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## THE SCOURGE OF DEFAULT-TO-LIKING BIAS

How it insidiously misdirects consumer research and  
new product development

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# LIKING & PURCHASE INTENT SCALES

Taking everything into consideration, what is your overall opinion of this product?

Dislike extremely

Like extremely

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



The two most commonly used metrics in consumer research, are *liking* and *purchase intent*

How likely would you be to purchase this product if it was available at a reasonable price?

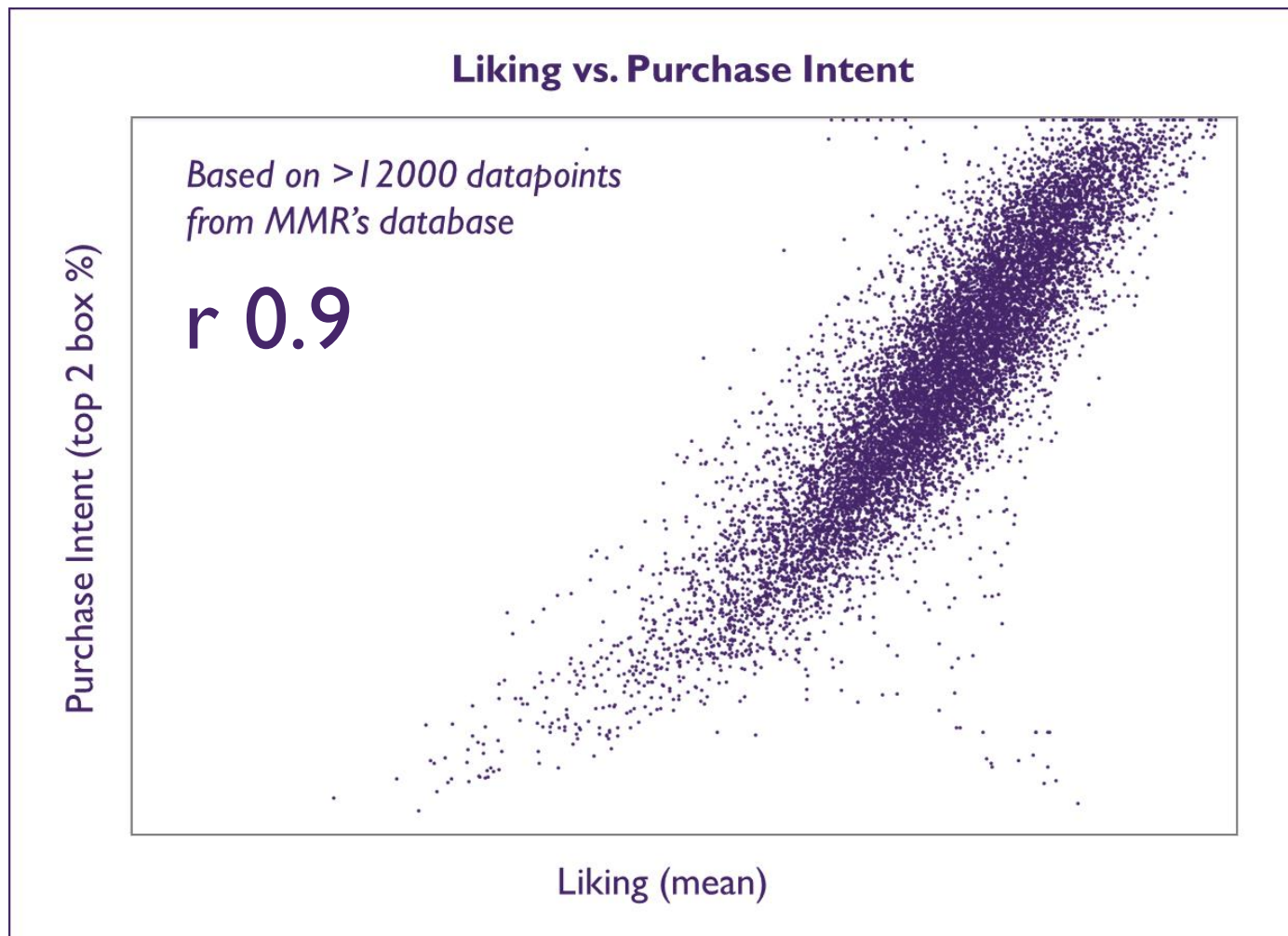
- ☐ Definitely would buy
- ☐ Probably would buy
- ☐ Might/might not buy
- ☐ Probably would not buy
- ☐ Definitely would not buy



# LIKING & PURCHASE INTENT SCALES

When these two questions are presented within the same questionnaire, the correlation coefficient is typically 0.9.

We can't consider everything that will influence our purchasing decisions, because it's beyond our mental processing capacity. Instead, we inadvertently default to what comes to mind most readily...liking





# FRAGRANCE STUDY LIKING RATINGS (BLIND ASSESSMENT)

When assessed blind, repertoire users of each of these fragrances, liked the other fragrance as much as their own fragrance.

Asking consumers how much they like these fragrances told us nothing about their current usage behaviour!



# DUAL ASPECTS OF REWARD THEORY (DART)

There are two aspects of Reward

## 1. Reward via Immediate Pleasure

Immediate

No cognitive thought  
processing

Dominates conscious thought

Immediate influence on  
behaviour

**Measurable**

## 2. Reward via Emotional Outcomes

Typically...

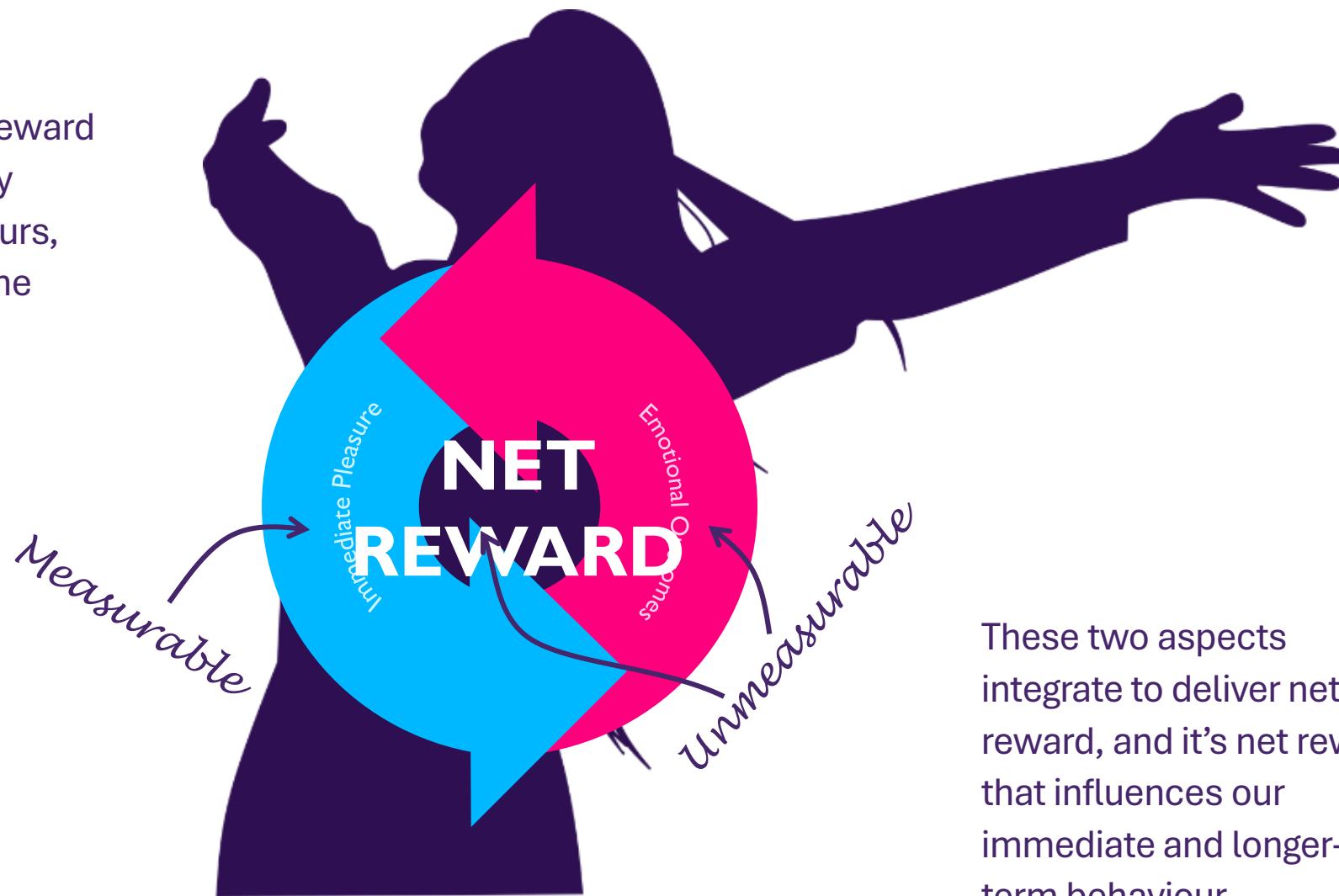
...neither immediate nor  
apparent

...Inaccessible via cognitive  
thought processing

**Largely Unmeasurable**

# DUAL ASPECTS OF REWARD THEORY (DART)

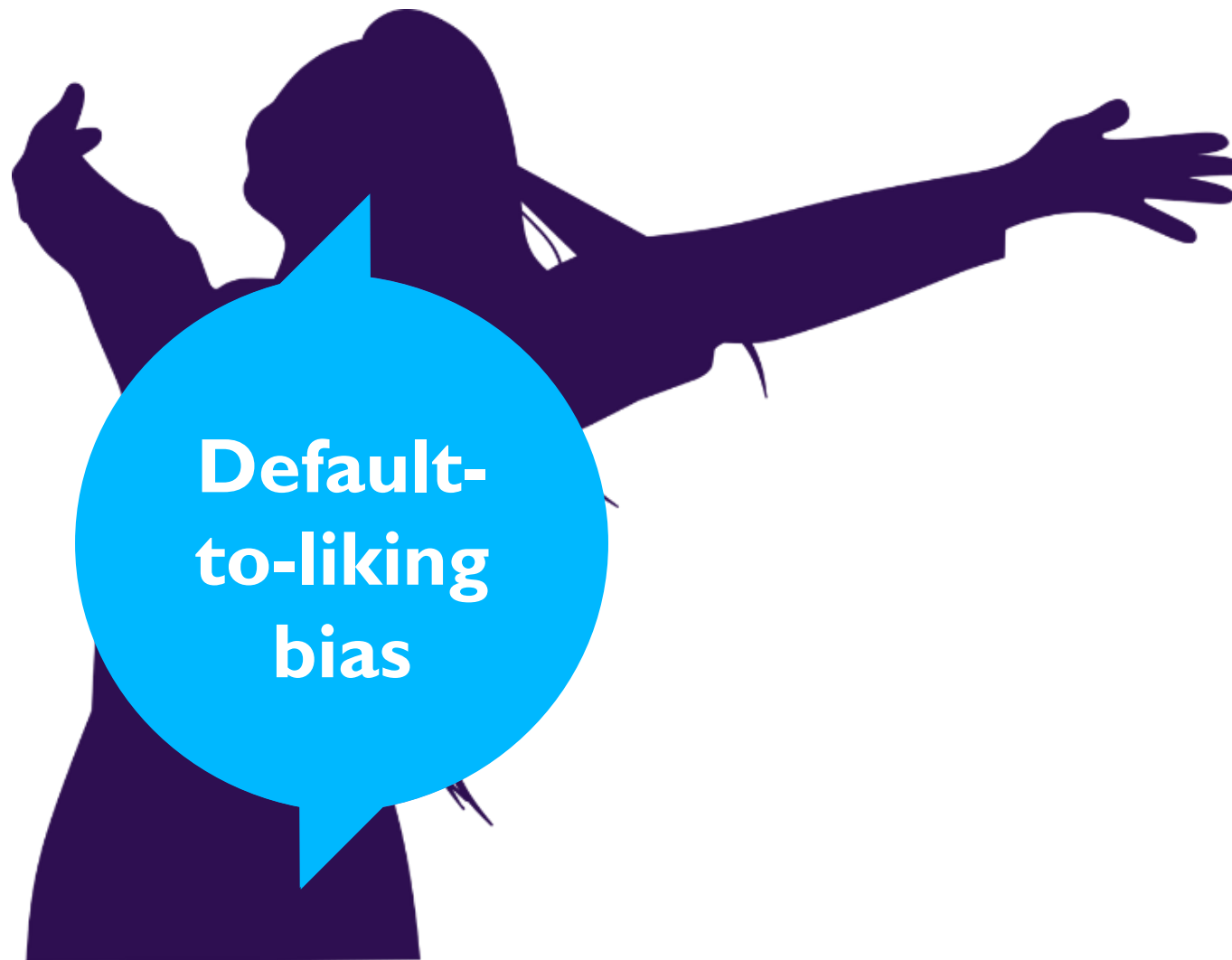
The two aspects of reward are constantly at play during our waking hours, as we interact with the world around us.



These two aspects integrate to deliver net reward, and it's net reward that influences our immediate and longer-term behaviour.

## DUAL ASPECTS OF REWARD THEORY (DART)

Unfortunately, both net reward and Reward via Emotional Outcomes are fundamentally unmeasurable due, once again, to **default-to-liking** bias.



Thomson, D.M.H. & Coates, T. (2021). Conceptual Profiling – Navigating Beyond Liking. In H. Meiselman (ed.), Emotion measurement (2nd Edition). Cambridge, UK: Woodhead. Pages 381-438

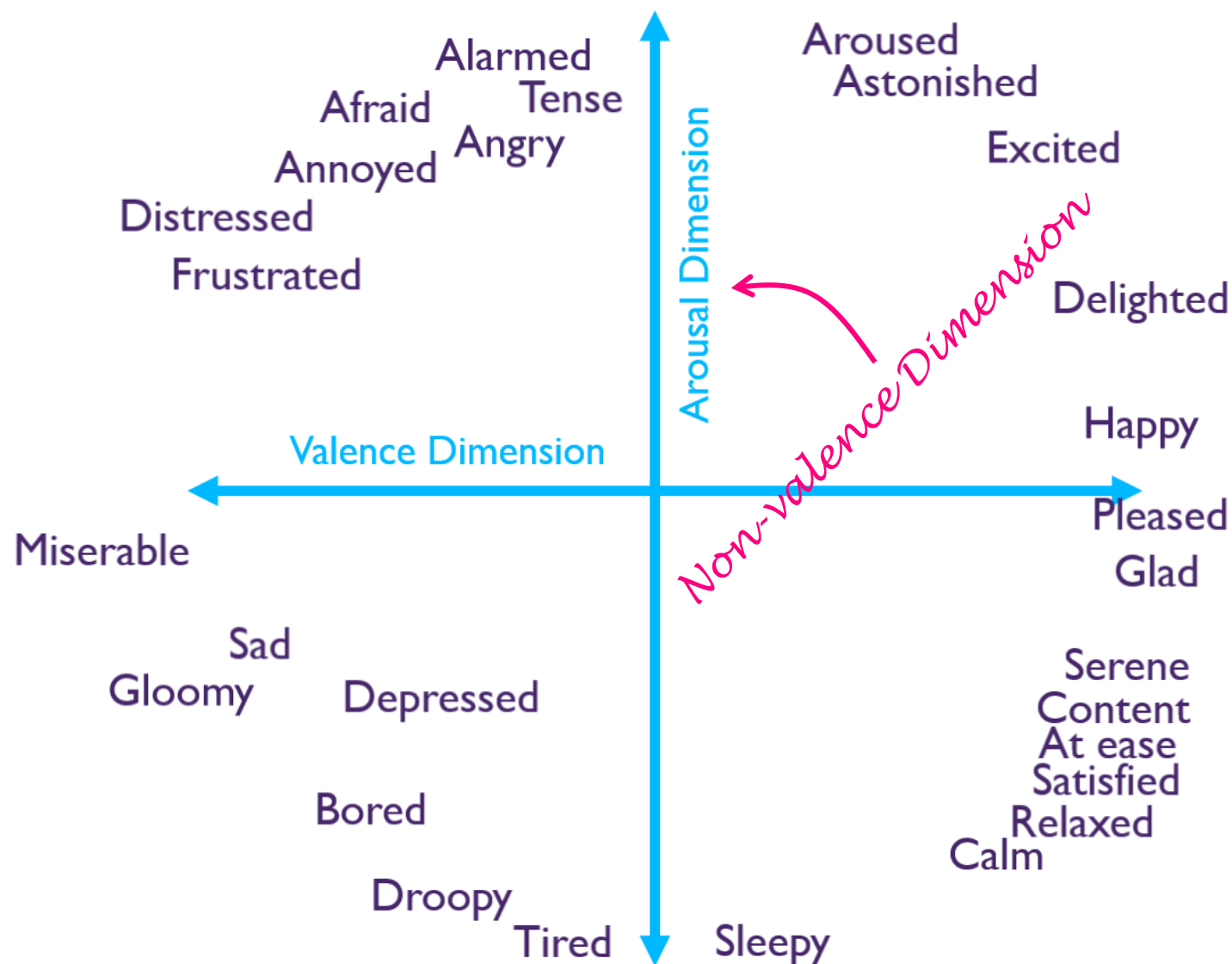
# RUSSELL'S CIRCUMPLEX MODEL OF AFFECT

A clue as to how we might tackle this problem came from James Russell's famous circumplex model of affect

The first (valence) dimension separates words that allude to positive versus negative concepts

The second (arousal) dimension separates words that allude to high or low arousal concepts

We can characterise the second dimension as a non-valence dimension.





# VALENCE VS. NON-VALENCE CONCEPTS

Over the years, this work has been repeated many times, typically using more words and various different research techniques.....the result is invariably the same: A hugely dominant valence dimension, and several lower order, non-valence dimensions.

Our own recent study started with around 2000 concept descriptors.

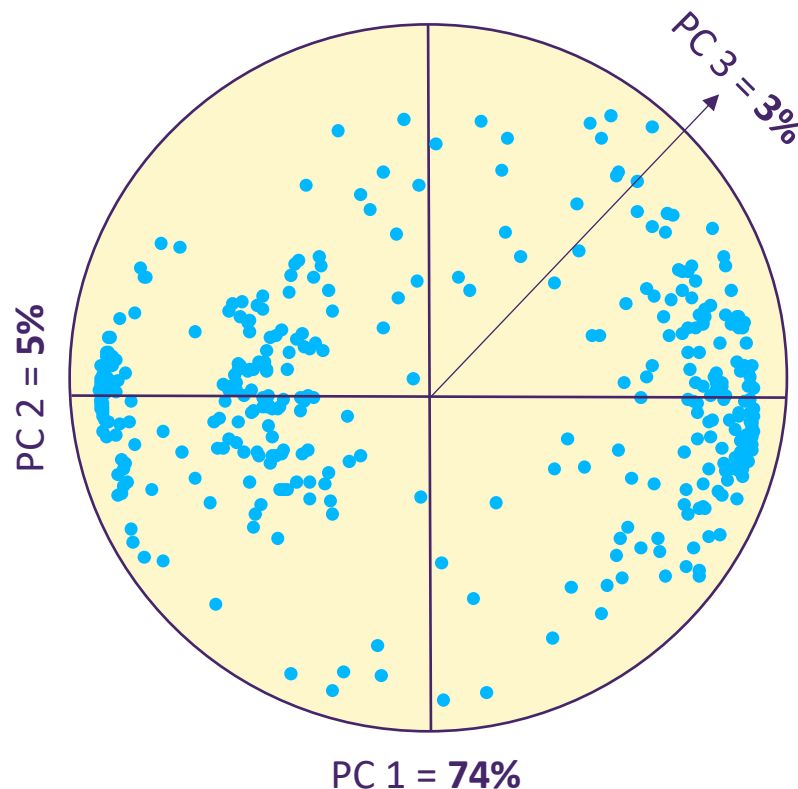


**2000**  
Concept  
Descriptors

# VALENCE VS. NON-VALENCE CONCEPTS

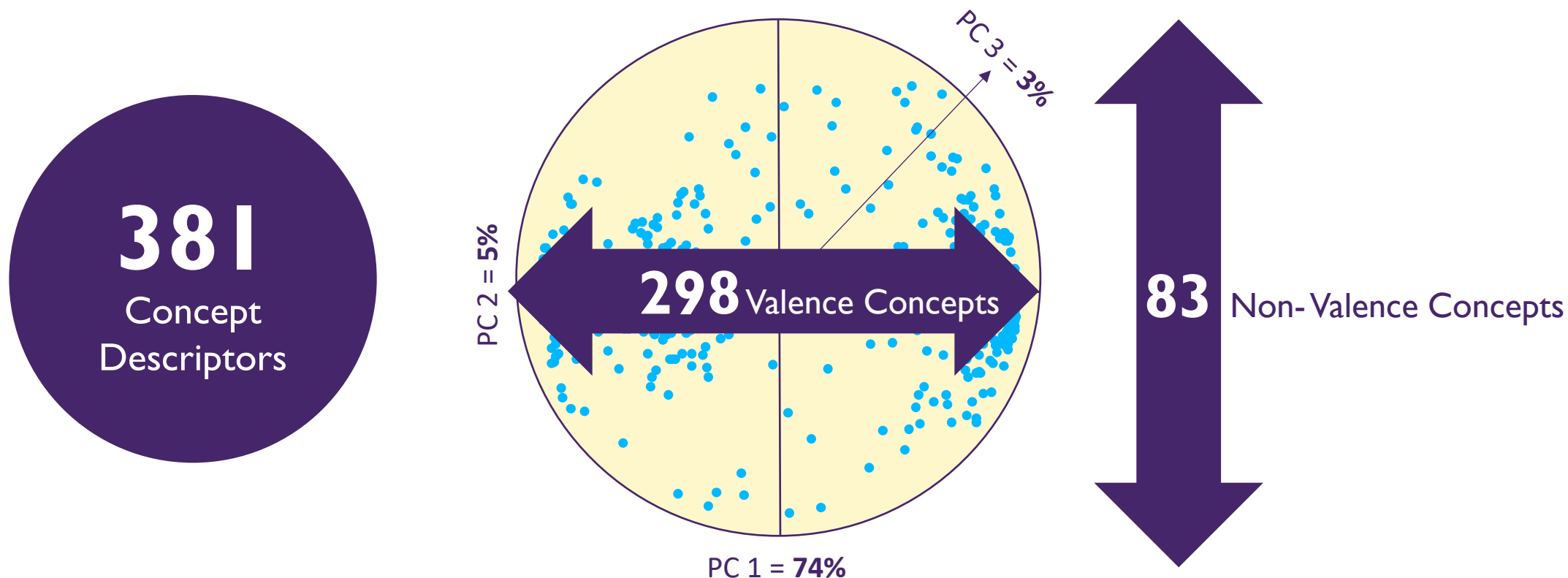
We rationalised this down to 381 descriptors using a variety of respondent-driven techniques, which we then mapped based on similarity of conceptual meaning.

**381**  
Concept  
Descriptors



# VALENCE VS. NON-VALENCE CONCEPTS

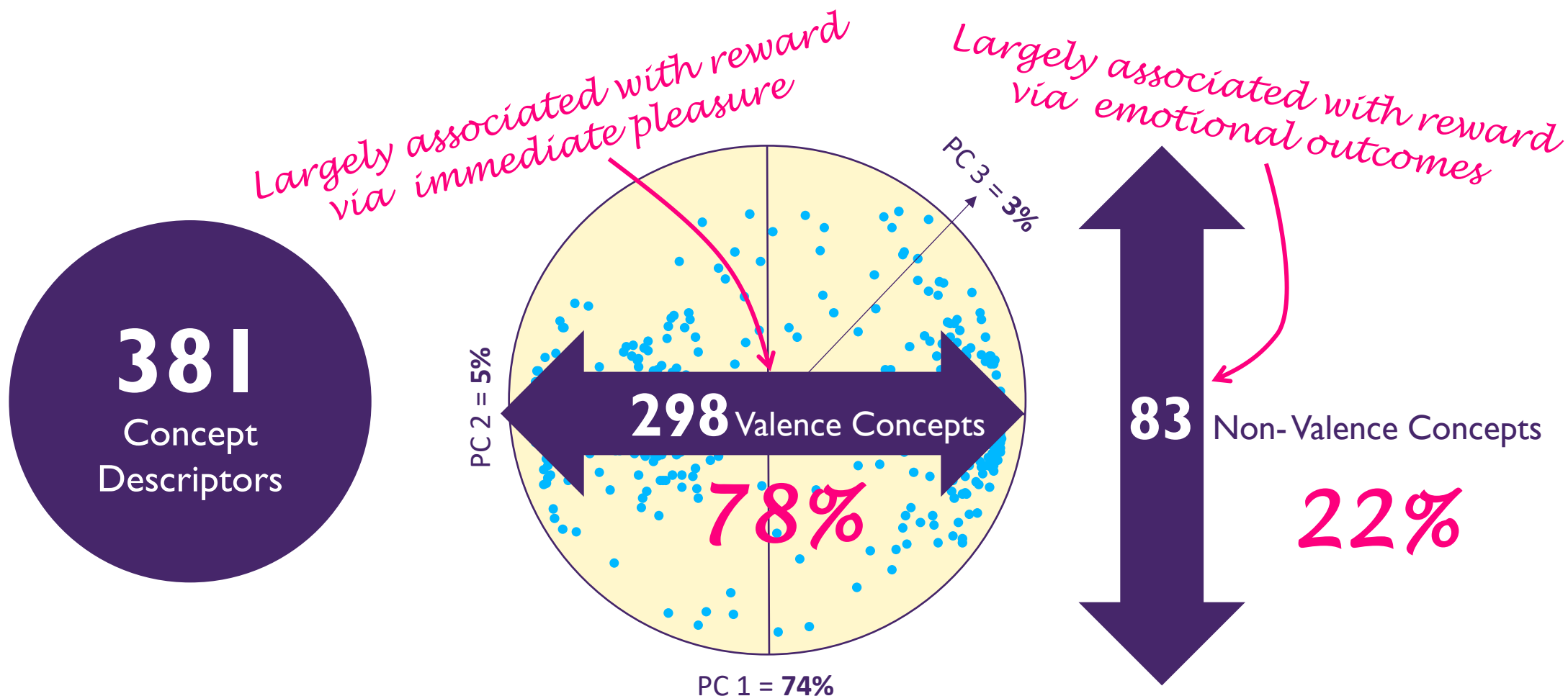
This yielded a dominant valence dimension, and two lower-order non-valence dimensions, both of which are orthogonal to the first.



298 of our 381 concept descriptors were associated with the valence dimension, reflecting the dominance of valence concepts in language...because that's what we bring-to-mind most readily

83 terms are strongly correlated with Dimensions 2 and 3, and unrelated to the valence dimension.

# VALENCE VS. NON-VALENCE CONCEPTS



We propose that the valence dimension, is defined by concepts that deliver **Reward via Immediate Pleasure**, and these lower order, non-valence dimensions are defined by concepts that deliver **Rewarding Emotional Outcomes**

## BACK TO OUR FRAGRANCE STUDY...

We used Best Worst Scaling to associate 22 non-valence terms with the two unbranded fragrances



**MUGLER ALIEN**

**Black Opium**

- Relaxed / At ease
- Carefree / Easy-going
- Sensuous / Alluring
- Confident / Assertive
- Playful / Bubbly
- Innocent /
- Uncomplicated
- Modest / Humble
- Mysterious / Intriguing

8.1

Mugler Alien and the Black Opium users not only like them equally, they also conceptualise Black Opium similarly. Only those concepts shown in blue differentiate them



**YSL BLACK OPIUM**

**Black Opium**

- Relaxed / At ease
- Carefree / Easy-going
- Sensuous / Alluring
- Confident / Assertive
- Playful / Bubbly
- Innocent /
- Uncomplicated
- Modest / Humble
- Mysterious / Intriguing
- Conventional /
- Conservative
- Awake / Energised

7.1

6.8



# BACK TO OUR FRAGRANCE STUDY...

## Alien

**Bold / Adventurous**  
**Extravagant /**  
**Flamboyant**  
**Confident / Assertive**  
**Mysterious / Intriguing**  
**Sensuous / Alluring**  
**Awake / Energised**  
**Cutting edge / Forward-**  
**thinking**  
**Quirky / Eccentric**

## Black Opium

**Relaxed / At ease**  
**Carefree / Easy-going**  
**Sensuous / Alluring**  
**Confident / Assertive**  
**Playful / Bubbly**  
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**Cutting edge / Forward-**  
**thinking**  
**Playful Bubbly**

## Black Opium

**Relaxed / At ease**  
**Carefree / Easy-going**  
**Sensuous / Alluring**  
**Confident / Assertive**  
**Playful / Bubbly**  
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**Modest / Humble**  
**Mysterious / Intriguing**  
**Conventional /**  
**Conservative**  
**Awake / Energised**

MUGLER  
ALIEN

YSL BLACK  
OPIUM

Likewise, for Mugler Alien, the only differences between the two user types are those concepts shown in pink

8.1

8.1

7.1

6.8

# BACK TO OUR FRAGRANCE STUDY...

## Alien

**Bold / Adventurous**  
**Extravagant /**  
**Flamboyant**  
**Confident / Assertive**  
**Mysterious / Intriguing**  
**Sensuous / Alluring**  
**Awake / Energised**  
**Cutting edge / Forward-**  
**thinking**  
**Quirky / Eccentric**

**MUGLER**  
**ALIEN**

**8.1**

## Black Opium

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**Sensuous / Alluring**  
**Confident / Assertive**  
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**8.1**

## Alien

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**Extravagant /**  
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**Mysterious / Intriguing**  
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**Awake / Energised**  
**Cutting edge / Forward-**  
**thinking**  
**Playful / Bubbly**

**YSL**  
**BLACK**  
**OPIUM**

**7.1**

## Black Opium

**Relaxed / At ease**  
**Carefree / Easy-going**  
**Sensuous / Alluring**  
**Confident / Assertive**  
**Playful / Bubbly**  
**Innocent /**  
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**Modest / Humble**  
**Mysterious / Intriguing**  
**Conventional /**  
**Conservative**  
**Awake / Energised**

**6.8**

Concepts associated with the alternative fragrance don't motivate our brand devotees, presumably because these concepts don't deliver emotional outcomes that they find rewarding

# BACK TO OUR FRAGRANCE STUDY...

## Alien

**Bold / Adventurous**  
**Extravagant / Flamboyant**  
**Confident / Assertive**  
**Mysterious / Intriguing**  
**Sensuous / Alluring**  
**Awake / Energised**  
**Cutting edge / Forward-thinking**  
**Quirky / Eccentric**

*These are my Key Motivating Concepts*

## Black Opium

**Relaxed / At ease**  
**Carefree / Easy-going**  
**Sensuous / Alluring**  
**Confident / Assertive**  
**Playful / Bubbly**  
**Innocent / Uncomplicated**  
**Modest / Humble**  
**Mysterious / Intriguing**  
**Conventional / Conservative**  
**Awake / Energised**

*...and these are my Key Motivating Concepts*

Key motivating concepts that deliver reward to Black Opium users are very different from the key motivating concepts that deliver reward to Mugler Alien users, despite both liking both fragrances equally, and conceptualising both fragrances similarly

8.1

6.8





As an optimisation strategy, **maximising Liking has been 'Maxed out'!**

Most NPD strategies and research methodologies completely overlook **key motivating concepts**.....and that's the problem!

What we're proposing may not make your research easier, but it will increase the probability of new product success.

Finally.....

Beware of **Default to Liking Bias**...it has insidiously misdirected consumer research and new product development for more than 80 years .....**including yours!**