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The Science of Connection

Psychology Fueled Creative Messaging for Precision Marketing

Executive Summary

This whitepaper introduces a strategic media approach that enhances messaging precision through psychology-driven segmentation. By understanding who your audience truly is—not just their demographics but their psychological drivers—you can craft messages that speak directly to their motivations and deliver it at the right time.

Key principles explored include:

1. **Regulatory Focus Theory,** which identifies whether consumers are driven by aspiration (promotion-focused) or security (prevention-focused), enabling messaging that aligns with their decision-making mindset.
2. **Motivational Insights,** which go beyond surface-level segmentation to uncover the deeper emotional drivers influencing behavior.
3. **Heuristics & Cognitive Biases**, which leverage instinctive decision-making shortcuts to enhance engagement and conversion.

By applying these principles, brands can transform their media buying from passive messaging into active persuasion—creating content that not only captures attention but compels action.

About the Authors



Liam Pavlovski

Liam wrote this whitepaper after repeatedly encountering the same challenge with clients: *how to make meaningful change through creative strategies*. His curiosity grew as he observed the overwhelming volume of messages in the market, wondering how better understanding of audiences—coupled with data insights and media buying best practices—could create more powerful marketing funnels. This led Liam to explore how psychology-driven segmentation could refine messaging and enhance engagement, ultimately making marketing efforts more impactful and driving real results.



Sam Terminelli

As Head of Strategy at Magic, Sam has been instrumental in educating clients on how meaningful creative connections drive media effectiveness, marketing success, and ultimately, business growth. Beginning his career in social media marketing, he built a strong foundation in content before expanding into performance-driven media strategies. With over a decade of experience spanning in-house and agency roles across both brand and performance marketing, Sam brings a unique perspective—crafting full-funnel strategies that seamlessly integrate creativity with the customer journey.

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Big idea, small statement.

Consumers **don't care** about your messaging—unless you **connect** with them in a way that makes them **pay attention.**

Big idea, small visual.



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In a world where every scroll presents a sea of sameness, capturing attention isn't just a challenge—it's a necessity.

Consumers today demand more than a surface level message to make them stop and listen; they crave *relevance, connection, and a reason to care.*

The real question isn't, ***"Are people seeing your ads?"*** but rather, ***"Are they feeling them?"***

Traditionally, the 4Ws of marketing—who, what, when and what—formed the backbone of every campaign. But in today's emotionally driven, attention-scarce world, it's no longer enough.

That's why we've built upon this framework with psychological insights—aligning audience psychology, timing, and channel dynamics to create a strategy that resonates at every touchpoint.

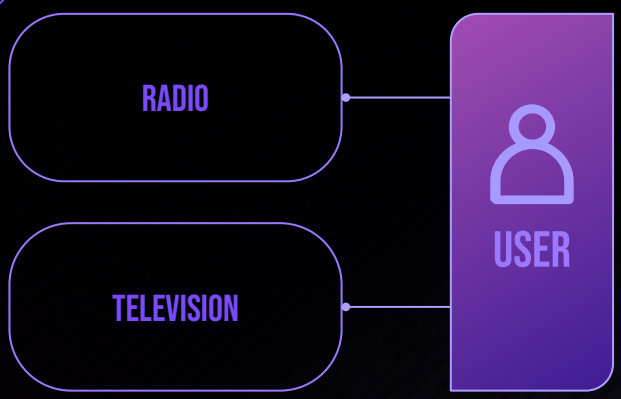
Average attention on screen has decreased by 31% over the last 2 decades[1]

- Golden Steps
on attention span

Golden Steps ABA. (2025, March 4). *Average human attention span (statistics)*. Golden Steps ABA. https://www.goldenstepsaba.com/resources/average-attention-span

Marketing continues to evolve, so should your messaging.

The current media landscape is much more diverse than the traditional one, meaning it's now harder than ever to break through the noise.



When traditional media launched, there were fewer channels to compete with.

Before digital media, consumers faced less noise, so their attention spans weren't as stretched.



Over time though, newer channels meant there was more competition for attention.

As digital media has grown, easy access to the online world means attention is now divided across multiple sources.



Each with varying number of advertising messages per platform.

With the rise of more platforms, consumers aren't just consuming messages at once—they're also exposed to more ads on certain platforms.



Meaning now, our messages need to break through the noise.

To cut through the noise, we must find ways to connect with our audience across multiple channels with tailored messages.



Who do we speak to?

Elevating traditional marketing for the attention scarce world.

Here's how the 4Ws translate for the new type of consumer, enabling us to transform campaigns into conversations and make every dollar spent on media work harder.

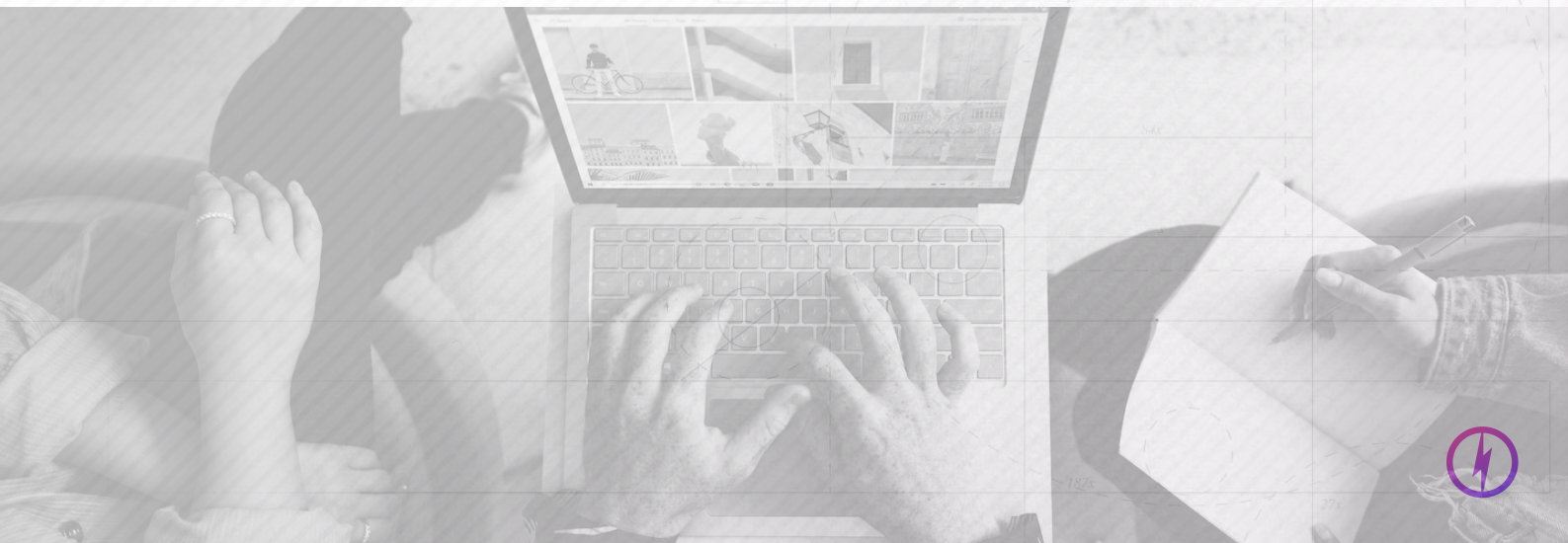
Let's break it down:

Who we speak to: We go beyond demographics, delving into the psychological drivers that shape your audience's behaviours and decisions.

What we say: By leveraging heuristics—powerful cognitive shortcuts—we craft messaging that aligns with human nature, making decisions feel instinctive and effortless.

When we say it: By aligning content with awareness stages, we meet your audience at the exact moment they're ready to listen.

Where we say it: Channel selection is driven by your audience's behaviour, ensuring every message lands where it matters most.



Who do we speak to?

In a digital world saturated with ads, the real battle isn't just for attention—it's for relevance.

Audiences are quick to dismiss messages that feel generic or out of touch, often asking themselves, "***Why should I care?"***

The solution lies in peeling back the layers of the onion, digging beyond surface-level characteristics to uncover what truly makes your audience tick.

Unlike traditional methods that focus on demographics, psychology-based segmentation taps into the emotional and cognitive drivers of behavior. By leveraging these principles, we can craft messaging that cuts through the noise and resonates with consumers,transcending superficial transactions and prompting them to ask not, *"**Why should I care?"*** but ***"How much do I care?"***

We can better define our audiences through 2 areas of segmentation:

1. **Regulatory Focus theory**
2. **Motivations**

Regulatory Focus Theory

Regulatory focus theory explains how individuals approach goals based on their mindset—**promotion-focused** consumers are driven by aspirations and growth, while **prevention-focused** consumers seek safety and security. Understanding these orientations allows you to craft messages that resonate more deeply[2].

When a marketing message aligns with a consumer's regulatory focus, it creates **regulatory fit,** making the content more engaging and persuasive. This means promotion-focused individuals respond best to gain-framed messages, like "Achieve more with our product," while prevention-focused individuals prefer security-driven messages, like "Protect your family with our service."

The Decision Lab. (n.d.). *Regulatory focus theory*. The Decision Lab.https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/management/regulatory-focus-theory

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Why should someone care?

Promotion Focus

People motivated by aspirations or growth.

"Achieve more with our product"

Prevention Focus

People driven by need for safety and security.

"Protect your family with our service"

Thought starter.

Identifying your audience's regulatory focus.

Picture your audience using your product or service—what does a "win" look like for them?

- If success feels like gaining something new—more freedom, more achievement, more excitement—they likely have a **promotion focus.**
- If success feels like avoiding a negative outcome—staying safe, maintaining stability, preventing hassle—they likely have a **prevention focus.**

Relevant motivations of each regulatory focus.

Once we have defined the regulatory focus of our target audience, we can further refine our messaging by understanding what motivates them. Regulatory focus shapes how consumers approach goals, while **motivations reveal the deeper emotional drivers behind their decisions.**

By layering these insights, we move beyond broad segmentation to create messaging that speaks directly to what truly matters to our audience. This deeper understanding ensures that messaging not only aligns with how consumers think but also resonates with why they care. Whether positioning a product as a tool for success or a safeguard against uncertainty, this approach allows us to craft communication that is both relevant and persuasive.

Here's the relevant motivations for each regulatory type:



Transforming messaging from functional to emotionally resonant.

Purely functional

"Our app helps you stay organised and manage your tasks efficiently."

Emotionally resonant

“Unlock your full potential with our app and take control of your success!”

Process of developing emotionally relevant messaging

Brand Context

Product: A productivity app designed to help users stay organised, manage tasks, and increase efficiency in both personal and professional settings.

Value Proposition: TaskMaster empowers users to streamline their daily tasks, helping them achieve more while maintaining a sense of control and accomplishment.

Target Audience: Professionals, students, and busy individuals who seek better time management and task organisation.

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Step 1 Uncover Motivations

What does success feel like for them?

- What are they trying to achieve through your product? Do they want success, confidence, or empowerment?

What frustrations or fears are they trying to avoid?

- What problems are they trying to solve? Are they avoiding failure, disorganisation, or stress?

How do they want to feel after using your product or service?

- What is the end emotional result they want to experience? Do they want to feel relieved, calm, or in control?

Step 2 Transform the copy based on these motivations

Neutral Copy: "Our app helps you stay organised and manage your tasks efficiently."

Transformed Copy for a promotion focused audience: "Unlock your full potential with our app—organise your tasks and boost your productivity to achieve more, faster. Take control of your success!"

Questions we asked to uncover motivations:

- What is their end goal? Success, achievement, growth.
- What are they striving for? Empowerment, efficiency, and confidence in their capabilities.
- How do they want to feel after using the app? Motivated, productive, and successful.

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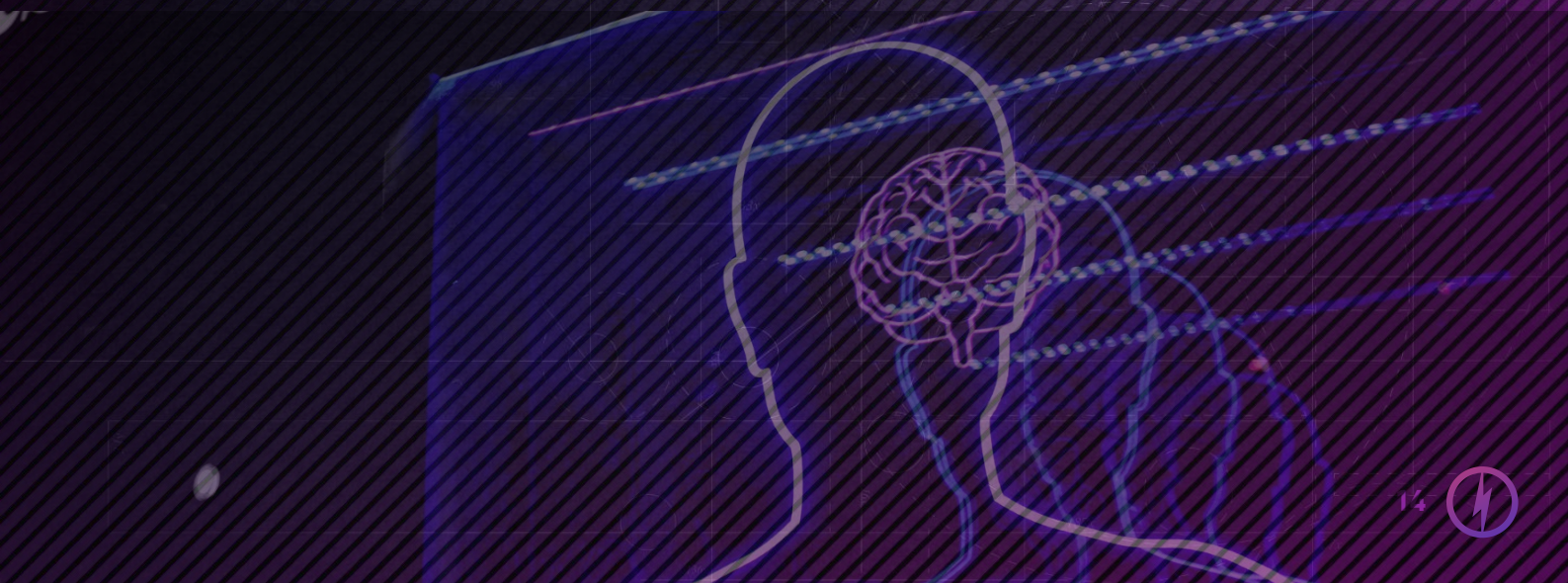
How psychology allows for hyper-targeted messaging delivery.

Psychological insights create messaging that is both precise and deeply resonant, connecting with the right people and laying the foundation for impactful campaigns.

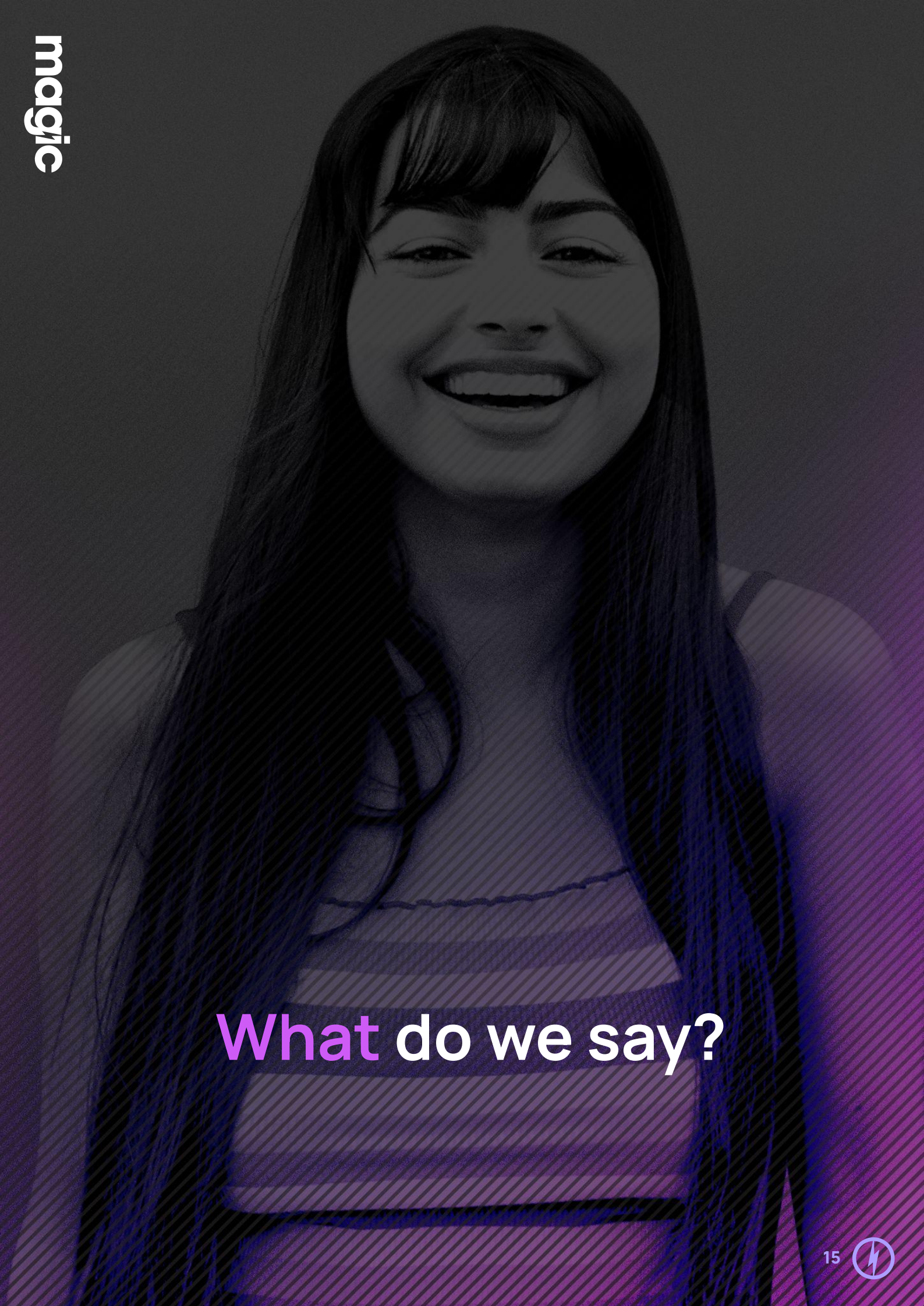
For example, traditional audience segmentation might focus on broad traits like age or location, leading to generic messaging such as, "Busy moms will love our quick meal solutions!" While this can resonate somewhat, it lacks depth and personalisation.

In contrast, a psychology-focused approach might reveal that a segment of busy mums feels guilty about not spending enough time with their children. Messaging can now shift to address this emotional driver, such as, "Spend more time with your family while we take care of dinner."

By understanding not just who your audience is, but how they think and what motivates them, you can craft highly specific and emotionally resonant messaging, delivering far greater precision and impact.



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What do we say?

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Message based audience targeting.

Pain Points

What are the issues that your potential customers have?

Promotion Focus

What can we say to answer these issues in a *promotional* manner?

Status
Aspiration
Belonging
Curiosity
Pleasure
Self-Expression
Achievement

Prevention Focus

What can we say to answer these issues in a *preventative* manner?

Security
Comfort
Fear Avoidance
Prevention
Belonging
Altruism
Practicality

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> By aligning your message with cognitive triggers, you can bypass the clutter of overthinking and create moments that just feel right.

What do we say?

Once we uncover what drives our audience at a deeper level, the next step is turning that understanding into messaging that works with human nature. Now that we know the regulatory focus of your audience, we can use **heuristics**—powerful cognitive shortcuts—to further turbocharge the messaging.

What are heuristics?

Heuristics in marketing are cognitive shortcuts consumers use to simplify decision-making, allowing for quick, intuitive choices in complex environments. These mental shortcuts shape perceptions, influence behaviour, and streamline how consumers evaluate products and services[3].

Why they matter in messaging

Unlike surface-level messaging, heuristics tap into the subconscious, where decisions are often made before logic has a chance to weigh in. By aligning your message with these cognitive triggers, you can bypass the clutter of overthinking and create moments that *just feel right*. Whether it's the authority of an expert recommendation, the urgency of a limited offer, or the reassurance of social proof, heuristics make decisions easier, faster, and more emotionally driven.

The Decision Lab. (n.d.). *Heuristics*. The Decision Lab. https://thedecisionlab.com/biases/heuristics



Where do we say it?

Determining the most effective heuristic

With a clear understanding of your audience's regulatory type, the next step is selecting the heuristic that will drive the strongest response. Different heuristics align more effectively with either promotion- or prevention-focused consumers, reinforcing their natural way of thinking and making your message feel intuitive. By strategically combining the right heuristic with the right mindset, you create messaging that not only captures attention but also compels action.

Relevant heuristics for promotion focused

Promotion-focused audiences are motivated by opportunities for growth, pleasure, and achieving aspirations. Heuristics that amplify a sense of opportunity or future success are especially effective.

- **Social Proof**: Highlight how others are thriving or achieving their goals with the product.
    - Example: "Join thousands who have unlocked their fitness potential with our app!"
- **Scarcity**: Create urgency to seize opportunities, tying into the fear of missing out.
    - Example: "Exclusive access to our VIP membership—unlock your potential today!"
- **Framing Gains**: Use messaging that emphasises potential gains.
    - Example: "Fuel your day with a juice that powers your mind and body."

Relevant heuristics for prevention focused

Prevention-focused audiences prioritise safety, security, and avoiding risks. Heuristics that reassure and reduce uncertainty align with their motivations.

- **Authority**: Showcase expertise or endorsements to build trust.
    - Example: "Recommended by leading health experts for immune protection."
- **Loss Aversion**: Highlight potential risks of inaction or alternatives.
    - Example: "Don't leave your health unprotected—our juice is your daily shield."
- **Framing Loss Prevention**: Focus on avoiding harm or mitigating risks.
    - Example: "Stay ahead of aging with antioxidant-rich nutrition."

When we say it?

Timing can become a powerful tool when combined with psychological strategy. By aligning messaging with the consumer's stage of awareness, we can guide them seamlessly from **vague curiosity** to **decisive action**. It's about meeting your audience where they are emotionally and cognitively.

By integrating awareness stages into a framework of regulatory focus and heuristics, brands can unlock the ultimate persuasive power—messaging that doesn't just inform but *transforms*. It shifts the conversation from *"Is this relevant?"* to "*This is exactly what I need, right now."*



Stages of awareness and their relevant heuristics.

1. Unaware Stage

- **Definition**: Consumers don't recognise they have a need or problem.
- **Objective**: Introduce a latent problem by surfacing emotional triggers and showing what's possible (promotion focus) or what could go wrong (prevention focus).

How Heuristics Enhance Messaging

- **Social Proof**: Show others benefiting from recognising the problem (*"Millions of people have improved their lives by addressing X"*) to create curiosity.
- **Authority**: Use credible experts to highlight why the problem is worth attention (*"Experts agree this hidden issue impacts your daily energy"*) to build trust.
- **Scarcity**: Subtly position the awareness as a timely opportunity to avoid missing out on improving their life (*"Don't wait until it's too late to discover this key insight about your health"*).

2. Problem Aware Stage

- **Definition**: Consumers recognise a problem but don't know potential solutions.
- **Objective**: Show empathy for their challenges and introduce possible solutions while maintaining focus on regulatory motivations.

How Heuristics Enhance Messaging

- **Loss Aversion**: Highlight the risks of not addressing the problem (*"Continued fatigue could lead to long-term health issues"*) to resonate with prevention-focused consumers.
- **Framing**: Position the problem as a gateway to a better life (*"Feeling drained? Improving your sleep could help you wake up energised"*) for promotion-focused audiences.

3. Solution Aware Stage

- **Definition**: Consumers know solutions exist but are exploring their options.
- **Objective**: Educate the audience on how your product category provides value while framing benefits in line with their regulatory focus.

How Heuristics Enhance Messaging

- **Authority**: Leverage experts or testimonials to position your product category as the most credible solution (*"Doctors recommend these techniques for improving sleep quality"*).
- **Anchoring**: Use comparisons to elevate your solution above others (*"Unlike quick fixes, our approach improves sleep quality for long-term results"*) to solidify the consumer's perception of value.

4. Product Aware Stage

- **Definition**: Consumers are familiar with specific products or brands but are deciding between options.
- **Objective**: Differentiate your product by emphasising unique benefits tied to the consumer's emotional triggers and regulatory focus.

How Heuristics Enhance Messaging

- **Social Proof**: Show how your product has helped others achieve results (*"Trusted by 100,000+ customers to improve their sleep"*).
- **Framing**: Emphasise benefits over competitors (*"Unlike other sleep aids, ours is clinically proven for long-term results"*) to make your product stand out



5. Most Aware Stage

- **Definition**: Consumers are ready to make a purchase but need a nudge.
- **Objective**: Use urgency, assurances, and ease of action to close the sale while reinforcing their regulatory focus.

How Heuristics Enhance Messaging

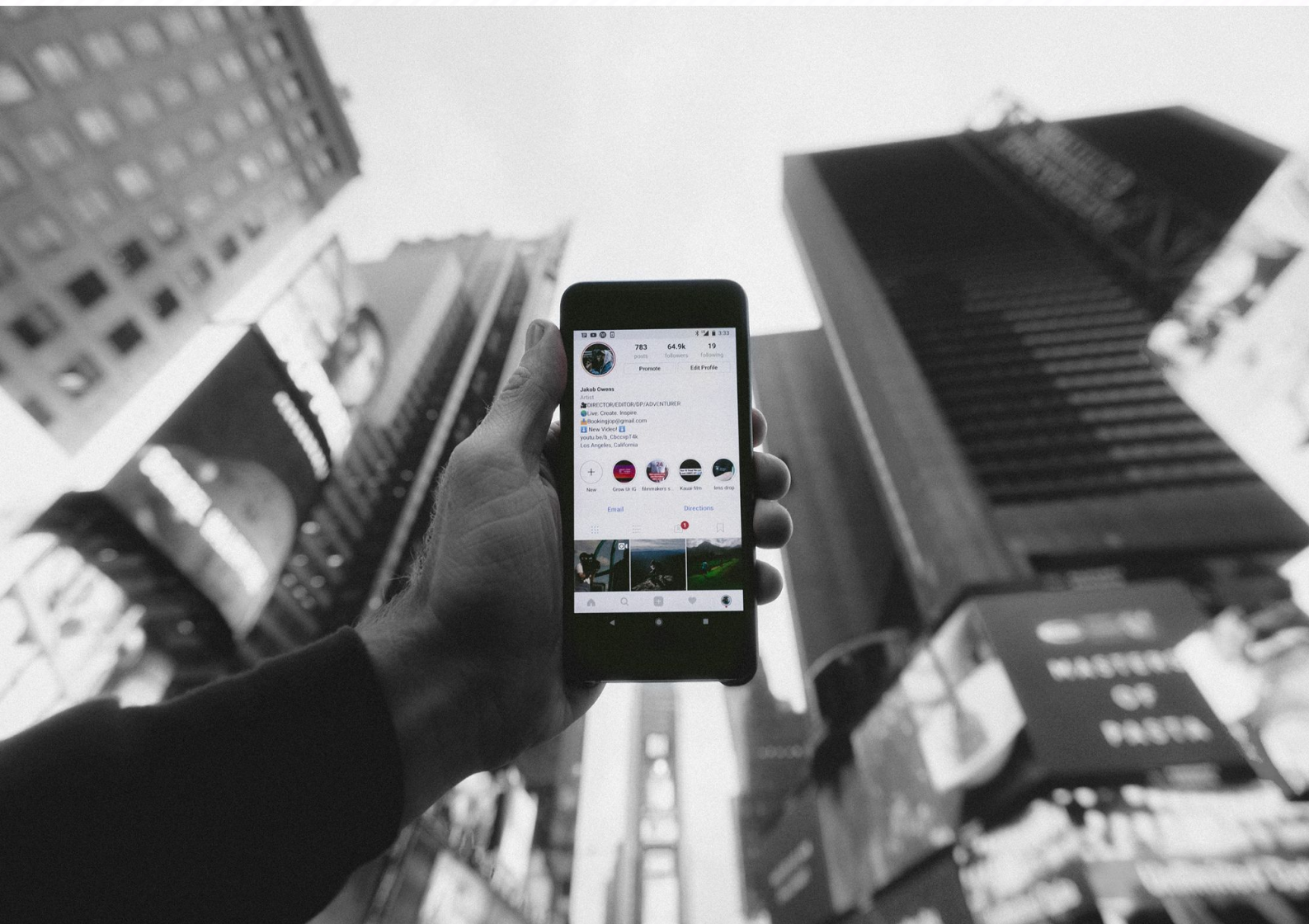
- **Scarcity**: Create urgency with limited-time offers (*"Order today and get free shipping—offer ends soon"*) to push for immediate action.
- **Authority**: Reinforce trust with endorsements (*"Recommended by sleep specialists for optimal rest"*) to validate their decision.
- **Loss Aversion**: Highlight the cost of delaying (*"Every night without better sleep is a missed chance for better energy tomorrow"*) to make the purchase feel critical.



Where we say it?

The modern consumer navigates a fragmented digital world, where every platform and touchpoint shapes perceptions and influences decisions. To thrive in this landscape, we have to go beyond delivering content, crafting intentional experiences that resonate with consumers' needs and emotions.

By aligning psychological insights with platform selection and awareness stages, marketers can create strategies that connect with precision—reaching the right audience, at the right time, in the right mindset. This approach ensures each interaction feels relevant and impactful, building trust, driving action, and turning engagement into lasting loyalty.



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Finding where our audiences are based on their awareness.

Unaware stage
Help the consumer recognise that they have a need or problem they weren't aware of.

- Social channels via **influencer content**
- Social media ads via **branded content**
- YouTube ads via **pre-roll / in-feed**

Problem Aware Stage
Consumers recognise a problem, but don't know potential solutions.

- Search marketing via **problem-related terms**
- YouTube ads via **problem + answer content**
- SEO via **educational problem + answer blogs**

Solution Aware Stage
Consumers know solutions exist, but are exploring their options.

- Search marketing via **solution-related terms**
- YouTube ads via **solution-focused content**
- Retargeting ads via **social media and display**

Product Aware Stage
Differentiate your product by emphasising unique benefits that align with the consumer's emotional triggers.

- Social channels via **influencer reviews**
- Email marketing **via personalisation**
- Retargeting ads via **social media and display**

Most Aware Stage
Encourage immediate action by leveraging urgency, trust, and ease of purchase.

- Social channels via **offer and urgency content**
- Email marketing **via personalised offers**
- Retargeting ads via **social media and display**

let's make magic.