e.g., "*Living Brands*"). Why is it important to think of brands this way?

Brands that embed the very biological forces of life have the ability to speak to each of us personally. They become living parts of everyone's reality because they allow the brain to reinterpret them at each one's individual situation. Living brands have the ability to continually evolve and adjust to particular cultures and still remain true to themselves.

4. This book introduces us to a framework you call "*The Pathways of Human Behaviour*." Can you describe these pathways and the contribution this framework makes to your overall approach?

Marketing has relied on psychology to measure customer perceptions. The focus on only one discipline can be flawed in that the responses are claimed, subjective and often contradictory. Although much of our behavior is unconscious, it is not arbitrary. Decisions and meaning are rooted in the psychological and neurophysiological

interface creating strong predispositions that guide preferences. Our choices must make sense, our life must add up. To be consistent, brands and messages should work in the same way at the explicit and implicit level, the mental (meaning) should be compatible with the physical (product characteristics, packaging, etc.).

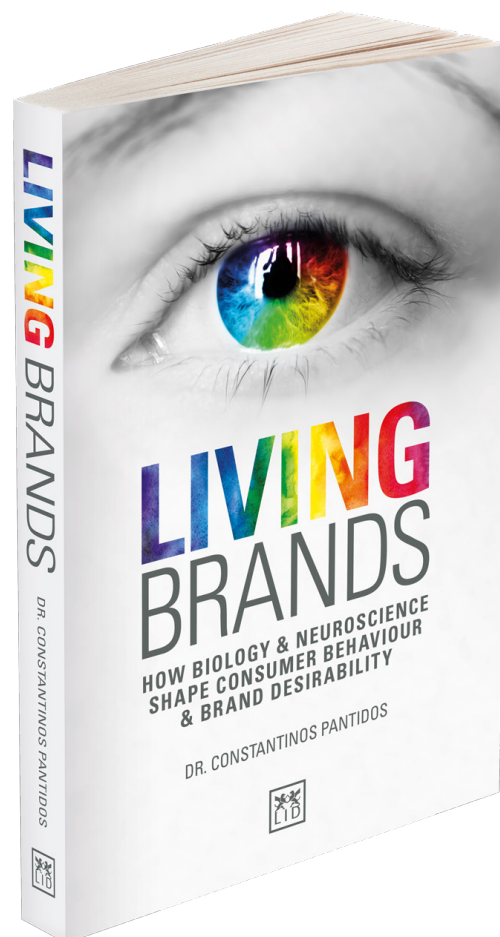


Diagram 1: The Pathways of Human Behaviour, *Living Brands, How Biology and Neuroscience Shape Consumer Behaviour and Brand Desirability*, Dr. Constantinos Pantidos, Lid Publishing, London, 2018

The roots of all our behavior lie in biology, not in psychology. To ensure we never forget the importance of these motives, nature has established an array of systems in our mind and body and has made their satisfaction intrinsically rewarding. Our feelings reflect our neural experiences. *The Pathways of Human Behaviour* helps us fire the right associations in the brain, that derive naturally from the product and the brand.

5. Another framework you use is the “The Wheel of Motives.” What is the basis of The Wheel?

Scientists know that our behavior and choices, including brand choices are richly structured. As the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio says “There’s nothing free or random about drives and emotions. They are highly specific and evolutionarily preserved repertoires of behaviors”. And for the cognitive scientist and philosopher Jerry Fodor: “Behavior is organized, but the organization of behavior is merely derivative; the structure of behavior stands to mental structure as an effect stands to its cause”.

Living Brands unlocks this structure. By establishing the links between many sciences, it shows that we are guided by 12 neuro-motives from which all human values & concepts derive. Underlying all our behaviors are fundamental motives, the evolutionarily preserved mechanisms that helped us survive and thrive. By establishing the links between many sciences, *The Wheel of Motives* systematizes these fundamental motives underpinning everyday consumer behavior, as well as the basic emotions and major ingrained concepts deriving from them. The result is a framework that can help marketers engage people at a profoundly human level.

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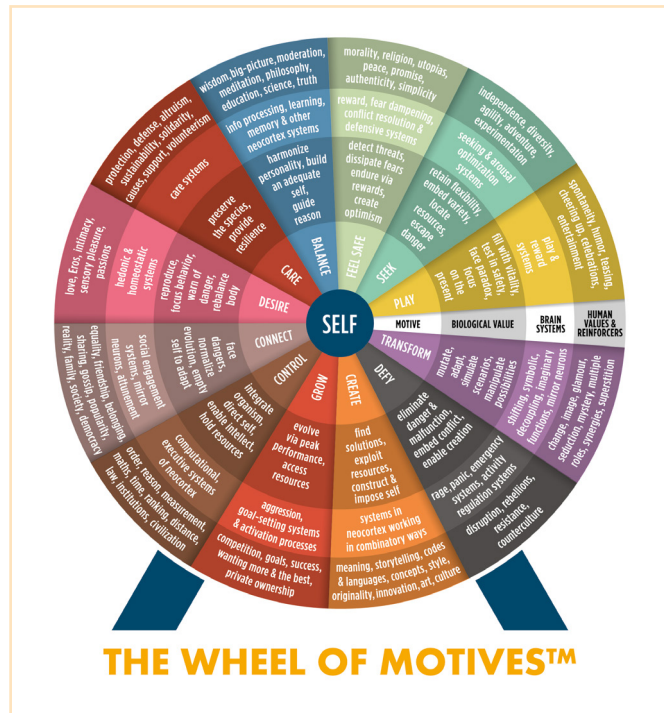


Diagram 2: The Wheel of Motives, Living Brands, How Biology and Neuroscience Shape Consumer Behaviour and Brand Desirability, Dr. Constantinos Pantidos, Lid Publishing, London, 2018

6. How do you recommend marketers and consumer insight managers use “The Wheel of Motives”?

Marketers and consumer insight managers can leverage *The Wheel of Motives* strategically to deeper understand the motives that drive their categories and their brands and trigger meaning in the psychological and neurophysiological interface creating strong predispositions that guide preferences.

At an implementation level, *The Wheel of Motives* helps align all consumer touchpoints such as words, colors, shapes, sounds, flavors etc. according to their neural impact instead of just following fleeting trends and category codes.

Thus, *The Wheel of Motives* can be used as a holistic platform to fully integrate for the first time brand positioning, category vision, communication strategy, innovation and packaging down to every consumer touchpoint in an unmatched narrative.

7. Can you give an example of how this material can be used to bring a brand to life?

A global beverage company wanted to launch a brand that existed already in the US in Europe and asked us to confirm if the positioning the brand had in the US was also valid for Europe. Our analysis indicated that the category had a diluted and unclear positioning, borrowing benefits from other drink categories rather than building excitement around its own unique benefits. The brand itself in the US was tapping into too many neuromotives indicating that its positioning was ambiguous. As a result, some messages, icons, narratives etc. contradicted each other on explicit and implicit levels. By leveraging *The Wheel of Motives*, we were able to propose a fine-tuning for the brand strategy and deep executional guidelines that helped exceed the expectations of the launch.

8. How can readers contact you and where can they purchase your book?

Readers can contact me at: c.pantidos@brandaviators.com. The book can be purchased at Amazon and other major retailers: *Living Brands, How Biology and Neuroscience Shape Consumer Behaviour and Brand Desirability*, Dr. Constantinos Pantidos, Lid Publishing, London, 2018

About the author:

Phil McGee has held executive leadership positions in FMCG Retail, as Divisional Vice President, Strategic Marketing at Kmart; Manufacturing, leading Consumer & Shopper Insights, Category Management and Beverage Strategy at the Campbell Soup Company; and Marketing Services, presiding over IPSOS's Global Retail & Shopper practice. He is currently President at Decision Breakers, a behavior-based research & consulting firm specializing in shopper insights and retail activation strategies.