

How Much Is Your Popcorn Worth?: **Powerful Lessons** In Marketing & The Psychology Of Selling

By Bryan Kumar

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How Much Is Your Popcorn Worth?: Powerful Lessons In Marketing & The Psychology Of Selling

Dear Reader,

In the following 'special report,' I will reveal some very powerful marketing strategies and psychological motivators that can easily help you make more profits from your business, no matter what business you're in.

Be sure to read it thoroughly, and take notes as needed so that you can take maximum advantage of the information being covered.

Sincerely,

Bryan Kumar, Author/Publisher
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From: Bryan Kumar

Time: 5:11 P.M.

Here's how it all began...

On Monday, July 19, 2004, I sent my subscribers a question...

If you had to sell popcorn, how much would you be able to charge for it?

Most of us would be willing to spend around one to two dollars on it. And I'm talking about a nice sized bag.

But, here's something interesting...

Movie theatres charge 3 to 6 dollars for their popcorn! And you don't even get nearly as much popcorn as you'd get elsewhere!

What's the deal? Is their popcorn "special?"

Not really. But they're still able to charge 2 to 3 times more than others and *still* have people buying in droves.

How are they doing it?? If you can answer that, I'll give you a special prize. :-) Just reply to this note with your answer. It doesn't have to be the right answer, as long as you stop to think about it.

Within minutes of sending the email out, the responses started pouring in...

Some were extremely short and to the point, with statements like... "*Because they can*" or "*It's the smell*" or "*Because people get hungry.*"

Yes, some people do get hungry and have to buy 'something.' But that's not the bulk of the buyers by any means. And... if they get

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hungry and are *forced* to pay the high prices, they mostly likely will *not* want to be caught in that situation again, will they?

And, yes, some do buy it because they can't resist the smell. But there's more to it than that.

Other answers said, "*It's the perfect location*" ... "*Supply and demand*" ... "*Captive audience.*"

Another answer stated...

"Monopoly! You can't bring anything into the theatre and once you are in, there is no where else to purchase popcorn."

That's not necessarily a wrong answer. But, it does make one wonder... If they corner their customers in this way and charge them high prices, wouldn't most customers be either outraged not to buy, or at least not buy again, *in the future*?

The question that comes up is... why do they *continue* to buy it and pay these outrageous prices?

Another subscriber suggested...

"People don't go to see the movies everyday. So, they are willing to pay the high prices once per weekend."

Sure, that's possible. Although, I think at some point, they'd get tired of having to pay the high prices, wouldn't you say?

They can't be paying the high prices just because they 'have to.' It's gotta be because they 'want to.'

But, why would they want to, despite the outrageous prices? Could it be that price just isn't an issue in this case? Hmm...

One subscriber started a discussion in his office, and sent these responses...

"Some said it's because it's the only place you can get "Movie theatre" popcorn, some said because the taste or when they smell it - they have to have it.

Others said because they have to be eating something.

My thought is because they have the market trained. And, it didn't start with this generation...

Parents brought their kids to the movies and either by example or verbally trained the kids to buy popcorn at the movies - It's just what you do..."

Ahh... now we're getting somewhere. ;-)

Could buying popcorn in a theatre be a 'conditioned' response? Could it be that people are 'trained' to believe that movies and popcorn go 'hand in hand' - and that one without the other is.... "incomplete?" And, therefore, price is just not an issue at all?

What a powerful place to be as a marketer, wouldn't you agree?

Of course, there are some customers who fall in the above group yet *still* aren't completely happy with the experience. They still end up buying the popcorn because the desire to have popcorn with their movie *outweighs* the pain of having to pay the higher price.

Here are more answers that I received...

"It is marketed as all part of the movie going experience! And they've got a captive audience - you can't get it in there unless you buy it from them. So if you want to experience the movie it it's fullest extent, you need to get the popcorn, and it needs to be their popcorn."

And another...

"First off may I say it is the conditioning that the movie theaters,

producers etc have done. Movies and popcorn go hand in hand. The movie goer has been conditioned all throughout life, that is what is on their minds when going to a movie. Once at the movies the smell of popcorn cooking ,the power of the senses reinforces the thought of movies and popcorn. Once at the movies you are a captive audience."

Yep. As, you can see, there's more than one marketing principle at work here. Stacked on top of each other, these strategies produce the overall result that's *very* powerful and very effective.

I'll go over each one below. And... I'll also cover one big mistake movie theatres are making.

Let's discuss the various marketing principles that are involved in "popcorn marketing":

1. Conditioning and Programmed Responses

Since childhood, people have been 'conditioned' to associate popcorn with movies. Growing up, many of us enjoyed popcorn with our favorite movies, and we now see a bag of popcorn as an *addition* to the "overall" movie-enjoying experience. Some of us even see it as a 'requirement' to watching a movie.

Here's how one of my smart subscribers explained it...

I think cinemas are relying on a very strong emotion -- nostalgia. Many of our happiest memories from childhood probably involve experiencing wonderful movies, maybe Bambi or Mary Poppins. It is likely that popcorn accompanied these life-changing events. Whenever we go to see a movie, popcorn will be linked with some of our happiest memories. I'm surprise they can't get away with charging more!

Bingo! We have been conditioned and 'trained' to believe that movies and popcorn go hand in hand. Watching a movie without having popcorn somehow doesn't seem 'complete.'

Eating popcorn by itself may or may not do anything for people. But, having popcorn *while enjoying a movie* is the "icing on the cake." It enhances the movie-going experience.

Yet, others are conditioned to want to munch on 'something' while they're watching a movie, be it popcorn, a hotdog, or any other snack. Because of this conditioning, they will buy *something* from the concession stand, despite the high prices.

But here's what's really interesting... movie theatres didn't *create* this demand or 'conditioned' response. They simply aligned with an 'existing' demand, an existing 'conditioning' and fulfilled it.

What are the other demands and 'conditioning' mechanisms that exist around you which *you* could tap into and profit from? Look around. I'm sure you'll start to see many of them once you shift your focus towards that.

2. Utilizing (and *Creating*) the Right 'Frame of Mind'

Having popcorn on it's own may not mean much to people, but having it while enjoying a movie is something entirely different. It's this 'frame of mind' that movies are taking advantage of by providing the popcorn when *you really want it!*

They're selling it when and where you're most ready to buy it. If they tried to sell you popcorn an hour before or after the movie screening, they would have a hard time convincing you to buy their over-priced popcorn. Similarly, if they tried to sell you the same over-priced popcorn on the side of the road, you'd probably laugh at them.

This is a very important concept to understand. Timing is everything! It's easiest to sell to a customer when *he* is ready to buy! *Not* when you're ready to sell. (And yes, there *are* ways to get the customer 'ready,' which I'll discuss shortly.)

The other 'frame of mind' they're using is something that they themselves have created over the years. That is... people now

expect to pay higher prices the moment they step into a movie theatre. It's almost as if they've suddenly stepped into another world where paying higher prices is 'normal' and even 'acceptable.'

3. Upselling and Backend Marketing

Moreover, the theatres continue to build on another 'frame' that the customer is in. He has just paid \$6 to \$12 for his movie ticket. He is in the "buying" frame of mind. And, while he is in this buying mood, the theatre decides to continue that 'flow' and "upsell" him. In other words, they offer him additional products that would enhance his 'movie-going' experience.

Since people already believe that popcorn will add to their entertainment, it becomes an easy sell.

Consider another existing frame that people are "on a night out" and want to enjoy the evening and be entertained, the 'cost' of the additional popcorn and soda become insignificant since the popcorn and soda *adds* to the overall entertainment value.

It's similar to when people go to Las Vegas, or when they're on vacation. Many of them don't worry so much about paying higher prices for stuff while they're on vacation or on a 'getaway.' It's almost as if they've stepped into another world where price is not that big of an issue anymore. Pleasure, satisfaction, comfort, and entertainment are their primary concerns.

But, the theatres don't stop with just popcorn. They continue to build on that flow and momentum by tempting the customer with sodas and other goodies. Most people who buy popcorn would want something to wash it down with, especially since popcorn is a salty snack.

I have often seen people walk into the theatre with a bucket of popcorn, sit down, start eating, and *then* get up again to go buy a soda.

How can you use this in your business?

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During 'check out,' offer the customer an upgrade to your additional product, or provide additional "related" products that he may be interested in buying. You can do this through your 'order page.' And, you can also do it after the initial order, through your 'thankyou / download' page by placing links to additional products that he may find useful.

Since the customer is 'in the buying mood' right now, with credit card in hand, it's the best time to offer him other useful products. Again, you're selling to him when he's ready to buy.

Also, how many products can you offer as backends (in the future) that would be easy sells to your existing customers?

Take some time out to really think about this one. In most cases, there are a ton of related products that we can offer to our customers - things we normally wouldn't think to sell to them.

Here's another great example of backend selling...

We used to have a theatre in our area where you could see fairly new movies (about a few weeks old) for just \$1.50 to \$2.00. They had made special arrangements with the copyright holders.

Naturally, this theatre didn't make its money by selling movie tickets. The bulk of its income came from the over-priced popcorn, sodas and other snacks. :-)

It's no wonder that one of the most effective online marketing strategies is to offer customers an inexpensive front-end product (or even something for free) and then continue the flow by offering them bigger, higher-ticket items in the future.

It's the 'baby steps' strategy... get them to take a 'small' riskless action first, be it subscribing to a free report, or buying an inexpensive front-end product. Then, build on that by getting them to take a slightly bigger action.

Each time they take a step towards you and are rewarded for it, they

are more likely to take the next bigger step in the future. You can build on the momentum over time, and condition them to keep taking action.

4. Engaging the "Senses"

You may already know that people usually buy for 'emotional' reasons more than 'intellectual' reasons. You can try to sell to a person by appealing to his intellect i.e. by providing dry facts. Or, you can sell to him by stirring up / appealing to his emotions, i.e. by offering him a 'taste' of what the future will be like when he has your product in his hands. The latter is a more powerful and effective way to sell.

People buy for emotional reasons. So, what can we use to stir up their emotions? We engage their 5 senses!

Movie theatres make full use of this strategy by engaging your sense of smell (using the aroma of freshly popped corn all around you,) your sense of sight, (situating the popcorn machine right in the middle of the theatre so it's the first thing you see, using slides and ads about popcorn on the movie screen several minutes before the movie starts), and your sense of taste.. or at least the *memory* of it from your last popcorn-eating experience. And, of course there's the visual images of others around you munching on, and enjoying, their own bag of popcorn.

The bottom line is, the customer can either pay the high prices or fight the aroma, the visual images, and physical reactions (drooling) for the next 2 hours.

You can use this strategy for your product as well, by describing in vivid detail how the product will benefit the customer. Paint a vivid, graphic picture of what the future will be like for him after he buys your product. Sell the benefits, and engage all his senses! Get him drooling over the product before he has even seen it.

There are many businesses out there who are still trying to sell their products only by talking about the 'features' of the products.

That's equivalent to selling popcorn by saying "You will get approximately 200 pieces, approximately 1/2 inch in diameter, white on the outside, and golden brown on the inside."

It sounds crazy, I know. Yet, this is exactly how most people sell their products. They focus on the 'features.' Not on the benefits or 'end results' that the customer is seeking.

If you're selling a fishing rod, don't just give them the dimensions and physical attributes of the product. Explain to them how each of those features will benefit them. More importantly, paint a picture of the satisfaction he'll get out of holding that big fish, of enjoying the praises of his companions, of tasting that first bite of his favorite fish, prepared just the way he likes it, etc.

You're not just selling the fishing rod. You're selling the 'result' the buyer will experience by owning and using that rod.

5. Preselling the Idea

Continuing with the above concept, theatres are using the smell, sight, and pre-existing memories within the customer to "presell" the popcorn. The customer may not necessarily be hungry or even want popcorn before he enters the theatre. But once that aroma of freshly popped, hot buttered popcorn hits his nose, and his 'mind', he *suddenly* 'becomes' hungry for some popcorn.

Can you use a similar strategy to sell your product? Absolutely.

Before you sell the product, show the customer *why* that product is so important and valuable to him?

For example, let's say you're selling home security products. When you initially approach a customer, he may not be that interested in spending money on alarms and light sensors, etc. But...the moment you start sharing burglary statistics from his area to him, as you start to explain the increased crime rate and the lack of effectiveness of

most other security systems, he is suddenly interested in learning more about *your* product. By educating the customer about your product and the need for it, and by showing him why he'll miss out on the benefits, you'll be able to convince him that he needs the product.

You can also presell your product by offering a 'sample' or trial of your product, with no obligation. If you're selling cookies, offer him a 'taste' of it. Once he takes a bite, he will probably want more. If you don't presell the idea by offering him a taste, he will never know what he's missing out on. Thus, he'll not care about what it is that you have to sell.

I remember a time when I went to the movies and just happened to be genuinely hungry. I don't usually buy much from the theatre concession stands, but this time I didn't have a choice. And, popcorn just wasn't going to do it for me. So, I decided to buy a hotdog to hold me over till the actual meal (after the movies.)

Here's what's interesting... My friend was sitting next to me, so I offered her a bite. She took a bite of mine and seconds later decided that she wanted one of her own, and she then ran off to buy one. Taking a bite out of mine (just like the cookie example above) made her realize that she *did* want a hotdog even though she really wasn't hungry or even in the mood for a hotdog.

Sometimes, you don't know what you're missing *until* you get a small taste of it. That gives you a frame of reference.

6. Exclusivity

During the few hours that you're in the theatre, they have the market cornered by being the only ones to sell popcorn. They virtually eliminate the competition by not allowing outside food or drinks into the theatre.

Being the only game in town offering a product in demand - without any real competition - is a great position to be in.

However, I wouldn't do it the way they do it. I wouldn't 'force' people

into buying from me by cutting off all other sources. I would instead provide a superior product, or a much better value, and get them to want to buy from me instead of going to other vendors or bringing their own food.

Just think of your favorite restaurant. Why do you go there verses all the other restaurants offering the same or similar kind of food? You may even be willing to pay more at your favorite restaurant because they just make it better. It's not because they 'force' you or 'corner' you into going to them. It's because they give you what you want! Something that you can't get anywhere else.

When you force people into doing something, they will hold some level of resentment towards the action/experience and the seller. When you offer them a better choice and/or a better value, they will *want* to buy from you.

7. The Principle of Consensus and "Herd Mentality"

If everyone else around him is buying and enjoying popcorn, then Joe Consumer wants to have popcorn as well! Most people want to follow the pack. They want to 'fit in,' they don't want to be left behind, they want to "keep up."

If other people and their kids are enjoying fresh, hot buttered popcorn, then heck so will Joe Consumer and his family.

He also 'assumes' that if others around him are enjoying the popcorn, then it must be good, and that he will enjoy it too.

How can you use this strategy in your product or service? Provide "proof" that others are already enjoying and benefiting from your product. Offer testimonials from existing customers, show specific examples and success stories of how a certain customer benefited from using your product/service. If you're selling a marketing/moneymaking product, give specifics of how much profit a customer made by using your strategies.

Additional Lessons from Popcorn Marketing

I'm assuming that the movie theatres have tested their price point and figured out what the highest price is, that they can charge and get away with - the highest price the market will be willing to pay.

And, that's what they charge for their popcorn.

I believe that's a mistake. Here's a better way of doing it:

Test your price point. Find out what the highest price is that the customer is willing to pay for your product. Then, bring the price down considerably! Offer a 'better' deal than your competitors. Or offer them a lot more value than others, by adding additional bonuses to increase the overall perceived value.

Sure, you can take advantage of your customers by charging as much as you possibly can. But, I wouldn't recommend that strategy. Instead, tell them what others are charging and what a great value you're giving them. Break it down for them and explain the difference. Show them how they're unique and why buying from you is in their best interest.

Remember, you can either corner them into buying from you, or you can just make your offer so much better, and so much more irresistible, that they will want to buy from you!

Moreover, I want the customer to feel good 'after' the purchase as well. I'm not a fan of buyer's remorse, and I assume my customers aren't either.

You ensure that they will continue to feel good about their buying decision *after* the purchase by delivering on your promise. In fact, you can go a step beyond and 'over-deliver.'

When you do that, you will also:

- 1) dramatically decrease your refund rate, and
- 2) ensure that the customer will buy from you again, in the future, because his first purchase from you was a positive and

rewarding experience.

And, besides, the only reason I'm "in business" is because of the 'customer.' Why would I want to cheat him or trick him? We're in this business because we want to help people and create real value in their lives. Not because we want to suck every penny out of them, right?

Most marketers are bad marketers because they think that marketing is about 'tricking' people into giving them money. That's absolutely not true.

If you do it right, they will want to give you the money, and feel good about it. And, you'll be able to sleep well at night.

Marketing is not a one-shot deal. If you try to trick the customer into giving you as much money as possible just so you can get one sale out of him, you're seriously missing out.

Instead, if you make the first buying experience a pleasant one, the customer will continue to buy from you again and again, and will happily give you more money. So, don't forget about your existing customers after they've made that first sale. That's just the *beginning* of your mutually-beneficial relationship with him.

Well, there you have it... "popcorn marketing" explained, and then some! :-)

There are many extremely powerful marketing strategies and psychological motivators at work in the above 'movie popcorn' scenario.

Remember, just 'knowing' about these strategies and concepts won't do much to increase your profits. Start applying as many of them to your own business as possible, and I guarantee you'll sell more, and sell more often.

In fact, you'll get much better results than the movie theatres ever will, by always keeping the customer's best interest in mind.

Here's to your dramatic increase in profits!

Sincerely,

Bryan Kumar

<http://www.about-secrets.com>

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