

## MR and BS

# *A match made in heaven or an unholy alliance?*

*Colin Strong*

*Global head of Behavioural Science*

*@colinstrong*

*colin.strong@ipsos.com*

## Summary of presentation

Colin Strong is Global Head of Behavioural Science at Ipsos. He is a consumer researcher working with a wide range of organisations (both private and public sector) to help shape their consumer strategies and policy development, always focusing around 'data' and behavioural science.

This presentation was given by Colin at the fourth workshop of the UKCN Consumer Remedies project held at the CMA on 22 June 2017. The first half of this workshop was focused on marketing, market research and behavioural insights.

# The challenge:

*“We know from behavioural economics that people are poor judges of their own behaviour & that buying context changes everything – should we not then spend all our budget on observational/ethnographic studies and data? Is there still a role for any of the traditional research methodologies given what we now know?”*

*FMCG client*

# There is confusion about the discipline....

## Behavioural sciences

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*For the journal, see Behavioral Science (journal).*



**This article has multiple issues.** Please help [improve it](#) or discuss these issues on the [talk page](#). [hide]

*(Learn how and when to remove these template messages)*

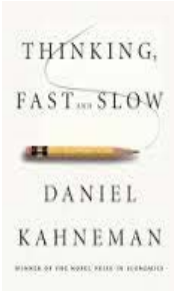
- This article includes a [list of references](#), but **its sources remain unclear** because it has **insufficient inline citations**. *(October 2016)*
- This article **needs additional citations for verification**. *(December 2009)*

The term **behavioural sciences** (behavioral science) encompasses the various disciplines and interactions among [organisms](#) in the natural [world](#). It involves the systematic analysis and investigation of [human](#) and [animal](#) behaviour through the study of the past, controlled and naturalistic observation of the present, and disciplined scientific experimentation. It attempts to accomplish legitimate, objective conclusions through rigorous formulations and observation.<sup>[1]</sup> Examples of behavioural sciences include [psychology](#), [psychobiology](#), and [cognitive science](#).

# But it is hot



# Most focus is on system 1 / system2...



## System 1



Fast



Unconscious



Automatic



Everyday decisions



Error prone

## System 2



Slow



Conscious



Reflective



Complex decisions



Reliable



# But let's be cautious....

- Lack of a coherent explanatory framework (lots of individual effects)
- Social sciences have often struggled to reproduce the same effects (even in controlled conditions)
- Nature of experiments often offer obscure choices / judgements
- Applied environments are more complex than labs





# We need to ask some hard questions...

- Definitional issues: Exactly what do we mean by system 1?
- Measurement issues: Lots of claims but how much clarity?
- Relevance issues: Have the boundaries for the discipline been established?

*“...the field has its limits. As policymakers use it to devise programs, it’s becoming clear that behavioral economics is being asked to solve problems it wasn’t meant to address.”*

George Lowenstein

# We need to move behavioural science

from an academic discipline.....



...to a scalable business practice



# Behavioural science as applied psychology....

- ‘System 1 / System 2’ is still important but as one part of a much wider discipline
- Creates opportunities to develop behavioural science into a practitioner activity

## Acid test:

- **Tangible value** for organisations: Not just academic insights
- **Scalable**: Organisations operate at scale – any practice concerning needs to reflect this
- **Operationalisable**: Need to be readily used, understood and integrated by practitioners
- **Integrative**: A good understanding of the boundaries & conditions of the discipline

# Behavioural economics & MR....

- System 1 / system 2 deals with mental processes
- MR deals with subjective experience / conscious thought
- There are many different ways we can examine behaviour (e.g. cultural psychology, sociology, evolutionary psychology, social psychology etc etc)
- They all add something but no discipline should claim primacy



# MR rediscovering what it means to be a practitioner....

- Acting as the bridge between business need and academia
- Creating tools that are informed by behavioural science but can be used by non-expert research practitioners
- Understanding the questions to ask – and then which discipline / tool will help answer it
- Awareness of the limitations of all disciplines / tools & understanding how to integrate meaningfully

