



Norwegian University of
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**Why consumers don't
always choose what
makes perfect sense**

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Why do Norwegians eat less seafood than recommended?

- 
-  Price
 -  Quality
 -  Health benefits

Five psychological insights

1. **Habits** beat intentions: People buy what they always buy
2. **Social Norms**: We eat with (and like) other people
3. **Imagination** determines craving
4. **Labels** are complicated
5. **Salience** determines choice

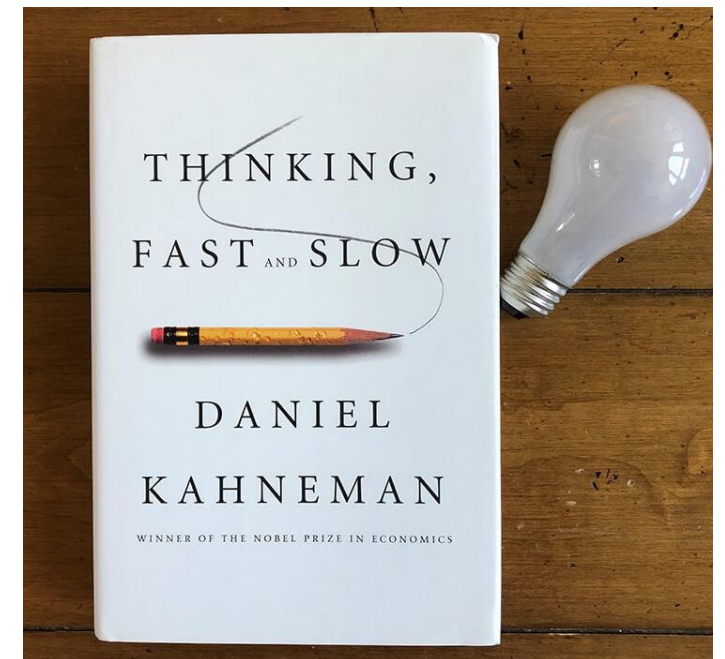


Habits

- The dinner decision often happens before entering the supermarket
- Habits reduce mental effort (Hot/fast system, Kahnemann)
- Changing products means changing routines
- Attention is limited (*"Buy ingredients for spaghetti"*)

Can we break habits? → Windows of opportunity

What do I usually eat?



Social norms

What do people
like me eat?



- Consumers don't only observe what other people buy, they make assumptions about what is normal (Richter et al 2018 a,b)
- Norms can backfire (Richter et al. 2020)
- Seafood is a family decision



- Consumers don't buy fish, they buy (family) dinners
- Seafood needs to feel like the normal choice

What we eat is guided by emotions

Can I imagine
enjoying this?



- Consumers buy experiences, not nutrients (Papies et al 2022)
 - Taste beats health (Trendel & Werle 2016)
 - We crave what we can imagine (Devos et al 2022)
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- Seafood competes with emotionally stronger food categories
 - Emotional debates around sustainability, salmon lice, fish farming, overfishing
 - Instead of more information we need better emotional associations (traditions, identity, family meals, convenience...)



Labels are not enough

- More labels do not necessarily help
- Origin is already a label
- Trust matters most

Building trust may be more effective than creating another label

Labels only work when consumers notice them, understand them, and trust them



Do I believe this?



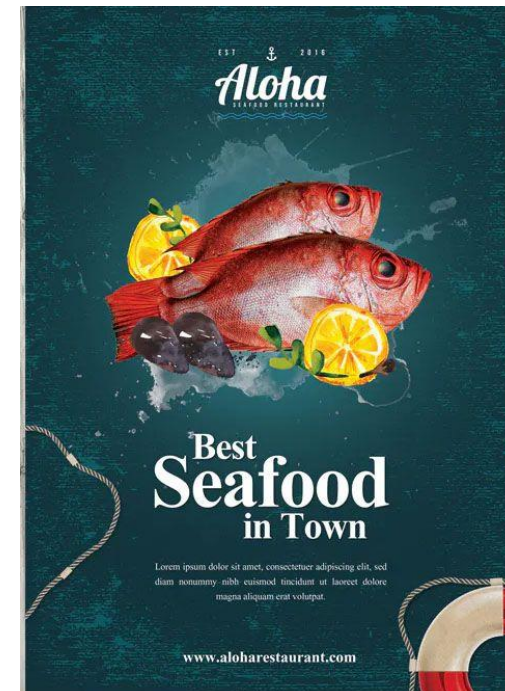
Salience/ Priming

Food categories can be activated unconsciously
(by seeing an advertisement or thinking of food)

Consumers bought more of the food category that
had been mentally activated (Richter et al 2020)

BUT: Seafood was much harder to activate
mentally than other food categories (e.g. dairy
or meat)

Did seafood even
come to my mind?



So why do Norwegians eat little seafood?

If we want people to eat more seafood, we need to think about

1. Opportunities to make seafood a **habit**
2. Making it «**normal**»
3. Associating seafood with **positive emotions**
4. Have **one trustworthy label** (not 10)
5. Find ways to prime seafood to increase the **mental accessibility**





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Thank you!

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