



FOOD
INNOVATION



The psychology of food choice: Intention to action



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The global context

- World Health Organization (WHO)
 - Society gripped by obesity epidemic (WHO, 2007)
 - CHD via obesity will be THE of major cause of death and disability worldwide by 2020 (WHO, 1996)
- European Food Council (EFC)
 - Relationship between food choice health key public concern (EFC, 2004)
 - Poor food choice linked to disease states (CHD, neoplasms etc.)



Policy, strategy & progress (?)

- UK Department of Health

- “Health of the nation”, 8 areas of food choice (DoH, 1997)
- 5-a-day fruit and vegetables (DoH, 2003 re-launch)
- Dietary salt (DoH, 2007)
- Energy derived from fat (DoH, 2004)
- Eating range of dairy (Food Standards Agency-FSA-2006)

- UK based information

- Augmented anti-obesity campaign (DoH, 2008) £372M
- Change4life “*eat well, move more, live longer*” (DoH, 2009)
- Food labelling work with food sector (FSA, 2007)
- “*Sales of ‘super foods’ soaring...*” (Telegraph, 2007)
- High profile media e.g. Jamie Oliver (2007; 2008)



The state of play

- Sobering reality

- 17 yrs since The **Health of The Nation** report (DoH, 1992)
- High rates of **mortality/morbidity** re: poor health choices remain
- People are **not changing** their behaviours



Why aren't things getting better?

- “Up-stream” information giving campaigns
 - The presentation of information on healthy food choice
 - Traffic lights; Change4life; web based information (inc retailers)
 - Overtime it is the case that these *may* work
 - Lots of evidence from Health Psychology that they might not
 - E.g. anti-smoking information on packets
- Does anyone engage with the information?
 - Cf. Smoking campaigns: does anyone think smoking won't kill?
 - How many people deliberately set out to be unhealthy?
 - **Something is going wrong...**



We are creatures of habit

- Everyone has their habits
 - *“You can live to be a hundred if you give up all the things that make you want to live to be a hundred”* (Woody Allen)
- Limited control over choices
 - *“Most of a person's everyday life is determined... by features of the environment ...that operate outside of conscious awareness” ... “The unbearable automaticity of being”* (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999)



How people are hamstrung re: food choices

- Firstly, through these habitual “choices”
 - Best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour
 - Poor food decisions yesterday = poor decisions today
 - No one can change what happened yesterday...
- Secondly, via our physiology
 - Appetite well adapted to feel full from low energy dense foods before overconsumption occurs
 - Appetite poorly adapted for environment rich in energy dense foods (Blundell et al., 1987)



Timing is everything...

Commercial and social enterprise

- Moment of synergy?

- Government(s) agenda / growing public and media awareness
- Food industry promoting “health”
- Volume of “pure” research outputs from psychology
- Knowledge Transfer **Food Innovations Project SHU**

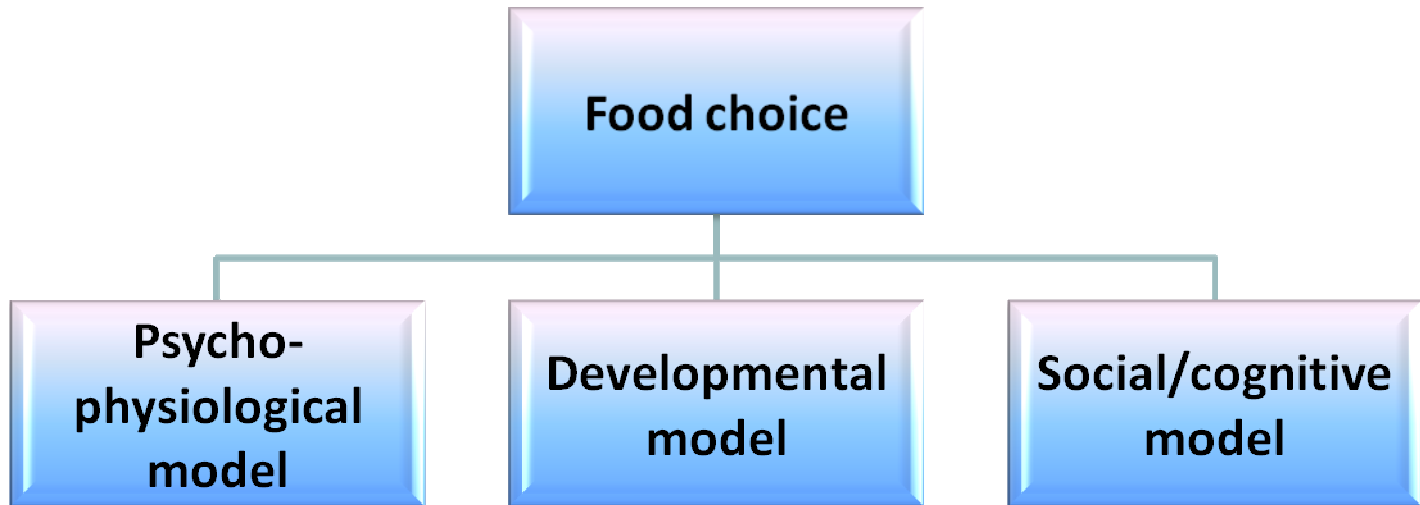
- Sheffield Hallam University’s offer

- To seek to provide products and services to facilitate healthy food choices for clients via the application of collaborative knowledge, developed with commercial partners. **How?**
- **1.** Track record of working with food sector **2.** Expertise in science of behaviour change **3.** Expertise in science of hunger and satiety



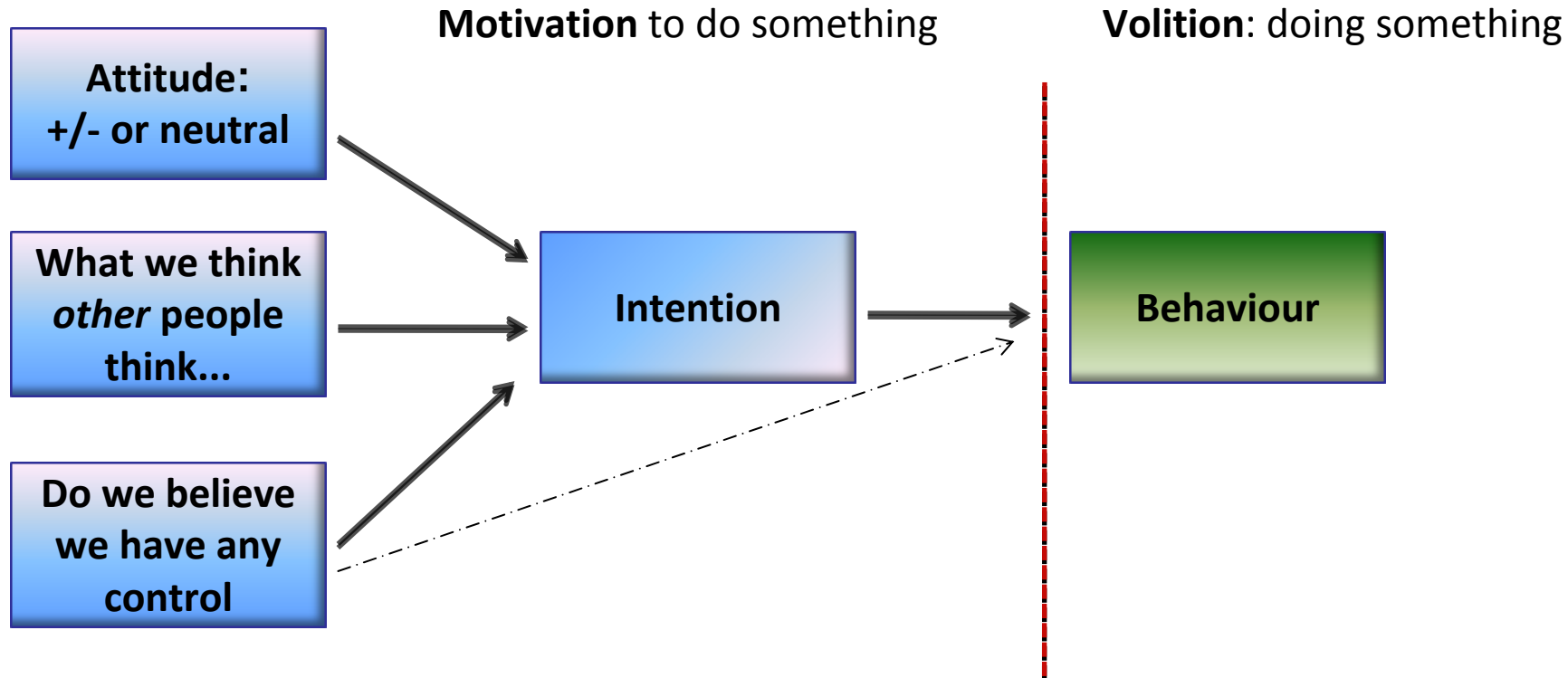
Understanding food choice

First step towards altering client behaviour

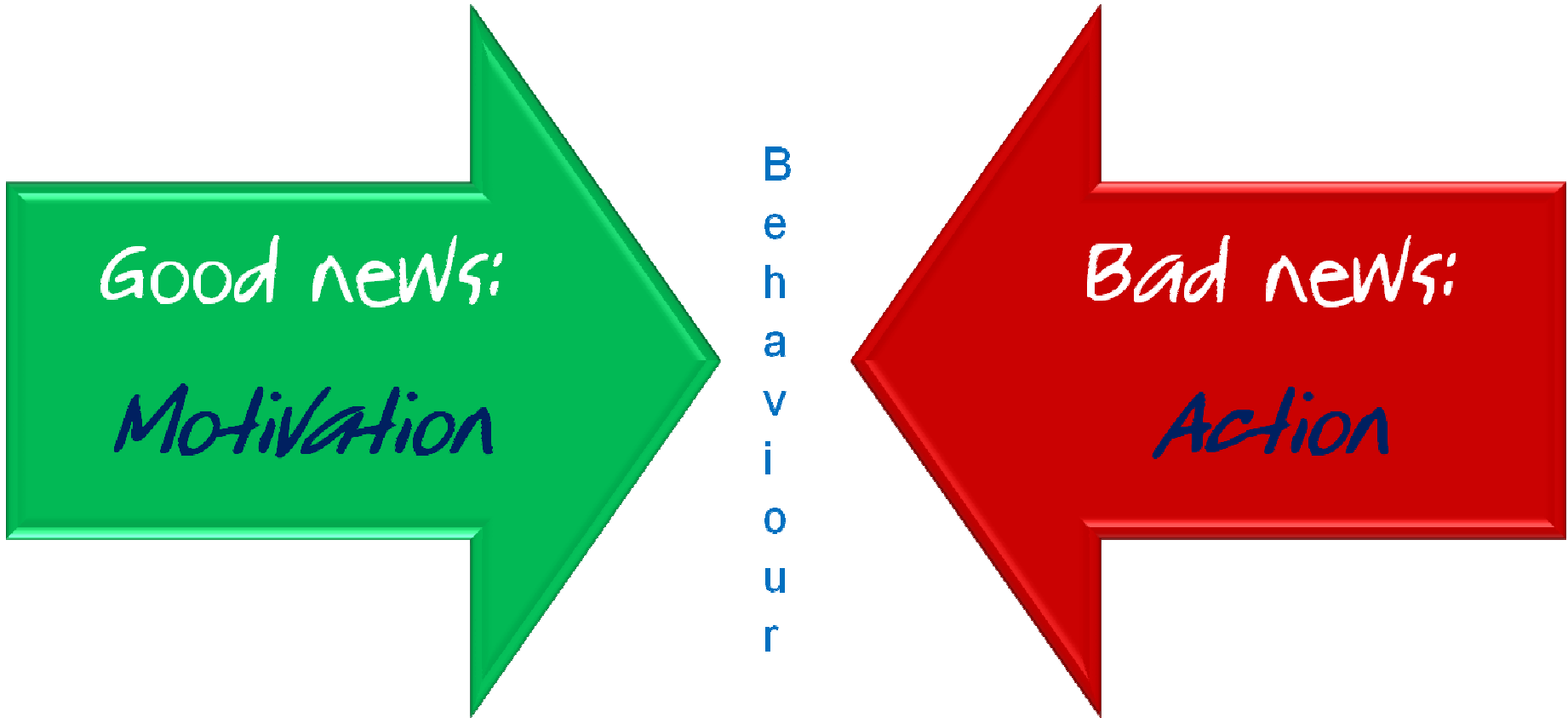


Can behaviour be predicted?

(From: *Theory of Planned Behaviour*, e.g. Ajzen, 1988)



Motivation ≠ action



Moving from intention to action

- **Goal intention**
(motivation)

- *What* you will do
- New Year's resolutions...
- *Vague and passive*

vs.

- **Implementation intentions** (volition/ACTION)

- *When, where* and *how* you will do it
- Creating the *illusion* of habit
- Capture of behaviour by cues in environment
- Requires “cognitive” effort before you get to the store

- *Specific and active*



Some research examples

- Applications of implementation intentions (imps)
 - Different to usual “downstream” interventions aimed at individuals, because requires deliberate planning (Verplanken & Wood, 2006)
 - Significant reduction in dietary fat via imps + 1 month (Armitage, 2004), for motivated and non motivated
 - Evidence that imps comparable to small financial incentive to break habit of not buying organic food (Bamberg, 2002)



How can we achieve this?

Beyond information giving

- Scope for collaboration

- Develop materials with **information and volitional strategies** to drive customers' food choice behaviour
- Work with **in-store health specialists** re: food choice
- A computer based **tailored feedback system** could include provision for implementation intentions, with a view to assisting in the partial automation of appropriate food choice behaviour once in store (via packaging/DVD/web)
- Marketing a sophisticated tool specific to the individual, could **improve on "generic" food labelling** (cf. “food tracker”)



Psychology (Food Innovations) SHU

Lots of pure research done on imps for a range of behaviours.

We are seeking to trial this in the real world with a commercial partner.

**Information | Packaging | Tasks | Games | In-store coaching |
Digital media | Bespoke solutions**

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING



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