

BEHAVIORAL BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

How to build your brand with
the right blocks

Ahu Sendilmen

Greg Gwiasda



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BUILDING ON YESTERDAY'S FOUNDATIONS

Imagine building a modern skyscraper using foundations designed for a two-story house and materials from 10 years ago. The craftsmanship may be excellent. But as the structure grows taller, more complex and more demanding, weaknesses begin to appear.

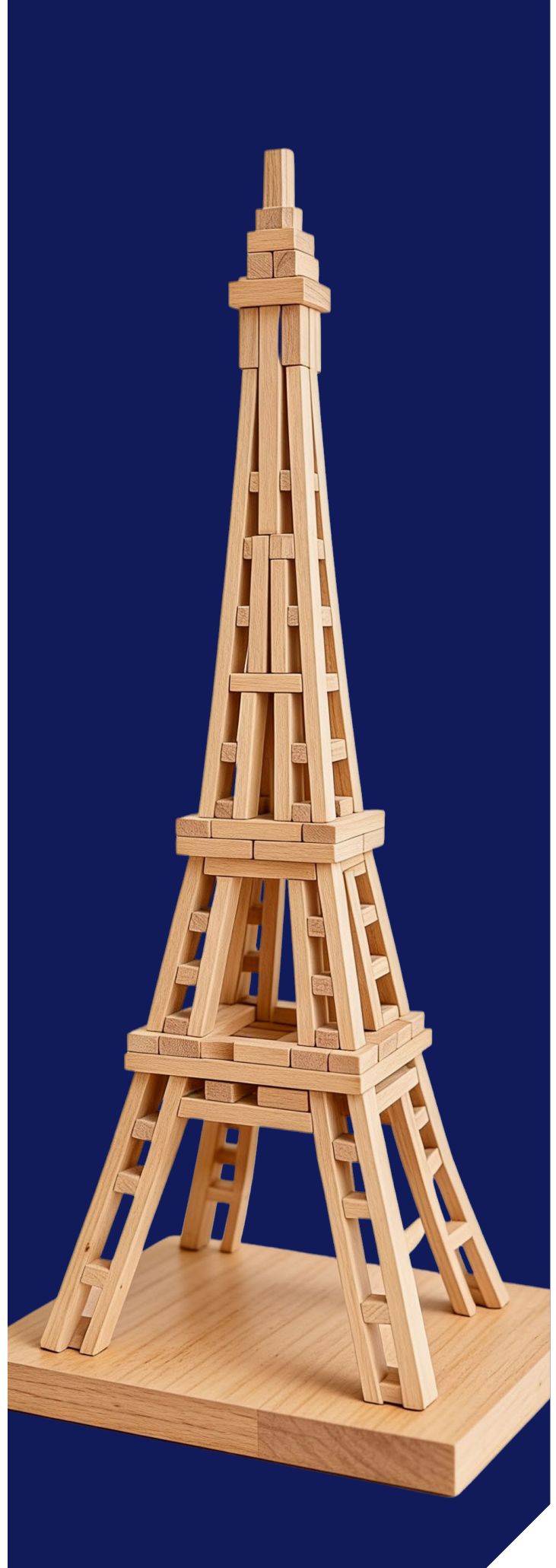
The same challenge faces brands today.

Consumer behavior has become faster, more fluid and more situational than ever before.

Yet many organizations continue to measure it using frameworks built for an era when behaviors were more stable, categories were more predictable and change happened at a slower pace.

As a result, brands often find themselves building strategies on foundations that look solid with plenty of data, abundant expertise and no shortage of KPIs.

What they lack is a measurement system designed around people's reality and how behavior actually works today.



Winning brands are those that start with three fundamental questions:

1

Do we truly understand the behaviors driving growth? In other words, what our consumers or users do – and is that understanding wide enough to help us win tomorrow, not just explain yesterday?

2

Can we translate business objectives and strategies into the specific behaviors we need to influence?

3

Do we have the right behavioral KPIs in place to target, track, and adjust our progress in real time and adapt before opportunities disappear?

Just as every great building depends on the strength of its foundations and the quality of its building blocks, sustainable growth depends on having the right behavioral measures in place. Get those foundations right, and growth becomes something that can be systematically built rather than simply hoped for.

The purpose of this article is to equip brand leaders for success by reviewing the pros and cons of the behavioral measurement techniques, unveiling Ipsos findings and sharing inspiring brand stories.



From obsolete traditional systems to behavioral and contextual market dynamics

The Real Problem is not one-dimensional; traditional systems fall short across three critical dimensions:



Time



How quickly behavior evolves vs. how often it is measured



Resolution



How precisely behavior is understood



Structure



Whether behavior is framed around moments and goals, or constrained by categories

It is the combination of all three that limits a brand's ability to drive sustained growth.

1. Behavior Changes Faster Than Most Systems Refresh



Brands' choices and behavior can shift almost overnight – through a viral TikTok trend, the emergence of a new delivery platform, geopolitical tensions, or economic pressure. In this reality, long, episodic studies refreshed every few years create a structural disadvantage. By the time understanding is updated, the market has already moved.

As such, shortening the gap between measurement and intervention is no longer an advantage, it is a necessity.

2. Context Increasingly Determines People Behavior



The same person might pick a salad at lunch with colleagues and a burger late at night with friends. The speed at which the context shifts now dictates the “how” and “why” of choice. In a world of endless digital stimuli and rapid-fire

trends, consumers’ and users’ goals are no longer fixed; they are activated by the immediate environment. **For marketers, the task is to map the environments where those thoughts translate into action.**



WHO



WHAT



WHERE



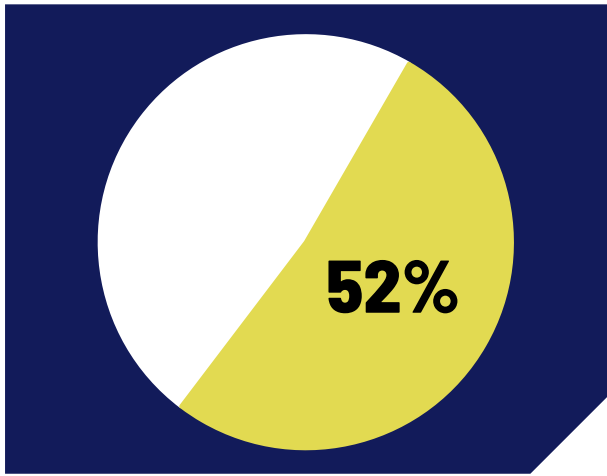
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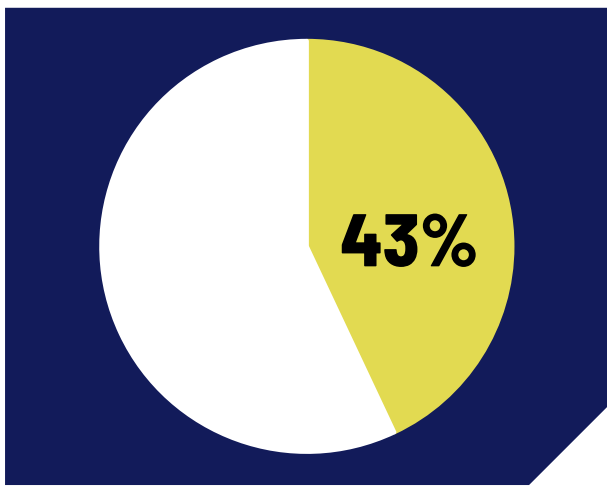
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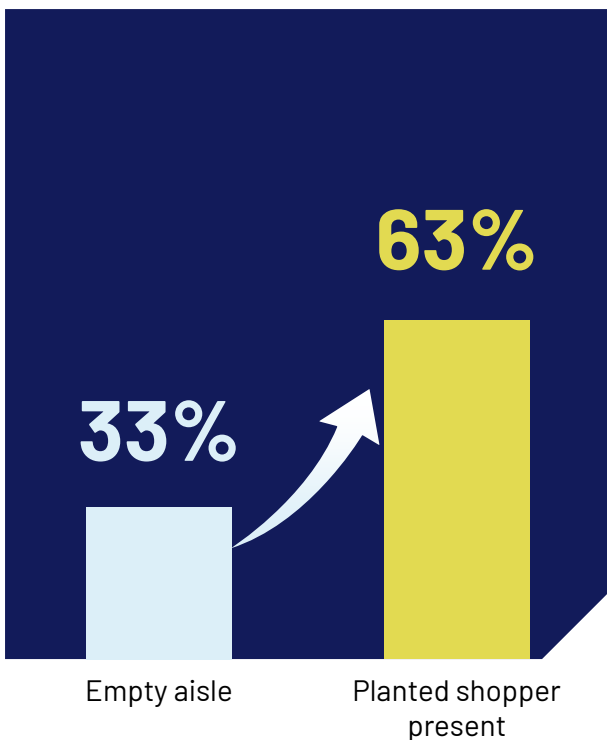
DOING
WHAT



Ipsos extensive R&D research¹ across countries and categories has revealed that **the context contributes to 52% of the brand choice** outlining the paramount importance of collecting all this contextual information, who, where, why, with whom, while doing what and why.



A study on habits² further shows that **43% of habitual behaviors are linked to contextual cues**. Goals, beliefs, and context work together to shape behavior; our mental models are inseparable from the environments in which they operate.



Context shapes behavior in powerful, often invisible ways. A classic shopping study³ illustrates this vividly: when people shopped for batteries in an empty aisle, only 33% chose a premium brand. When a single “planted” shopper was present, that number jumped to 63%. Social presence instantly shifted the meaning of the choice – from functional utility to social signalling.

This level of resolution is vital for reflecting real market dynamics rather than verbalized recollections. It allows brands to close the structural blind spots that otherwise limit their ability to identify, size, and convert true growth opportunities.



3.

Behavior Is Fluid Across Categories



Behavior rarely follows the category boundaries defined by marketers. Did you ever have a coffee as replacement for a dessert, or a protein bar as a breakfast or even watched a streaming service instead of a night out?

Now, growth is competed for across moments, not categories. But when measurement remains category-bound, the true competitive landscape remains invisible. Substitutions, repertoire shifts, and emerging brand opportunities go undetected – not because they do not exist, but because systems were not designed to see them.

Understanding behavior today therefore requires broad, moment-based framing, closer to moment and deeper – combined with behavioral science to decode underlying goals.

This is important because traditional research tends to capture the abstract “why,” missing the tactical frictions that often determine the final choice. Construal Level Theory shows that distance dictates mindset. When a decision is far off, people focus on the “why” (abstract values). As the decision approaches, focus shifts to the “how” (concrete execution).

BEHAVIORAL BUILDING BLOCKS – MAKING GROWTH MECHANICS VISIBLE

At its simplest, growth still follows a familiar universal formula:

$$\text{Sales} = \text{User Base} \times \text{Frequency} \times \text{Amount per moment}$$

What behavioral intelligence adds is clarity on **what actually drives each component in real life.**

The Core Behavioral Building Blocks

A modern behavioral growth system brings five elements together:

Users: Who drives growth

Occasions (Moments): When behavior happens

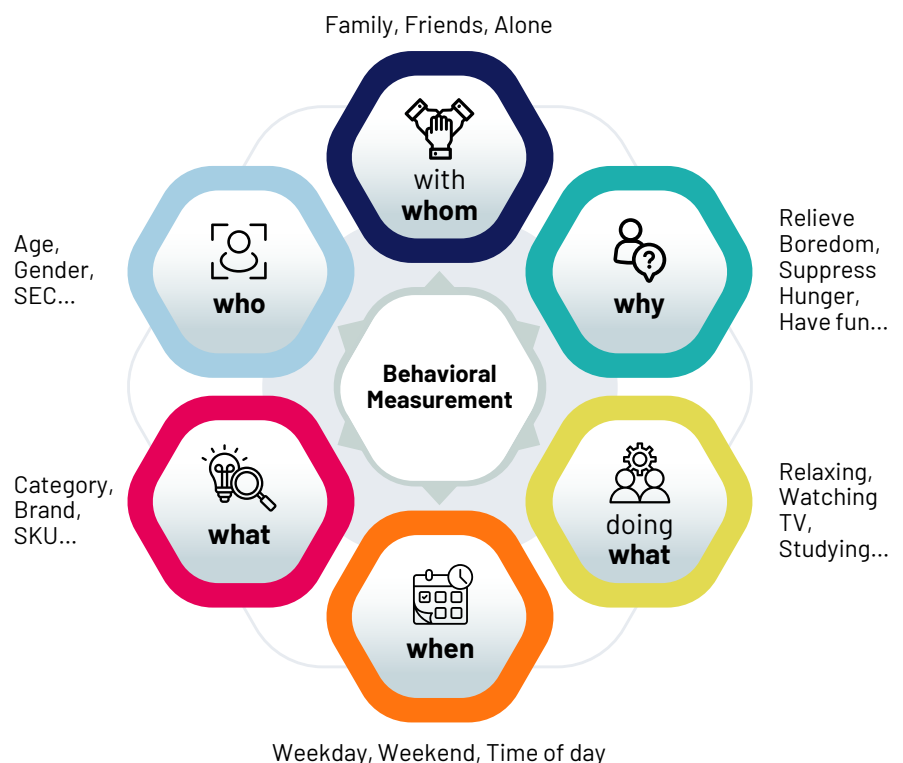
Choices Within Occasions: What people actually use, consume, buy

Context: Where behavior happens, with whom, while doing what & why

Active Goals: The objectives guiding choice in that moment (e.g., energy, comfort, control, reassurance, pleasure.)

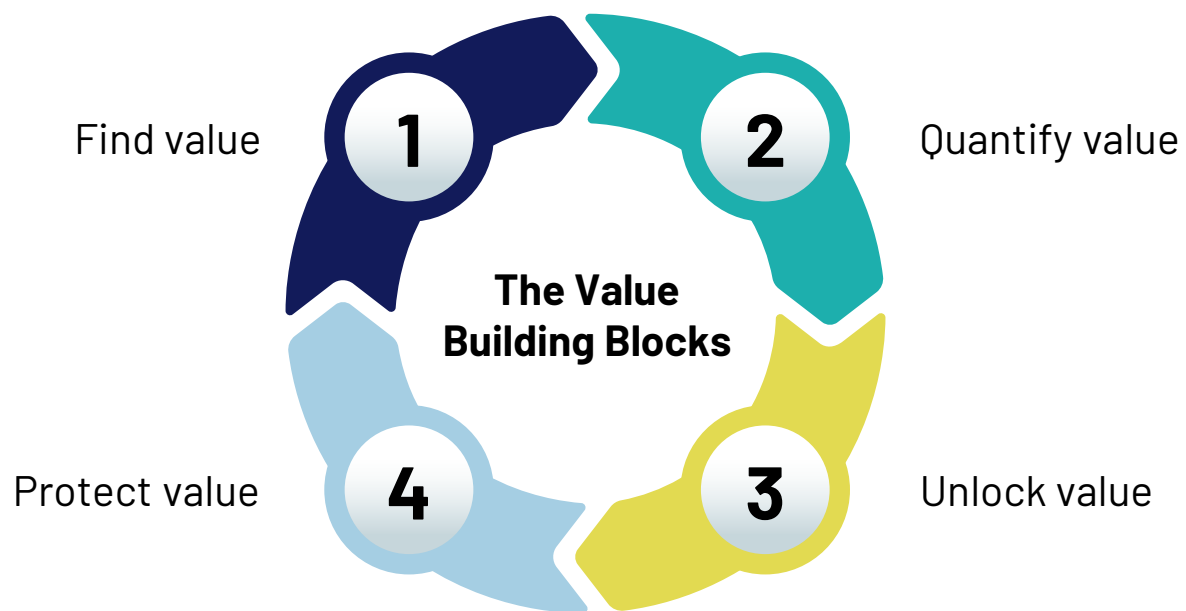
These building blocks allow brands to connect behavior to value:

- Which users, in which moments, drive volume
- Which behaviors are easiest to shift
- Which goals matter most in which contexts



TURNING BEHAVIOR INTO GROWTH: WHERE THE VALUE IS UNLOCKED

Behavioral data only matters if it improves brand decisions and helps influence people's behaviors. Winning brands translate behavioral understanding into sharper action across the brand growth cycle.



The Value Building Blocks

At the center of this cycle sits goal fulfillment. Goals are powerful, often subconscious drivers of behavior. When a goal is active, it acts as a cognitive filter: people notice different cues, assign importance differently, and choose accordingly. Have you noticed that when you are planning to replace your car, you suddenly notice a lot of advertising for automobiles, you start to look at your neighbor's cars and pick up on articles about e-V. This is "the connective tissue".

Goal alignment is the secret sauce of in-market activation.

To win the moment, brands must understand not just what people are doing, but what they are trying to achieve in the moment of consumption/usage.

1

FIND VALUE – Identify Real Demand Shifts

Behavioral intelligence reveals emerging and underserved moments:

- Snacking replacing meals
- Solo, screen-based consumption growing
- Energy and mood management overtaking indulgence

This reframes category definitions and builds a clearer view of the competitive landscape and brand positioning.

2

QUANTIFY VALUE – Size the Prize

Once opportunities are identified, behavioral data enables realistic sizing:

- Modelling penetration, frequency, and volume impact
- Translating Category Entry Points and shifting potential into value

This helps build credible business cases and align stakeholders around a fact-based growth plan:

If we shift X behaviors in Y contexts among Z audiences, this is the upside in volume, value, and share.

3

UNLOCK VALUE – Design for Real Life

Strategy

Focus on lower-friction, easier-to-convert behaviors.

Innovation

Design for real routines; borrow from adjacent categories where behaviors already exist.

Activation

Target messages, moments, and channels with the highest conversion potential.

4

PROTECT VALUE – Learn and Optimize Continuously

Behavioral KPIs make performance tracking more tangible and actionable, such as:

- Track trial, repeat, switching, and context-specific usage
- Identify underperformance early in a launch

Adjust propositions, pricing, or activation in time – preventing underperformance from being scaled into the P&L

FROM REACTING TO ANTICIPATING: BEHAVIOR AS FORESIGHT



With consistent, granular behavioral intelligence systems, brands can move from reacting to anticipating.

Because over time, these systems create benchmarks for healthy behavior change, a pattern of response under different conditions as well as early warning signals for risk and opportunity. With that, decision-making shifts from “What happened?” to “Given these signals, what will likely happen next and how should we act now?”.

This is where behavioral measurement stops being a static research tool and becomes an invaluable strategic advantage.



THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR BRAND GROWTH

The brands that win tomorrow will be those that understand behavior deeply enough, precisely enough, and early enough to act with confidence and turn real behavior into sustained growth. Winning brands:

Know Better – they capture real behavior with depth and consistency

Play Better – they translate behavioral intelligence into strategies

Win Better – they deliver sustainable growth with confidence

Behavioral measurement helps brands find growth opportunities where traditional research cannot because it is not measuring “what people say they do” but it is capturing “what people really do”.

Are you ready to build your brand with the right building blocks?





Sources

- i. Ipsos R&D 2023: (N=7000) Category Users/Buyers in UK, USA, Japan, France and South Africa across Streaming, Banking, Credit Cards, Sparkling water, Beer, Retail and Analgesics
- ii. Wood, W., Quinn, J. M., & Kashy, D. A. (2002). Habits in everyday life: Thought, emotion, and action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83(6), 1281-1297. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.83.6.1281>
- iii. Argo, J. J., Dahl, D. W., & Manchanda, R. V. (2005). The Influence of Social Presence on Consumer and Choice. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(2), 207-212. <https://doi.org/10.1086/432230>



Interesting reads:

Understanding the context of consumption moments – Ipsos Views December 2023

Beyond Surveys: Leveraging Technology to capture the truth

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AUTHOR:

Ahu Sendilmen,

Research Director,

Head of Behavioural Measurement

CONTRIBUTOR:

Greg Gwiasda,

PhD, SVP,

Ipsos Behavioural Science

