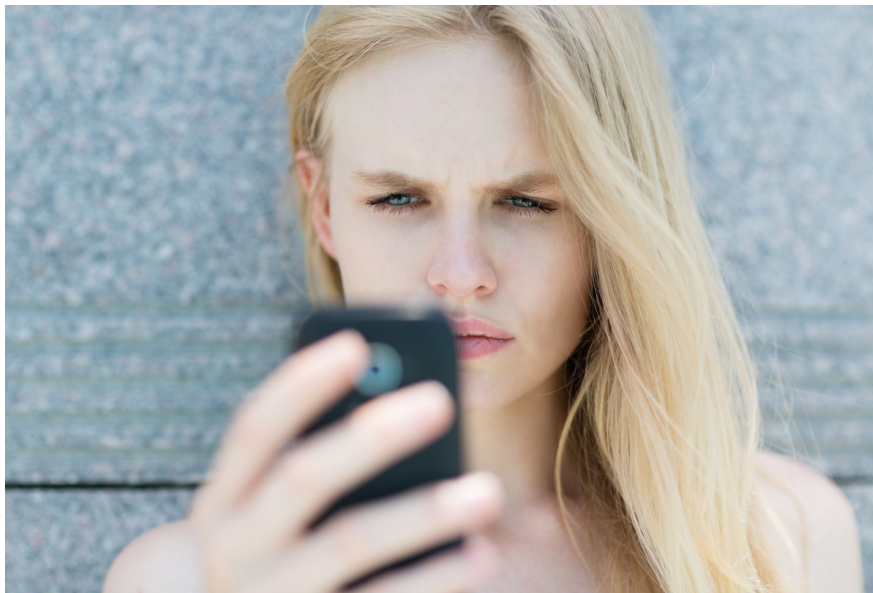


What is Saliency Bias?

Social media is designed to grab our attention. It's highly successful at it, especially so at times of social change. It gives us little time to think and consider other issues that may be more important. This tendency to focus on and favour information that stands out can lead us astray. It's an effect known as saliency bias



Attention grabbing

Saliency bias is not confined to the news we notice; it can affect the way people spend and save.

For example, it's easy to focus on an advertised bundled internet service deal without considering whether each component actually delivers value, or to remember the excitement of a new purchase while ignoring the dent it makes in our bank account. Some information or experiences [appear more important](#) than others which means we are more likely to remember and act on them.

And because distractions aren't always the right place to focus, saliency bias describes why we can make judgements based on the wrong information, or on information that isn't very important in the whole scheme of things.

Salient tech

When something is front of mind, or salient, it's much easier to act on. Something that falls into the shadows is easily forgotten and this can explain why it's challenging to achieve specific goals. Temptations right in front of us are much more noticeable, or salient, than future benefits that take effort to achieve.

Making things more obvious can help with goals, such as better money management, as many personal-finance apps show. Any tool that collates all of your finances in one place, sends notifications to remind you of payments due, or calculates how much you can spend while still meeting your savings goal is playing to salience bias. Each of these services makes the information we need obvious and tries to put it in front of us exactly when we need it.

Front of mind

And salience can benefit in other ways when it comes to our money.

A researcher from the University of California wanted to understand how making overdraft amounts salient could reduce how much people paid in overdraft fees. [He found that](#) continually reminding people of their overdraft expenses moved the extra fees they were paying towards, as it were, the "front" of their mind, which reduced how much people paid out in additional expenses.

When people were more aware of the expenses they were incurring, they reduced how many debit transactions they made and some people cancelled their automated withdrawals. They were more likely to act because the costs they were incurring were obvious.

Not only money

While salience can help with money management, this idea applies to other things too. For example, when researchers from Zurich University reminded people how much water they were using while showering, this meant they used less water, reducing waste. People reacted to the real-time feedback by shortening their showers by an average of 22%.

The [researchers confirmed that](#) when we focus on what's immediately visible, we can change our behaviour in an effective way.

Not always obvious

But while pointing things out to people might seem like a really simple approach to behavioural change, it can help people to shift focus and make better decisions – avoiding distractions and paying attention to what's important.

What's salient for some people might not be salient for others. Particularly, [research shows](#) that salience is more obvious to the one acting, compared to the person who's on the receiving end of an exchange. That is, the situation in which some behaviour occurs is not usually salient to the observers, only to the people actually taking the action.

For example, if a friend seems to be continually spending on their credit card (typically incurring fees) despite having plenty of savings, you might think this doesn't make sense. You may argue that they could save money by using their savings to pay off their credit card and avoid any interest repayments.

For you, as the observer, this might seem obvious. But for your friend – the actor – there may be some other salient feature prompting this activity. They may be saving strategically, for a specific financial need or a time when they know they'll need extra funds to outlay, for example.

Attention! Attention!

It goes without saying that noticeable or prominent features are attention-grabbing. And given there is so much going on around us, we do need to be able to separate what needs our attention from background noise. But when we focus too much on the wrong things, we can end up making decisions that may not be the best.

Author

Alissa Lefebre

Economist

alissa.lefebvre@ing.com**Deepali Bhargava**

Regional Head of Research, Asia-Pacific

Deepali.Bhargava@ing.com**Ruben Dewitte**

Economist

+32495364780

ruben.dewitte@ing.com**Kinga Havasi**

Economic research trainee

kinga.havasi@ing.com**Marten van Garderen**

Consumer Economist, Netherlands

marten.van.garderen@ing.com**David Havrlant**

Chief Economist, Czech Republic

420 770 321 486

david.havrlant@ing.com**Sander Burgers**

Senior Economist, Dutch Housing

sander.burgers@ing.com**Lynn Song**

Chief Economist, Greater China

lynn.song@asia.ing.com**Michiel Tukker**

Senior European Rates Strategist
michieltukker@ing.com

Michal Rubaszek
Senior Economist, Poland
michal.rubaszek@ing.pl

This is a test author

Stefan Posea
Economist, Romania
tiberiu-stefan.posea@ing.com

Marine Leleux
Sector Strategist, Financials
marine.leleux2@ing.com

Jesse Norcross
Senior Sector Strategist, Real Estate
jesse.norcross@ing.com

Teise Stellema
Research Assistant, Energy Transition
teise.stellema@ing.com

Diederik Stadig
Sector Economist, TMT & Healthcare
diederik.stadig@ing.com

Diogo Gouveia
Sector Economist
diogo.duarte.vieira.de.gouveia@ing.com

Marine Leleux
Sector Strategist, Financials
marine.leleux2@ing.com

Ewa Manthey
Commodities Strategist
ewa.manthey@ing.com

ING Analysts

James Wilson
EM Sovereign Strategist
James.wilson@ing.com

Sophie Smith

Digital Editor

sophie.smith@ing.com

Frantisek Taborsky

EMEA FX & FI Strategist

frantisek.taborsky@ing.com

Adam Antoniak

Senior Economist, Poland

adam.antoniak@ing.pl

Min Joo Kang

Senior Economist, South Korea and Japan

min.joo.kang@asia.ing.com

Coco Zhang

ESG Research

coco.zhang@ing.com

Jan Frederik Slijkerman

Senior Sector Strategist, TMT

jan.frederik.slijkerman@ing.com

Katinka Jongkind

Senior Economist, Services and Leisure

Katinka.Jongkind@ing.com

Marina Le Blanc

Sector Strategist, Financials

Marina.Le.Blanc@ing.com

Samuel Abettan

Junior Economist

samuel.abettan@ing.com

Franziska Biehl

Economist, Germany

Franziska.Marie.Biehl@ing.de

Rebecca Byrne

Senior Editor and Supervisory Analyst

rebecca.byrne@ing.com

Mirjam Bani

Sector Economist, Commercial Real Estate & Public Sector (Netherlands)

mirjam.bani@ing.com

Timothy Rahill

Credit Strategist

timothy.rahill@ing.com

Leszek Kasek

Senior Economist, Poland

leszek.kasek@ing.pl

Oleksiy Soroka, CFA

Senior High Yield Credit Strategist

oleksiy.soroka@ing.com

Antoine Bouvet

Head of European Rates Strategy

antoine.bouvet@ing.com

Jeroen van den Broek

Global Head of Sector Research

jeroen.van.den.broek@ing.com

Edse Dantuma

Senior Sector Economist, Industry and Healthcare

edse.dantuma@ing.com

Francesco Pesole

FX Strategist

francesco.pesole@ing.com

Rico Luman

Senior Sector Economist, Transport and Logistics

Rico.Luman@ing.com

Jurjen Witteveen

Sector Economist

jurjen.witteveen@ing.com

Dmitry Dolgin

Chief Economist, CIS

dmitry.dolgin@ing.de

Nicholas Mapa

Senior Economist, Philippines

nicholas.antonio.mapa@asia.ing.com

Egor Fedorov

Senior Credit Analyst

egor.fedorov@ing.com

Sebastian Franke

Consumer Economist

sebastian.franke@ing.de

Gerben Hieminga

Senior Sector Economist, Energy

gerben.hieminga@ing.com

Nadège Tillier

Head of Corporates Sector Strategy

nadege.tillier@ing.com

Charlotte de Montpellier

Senior Economist, France and Switzerland

charlotte.de.montpellier@ing.com

Laura Straeter

Behavioural Scientist

+31(0)611172684

laura.Straeter@ing.com

Valentin Tataru

Chief Economist, Romania

valentin.tataru@ing.com

James Smith

Developed Markets Economist, UK

james.smith@ing.com

Suvi Platerink Kosonen

Senior Sector Strategist, Financials

suvi.platerink-kosonen@ing.com

Thijs Geijer

Senior Sector Economist, Food & Agri

thijs.geijer@ing.com

Maurice van Sante

Senior Economist Construction & Team Lead Sectors

maurice.van.sante@ing.com

Marcel Klok

Senior Economist, Netherlands

marcel.klok@ing.com

Piotr Poplawski

Senior Economist, Poland

piotr.poplawski@ing.pl

Paolo Pizzoli

Senior Economist, Italy, Greece

paolo.pizzoli@ing.com

Marieke Blom

Chief Economist and Global Head of Research

marieke.blom@ing.com

Raoul Leering

Senior Macro Economist

raoul.leering@ing.com

Maarten Leen

Head of Global IFRS9 ME Scenarios

maarten.leen@ing.com

Maureen Schuller

Head of Financials Sector Strategy

Maureen.Schuller@ing.com

Warren Patterson

Head of Commodities Strategy

Warren.Patterson@asia.ing.com

Rafal Benecki

Chief Economist, Poland

rafal.benecki@ing.pl

Philippe Ledent

Senior Economist, Belgium, Luxembourg

philippe.ledent@ing.com

Peter Virovacz

Senior Economist, Hungary

peter.virovacz@ing.com

Inga Fechner

Senior Economist, Germany, Global Trade

inga.fechner@ing.de

Dimitry Fleming

Senior Data Analyst, Netherlands

Dimitry.Fleming@ing.com

Ciprian Dascalu

Chief Economist, Romania

+40 31 406 8990

ciprian.dascalu@ing.com

Muhammet Mercan

Chief Economist, Turkey

muhammet.mercan@ingbank.com.tr

Iris Pang

Chief Economist, Greater China

iris.pang@asia.ing.com

Sophie Freeman

Writer, Group Research

+44 20 7767 6209

Sophie.Freeman@uk.ing.com

Padhraic Garvey, CFA

Regional Head of Research, Americas

padhraic.garvey@ing.com

James Knightley

Chief International Economist, US

james.knightley@ing.com

Tim Condon

Asia Chief Economist

+65 6232-6020

Martin van Vliet

Senior Interest Rate Strategist

+31 20 563 8801

martin.van.vliet@ing.com

Robert Carnell

Regional Head of Research, Asia-Pacific

robert.carnell@asia.ing.com

Karol Pogorzelski

Senior Economist, Poland

Karol.Pogorzelski@ing.pl

Carsten Brzeski

Global Head of Macro

carsten.brzeski@ing.de

Viraj Patel

Foreign Exchange Strategist

+44 20 7767 6405

viraj.patel@ing.com

Owen Thomas

Global Head of Editorial Content
+44 (0) 207 767 5331
owen.thomas@ing.com

Bert Colijn
Chief Economist, Netherlands
bert.colijn@ing.com

Peter Vanden Houte
Chief Economist, Belgium, Luxembourg, Eurozone
peter.vandenhoute@ing.com

Benjamin Schroeder
Senior Rates Strategist
benjamin.schroeder@ing.com

Chris Turner
Global Head of Markets and Regional Head of Research for UK & CEE
chris.turner@ing.com

Gustavo Rangel
Chief Economist, LATAM
+1 646 424 6464
gustavo.rangel@ing.com

Carlo Cocuzzo
Economist, Digital Finance
+44 20 7767 5306
carlo.cocuzzo@ing.com