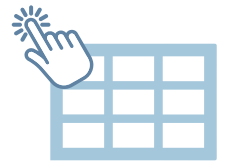




MAXIMPLICIT

A powerful combination of traditional and psychological research methods that provide valuable insights into the needs of consumers as well as how brands and products are associated and fulfilling (or neglecting) these needs.



Learning how to connect

Understanding consumers can be challenging. Conveying a message that resonates with consumers can be difficult without understanding the personalities of your consumers. To make a memorable product or message, it must reflect consumer interest. Ensuring congruency between a product, concept or message and the main motivators of a purchase affirms if the current strategy is effective by creating a cohesive product experience. HCD's MaxImplicit determines the most valuable words to test for information about consumer perceptions. **This exercise is customized to the particular client and customer-base, since each product, target audience and research question is unique.** By considering the context of the research, the multi-phase approach described in this white paper can define customers' expectations and perceptions of the current product and brand. Let's explore how...

Breaking This Down

When the MaxDiff and implicit reaction tests are combined to strategically reveal consumer priorities, assumptions and ideals, it is referred to as the MaxImplicit. It is important to understand each component of the exercise individually to recognize how both contribute to understanding consumer behavior.

So, what are these two research tools separately and why put them together?

- **MaxDiff** evaluates preferences for multiple items to determine which words are most important to consumers for specific product categories. Consumers prioritize key words through the MaxDiff forced ranking strategy, causing respondents to make trade-offs. The responses ultimately identify what words are the main drivers of purchase and serve as a strong predictor of what will influence respondents (Orme, 2009). In the example laid out in Figure 1, MaxDiff scores show consumers highly expect an afternoon snack "will help me relax" and "has luxurious taste." The score card also indicates that an afternoon snack is not prioritized as "a healthy option." The rankings reveal the characteristics expected from an afternoon snack as well as the features less appreciated.
- **Implicit associations** determine the strength of the automatic association between words and a stimulus. As a timed reaction test, the respondents respond as fast as possible, thus revealing connections within the semantic network within the brain. The reactions reveal the mental biases and associations of the consumer without the need to explicitly verbalize explanations. Having a faster response to the appearance of words or stimulus equates to a stronger association. The perception of snacks in Figure 1 shows that both chips and nuts have a weak association with luxurious taste. Additionally, chips are weakly associated with relaxing—the two most highly ranked needs for consumer snack expectations. However, chocolate had a medium association with both top needs (relaxing and luxurious taste). These results suggest a growth opportunity to innovate by incorporating rewards consumers expect into new campaigns or communications.

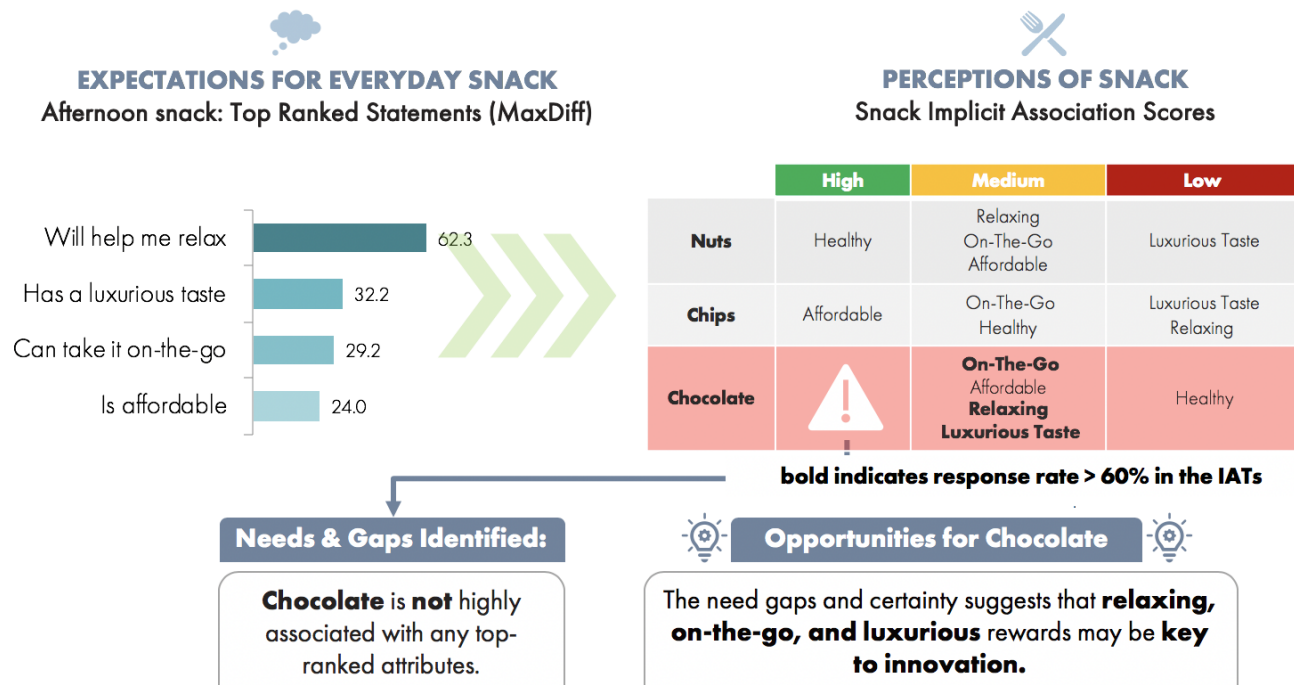


Figure 1

Example of a MaxImplicit score card about afternoon snacks. To the left are the results for the MaxDiff rankings, and the right is the implicit association scores for the three snack stimuli (nuts, chips and chocolate) broken down into high, medium and low associations.

Numerical scores derived from the MaxDiff scaling and implicit outputs allow for outputs to determine what best drives interest statistically. Understanding the strengths of each word or concept provides context regarding overall recognition among the customer base (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2003). Outputs also help to identify the optimal prototype or concept by determining cohesion with the product concept and brand harmony. The multi-phase approach demonstrates expectations and perceptions of the stimulus, helping product developers and marketers ensure products meet promises and fulfill consumer need gaps in the market. Learning about areas of disconnect, or need gaps, demonstrates developmental improvements for the brand or product.

MaxImplicit Partnership Particulars

MaxImplicit is an easy addition to any research project. In total, the MaxImplicit exercise adds no more than 10 minutes to the survey length and can be completed online or in-person. For the research to be validated, the sample size per target segment must be a minimum of 75 respondents. Furthermore, it is important to choose the right words to test during the implicit exercise. By prioritizing key attributes and developing an understanding of consumers' associations between those attributes and the competitive marketplace, **MaxImplicit identifies the need gaps and innovation opportunities for the company**. Companies use this knowledge to develop ideas, campaigns or products consistent with the consumer expectations while promoting a more cohesive product experience.

Conclusion

Combining self-reported survey data with psychological methodologies presents a powerful and innovative approach to better understand consumer behavior and perception than either approach alone. This exercise helps define needs, clarifies current perceptions and identifies

strategic opportunities. The information gathered from MaxImplicit serves as a map to understand an appropriate approach for innovation catered to specific market segments. Determining the language and analysis to use for the survey is crucial for the MaxImplicit to provide a sound springboard of information to program the consequent implicit test. By consulting and designing strong research methodologies, HCD strives to help better position the presentation and innovation of products, brands or messaging to build stronger engagement and connection to the consumer.

If you are interested in learning more about the methodology behind MaxDiff or Implicit Association Testing, please check out our whitepapers available at [linkedin.com/company/hcd-research](https://www.linkedin.com/company/hcd-research).

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT HOW MAXIMPLICIT CAN ELEVATE YOUR RESEARCH,
PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT HCD RESEARCH VIA EMAIL INFO@HCDI.NET OR CALL 908.788.9393.**

CITATIONS

Orme, B. (2009). *Maxdiff analysis: Simple counting, individual-level logit, and hb.* Sawtooth Software.

Romaniuk, J., & Sharp, B. (2003). *Measuring brand perceptions: Testing quantity and quality.* *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 11(3), 218-229.